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WWC QUICK Review

“Expanding College Opportunities for High-Achieving, Low Income Students”

What is the study about?

This study examined the effects of providing low-income, high-achieving high school seniors with college application guidance and information about the costs of college. The *application guidance* included information about deadlines and requirements for college applications at nearby institutions, at the state’s flagship institution, and at in- and out-of-state selective colleges.

The *information about the costs of college* allowed students to see the amount spent on instruction, the list price of attendance, and net costs of attendance for different colleges and universities. These materials also emphasized that the student’s actual cost of attendance at a given school would be unknown unless he or she actually applied. Finally, students received a *waiver* that allowed them to apply to selective institutions without paying application fees. Students ($n = 12,000$) were randomly assigned to either receive guidance and information packets by mail or not. The cost to implement the intervention was estimated at about \$6 per student.

What did the study report?

The study reported that the intervention increased the percentage of students who: (a) applied to a selective institution (from 55% to 67%), (b) were admitted to a selective institution (from 30% to 39%), and (c) enrolled in a selective institution (from 29% to 34%). Students in the intervention group also completed more admissions applications, and were admitted to more colleges, than students in the comparison group. All of these differences were statistically significant.

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Handy Definitions

- ▼ *quick review*
- ▼ *study rating*
- ▼ *meets WWC evidence standards without reservations*
- ▼ *meets WWC evidence standards with reservations*
- ▼ *does not meet WWC evidence standards*

See the *full glossary* ►

How does the WWC rate this study?

The study is a randomized controlled trial. As such it could potentially *meet WWC evidence standards without reservations*. However, there was attrition in the overall study sample, and more information is needed to determine whether attrition rates were similar in the intervention and comparison groups. A more thorough review (forthcoming) will explore this issue further and will determine the final study rating.

Citation

Hoxby, C., & Turner, S. (2013). *Expanding college opportunities for high-achieving, low income students*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Retrieved from: <http://siepr.stanford.edu/publicationsprofile/2555>

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