Comparative Historical Analysis
Admission Possible 2007-2009
# Dr. Christopher Avery
Harvard Kennedy School

June 2011

This report summarizes the results of data analysis designed to assess the impact of Admission Possible's program on the college enrollment decisions of participating students. This analysis is based on historical data provided by Admission Possible for applicants to the program from the high school graduating classes of 2007, 2008, and 2009. These students typically applied to join Admission Possible in the spring of 10th grade, two years prior to their anticipated date of high school graduation, and (if admitted to the program), began formal work with Admission Possible the following fall.

Figure 1 shows a simple comparison of students admitted to Admission Possible to students who applied and were not admitted to Admission Possible in the percentage of students enrolling in any college and the percentage of students enrolling in a four-year college in the fall after high school graduation. These percentages are based on college enrollment data compiled from the National Student Clearinghouse. Since four-year colleges are a subset of all colleges, the percentage of students in each group enrolling in a four-year college is lower than the percentage in enrolling in any college.

Among students admitted to the Admission Possible program, 76% enrolled in college and 58% enrolled in a four-year college. Among students who applied, but were not admitted to the Admission Possible program, 44% enrolled in college and 24% enrolled in a four-year college. Using either measure of enrollment, students admitted to Admission Possible were more than 30 percentage points more likely to enroll in college than students who applied but were not admitted to Admission Possible.

Figure 1: College Enrollment for Applicants to Admission Possible
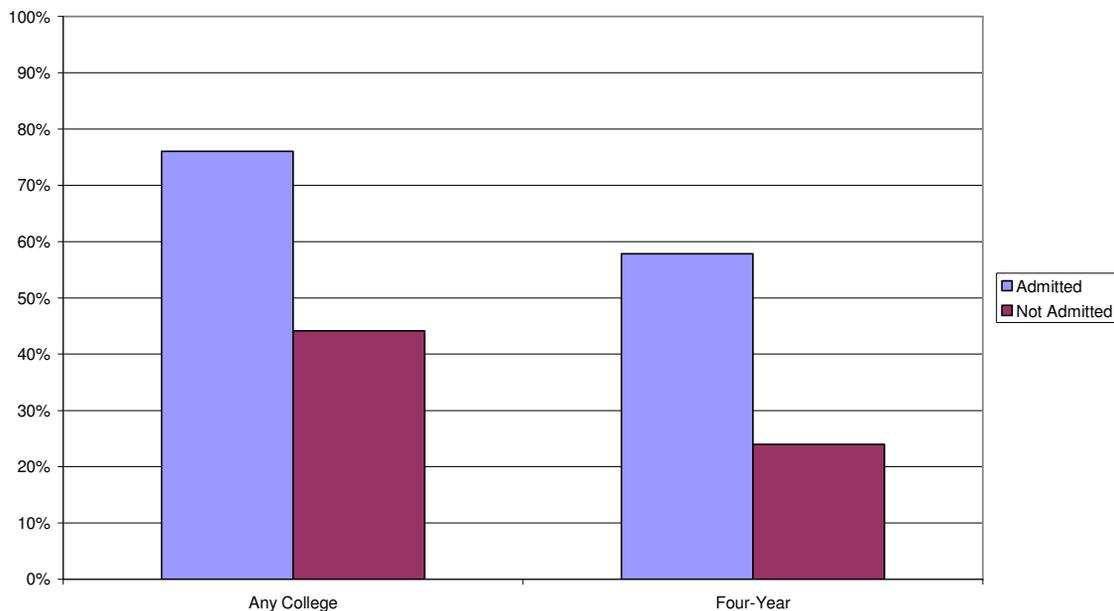
The obvious difficulty in interpreting the results from Figure 1 is that the students who were admitted to the program may not be comparable to the students who applied and were not admitted to the program. That is, it is not possible to conclude from Figure 1 alone whether (1) the differences in percentages in Figure 1 are the recent of the curriculum of the Admission Possible program or (2) Admission Possible simply selects students who are unusually likely to enroll in college.

One way to attempt to distinguish between these two competing hypotheses is to compare subgroups of applicants to the program. Figure 2 compares applicants based on the ratings given by program staff to 10th graders at the time that they applied to the program. In particular, Figure 2 compares the results for students who were not admitted to the program even though they received the highest possible rating "1" from program staff to the results for students who were admitted to the program even though they received a lesser rating of "2A" from program staff. That is, based on program ratings, we are comparing less promising students who were admitted to the program to more promising students who were not admitted to the program.

Students who were rated "2A" and admitted to the Admission Possible program, 66% enrolled in college and 46% enrolled in a four-year college. Among students who were rated "1", but who were not admitted to the Admission Possible program, 46% enrolled in college and 25% enrolled in a four-year college. Using either measure of enrollment for these subgroups, the students admitted to Admission Possible were more than 20 percentage points more likely to enroll in college than those who were not admitted.

We note that the percentage differences in outcomes for the two groups are not as large in Figure 2 as they were in Figure 1. This finding suggests that while Admission Possible does tend to select more promising students from the set of applicants, participants in the program are still much more likely to enroll in college than comparable students who do not participate in the program.

One cautionary note is that the students admitted to the program with ratings of 2A may still not be comparable to the students with ratings of 1 who were not admitted to the program. Without a formal randomized selection rule for admission of applicants to the program, we should interpret the comparisons in Figure 2 as suggestive evidence of the program's effect on students rather than a causal evaluation of that effect.

**Figure 2: College Enrollment for Applicants
Correcting for Ratings by Program Staff**