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WWC QUICK Review

“Looking Beyond Enrollment: The Causal Effect of Need-Based Grants on College Access, Persistence, and Graduation”

What is the study about?

This study examined whether eligibility for the Florida Student Access Grant, a need-based grant for low-income students in Florida, affects college enrollment, credit accumulation, persistence over time in college, and, eventually, graduation.

The sample for this study included seniors in Florida public high schools in 1999–2000 who submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and were within \$1,000 on either side of the family income cutoff for eligibility for a Florida Student Access Grant. Students whose family’s ability to pay (known as Estimated Family Contribution) was less than \$1,000 below the cutoff were eligible for the grant program and served as the intervention group. Students whose family’s ability to pay was less than \$1,000 above the cutoff were not eligible for the grant program and served as the comparison group.

What did the study report?

The study reported that eligibility for the Florida Student Access Grant significantly increased the likelihood of attending a 4-year public institution in Florida immediately after high school, but not the likelihood of attending a 2-year institution. The study also reported that grant-eligible students had accumulated significantly more college-level credits 1 year after high school than students above the grant-eligibility cutoff. This margin increased over the following 3 years. The study reported that grant eligibility did not increase the probability that students earned a bachelor’s degree in 4 years, but did have a significantly positive impact on

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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* ►

earning a bachelor’s degree within 5, 6, or 7 years after high school. In contrast, study authors reported that the impact of eligibility for the grant program did not significantly impact associate’s degree attainment.

How does the WWC rate this study?

The study could potentially *meet WWC regression discontinuity design evidence standards*. A more thorough review (forthcoming) will determine the rating for the study and report more fully on its results.

Citation

Castleman, B. L., & Long, B. T. (2013). *Looking beyond enrollment: The causal effect of need-based grants on college access, persistence, and graduation* (NBER Working Paper 19306). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from: <http://www.nber.org>

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