

Prepared by
Abt Associates
for Success Boston

The Power of Coaching

HIGHLIGHTS from the Interim Report on the Impact of
Success Boston's Transition Coaching on College Success



About Success Boston

Success Boston is Boston's citywide college completion initiative. Together, the Boston Foundation, the Boston Public Schools (BPS), the City of Boston, the Boston Private Industry Council, 37 area institutions of higher education, led by UMass Boston and Bunker Hill Community College, and local nonprofit partners are working to double the college completion rate for students from the BPS. Success Boston was launched in 2008 in response to a longitudinal study by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, which showed that only 35% of those BPS graduates who had enrolled in college ever completed a postsecondary certificate, Associate's or Bachelor's degree within seven years of graduation from high school. Together, the partner organizations implemented a three part strategy: getting ready, getting in, and getting through—to ensure Boston's young people are prepared to meet the challenges of higher education and achieve a degree that will allow them to thrive in the workplace. Recently, Success Boston has expanded its mission to include “getting connected” to the labor market upon graduation from college. In 2014, the Boston Foundation received a grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service to expand this effort. This \$6 million Social Innovation Fund award gives the Foundation the resources necessary to expand Success Boston's transition coaching model from serving 300 to 1,000 students from each of the Boston Public Schools classes of 2015, 2016 and 2017.

About Abt Associates

Founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1965, Abt provides applied research and consulting services to government agencies, philanthropic, nonprofit, and commercial organizations around the world. Abt's mission is to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people worldwide. It applies its exceptional subject matter expertise, outstanding technical capabilities in applied research, and strategic planning to help local, national and international clients make better decisions and deliver better services.

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A Report by Abt Associates

for

Success Boston

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**BOLD
THINKERS
DRIVING
REAL-WORLD
IMPACT**

Success Boston
COLLEGE COMPLETION INITIATIVE

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Introduction

Today, earning a college degree is seen as crucial for future well-being. College graduates earn more, are less likely to suffer job losses in a recession, and are projected to have superior long-term labor market prospects.ⁱ Nationally, more than three of ten jobs already require postsecondary educationⁱⁱ and more than six of ten current jobs are filled by candidates with postsecondary education.ⁱⁱⁱ These figures reflect the competitive advantage of postsecondary education: even when a job does not explicitly require a degree, a candidate with a degree will tend to be hired over an equally qualified candidate without one. By 2020, over 70 percent of Massachusetts jobs are projected to be filled by workers with postsecondary credentials,^{iv} a proportion higher than the state's likely supply of college graduates, creating additional competitive pressure on Massachusetts residents in the labor market. In Boston, the six-year college graduation rate for the city's 2009 public high school graduates who enrolled in college was 51 percent.^v This rate improves upon the 39 percent seven-year rate for 2000 graduates, yet is not sufficient to meet the predicted demand for a college-educated workforce.¹

Students from low-income backgrounds and racial/ethnic minority groups may face social, academic, and logistical barriers to succeeding in college, may lack the supports needed to overcome barriers,^{vi} and may struggle with managing key deadlines, such as financial aid and course registration deadlines.^{vii} One-on-one coaching from experienced counselors when students are completing their senior year in high school and beginning college can help them succeed.^{viii}

Success Boston Coaching: 2013-14 and 2014-15

- During the years covered in this study, seven local nonprofit organizations provided one-on-one coaching to students for their first two years in college. The organizations included: American Student Assistance, Boston Private Industry Council, Bottom Line, Freedom House, Hyde Square Task Force, Sociedad Latina, and West End House. Another nonprofit organization, uAspire, provided financial aid assistance and advising to Success Boston students, as well as training for Success Boston coaches.
- College/university partners included: Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, Bridgewater State University, Bunker Hill Community College, Massachusetts Bay Community College, Northeastern University, Roxbury Community College, Salem State University, Suffolk University, and University of Massachusetts Boston
- Prior research found that more coached students persisted in college than non-coached students^{ix}

¹ A 2008 report, *Getting to the Finish Line: College Enrollment and Graduation, A Seven-year Postsecondary Longitudinal Study of the Boston Public Schools Class of 2000 Graduates*, found that 64% of nearly 3,000 BPS Class of 2000 graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within the first seven years of high school graduation, yet only 35.5% of college enrollees had earned a certificate, a two-year degree, or a four-year degree (Sum et al. 2008). That figure was later revised to 39%.

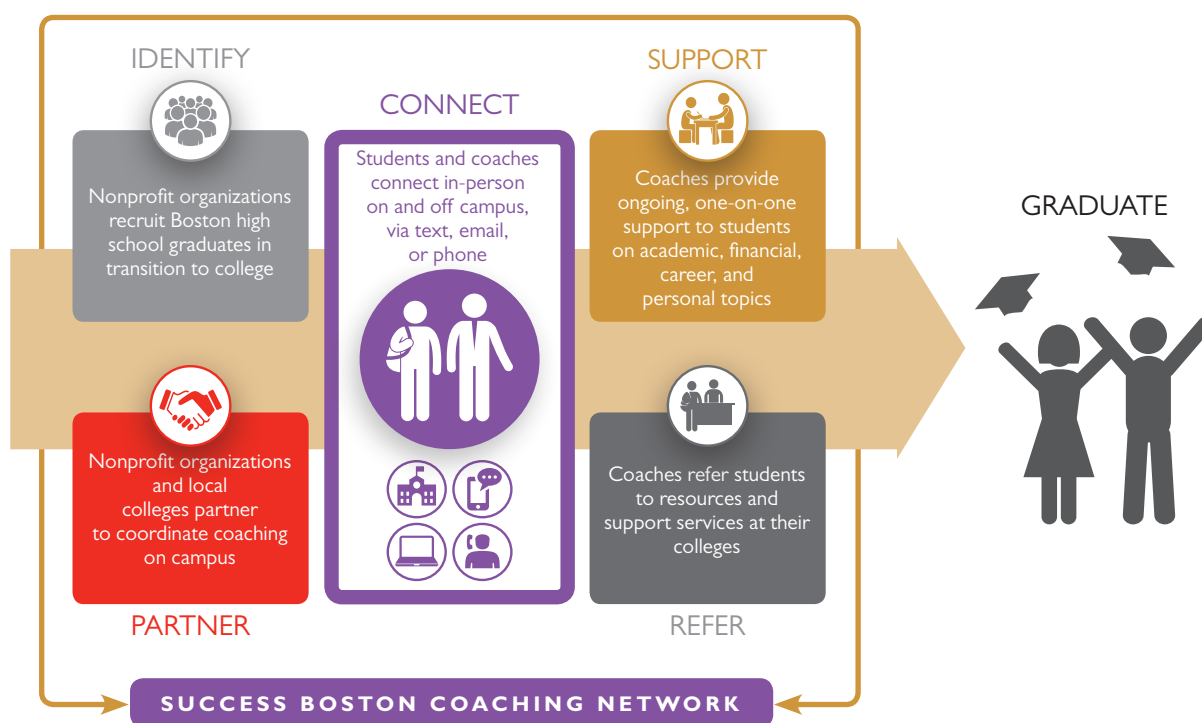
The Success Boston initiative was launched in 2008 specifically to improve Boston public high school graduates' access to and success in college, particularly for members of groups traditionally underrepresented in college degree attainment. Higher college graduation rates, in turn, are expected to increase students' access to employment in such local industries as technology, financial services, higher education, and medical sectors that routinely require advanced training.

The Success Boston initiative unites the Boston Foundation, City of Boston, Boston Public Schools (BPS), University of Massachusetts Boston, Bunker Hill Community College, other regional colleges and universities, uAspire, the Boston Private Industry Council, and other local nonprofit organizations in a concerted effort to improve college completion rates for Boston public school graduates. By offering academic programming and college advising activities in high school, one-on-one coaching support as students move into and through the first two years of college, and close collaboration with local higher education institutions, Success Boston aims to help BPS graduates earn degrees and enter the local workforce successfully. The Boston Foundation is the convening backbone organization of the Success Boston initiative; it funds and supports the nonprofit organizations that provide one of the core programs within the overall initiative: *one-on-one transition coaching*, or Success Boston Coaching (SBC).

Success Boston Coaching

The Boston Foundation funded seven nonprofit organizations to provide coaching for 750+ first- and second-year students enrolled in over 30 nearby colleges during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 years. These seven organizations already had programs for BPS students in place. SBC focuses purposefully on easing the transition from high school to college, and ultimately, increasing college completion. Nonprofit organizations, partner colleges, and the Success Boston network collaborate to provide transition coaching to support students on the path to college graduation (see **Exhibit 1**).

EXHIBIT 1
Success Boston Coaching model



SBC coaches support students throughout the academic year, offering on-demand guidance to help prepare students to navigate, increasingly independently, through to college graduation.² They provide support on life skills, study skills, help-seeking strategies, and academic skills; they help students develop meaningful relationships, clarify goals, access networks, understand college culture, and make college life feasible; and they provide job and career mentoring. Partner colleges communicate with coaches and help

² For a detailed description of how SBC was implemented in the 2014-15 academic year, see the report *Degrees of Coaching: Success Boston's Transition Coaching Model* (Linkow et al. 2015).

coordinate coaching services on their campuses. The SBC network, which the Boston Foundation oversees, facilitates communication across organizations; it also provides coaches access to specialized training about financial aid from uAspire, a national nonprofit organization, as well as access to training on other topics.

Since the Success Boston initiative's start in 2008, SBC has been offered to eight successive cohorts of Boston public high school graduates, starting with the class of 2009.³ An earlier evaluation demonstrated that coaching substantially increased student persistence in college for students from the BPS graduating class of 2009.^x Findings presented in this brief build on the work of Andrew Sum and his colleagues at the former Northeastern University Center for Labor Market Studies, by including additional cohorts of students (classes of 2013 and 2014), by examining academic achievement and FAFSA renewal outcomes in addition to persistence, and by exploring the relationships between implementation and student outcomes.

³ Two later cohorts, college entrants in fall 2015 and fall 2016, participate in an expansion of Success Boston Coaching called Boston Coaching for Completion (BosC4C). Implementation of BosC4C is examined in the 2015-16 Implementation Report (Linkow et al. 2017, *2015-16 Implementation Report: Boston Coaching for Completion (BosC4C)*. Boston, MA: The Boston Foundation.).

Study Design

This brief summarizes results from the second of three reports examining the classes of 2013 and 2014.⁴ Using data from BPS, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE), nine partner colleges, and the SBC program, the full report assesses whether and how coaching affects students' short-term college outcomes.^{xi} The report also examines variation in program impacts according to selected student characteristics and features of coaching. It focuses on two specific cohorts of students who participated in SBC via seven nonprofit organizations: those who graduated from BPS in

Key Design Features

This study employs the strongest design possible to support causal claims about the effects of SBC on students. It:

- Follows students who graduated from Boston and Boston-area public high schools in 2013 and 2014 for two and three years, respectively
- Uses a quasi-experimental design that matches SBC students to similar students who did not participate in coaching to create a comparison group of students as statistically similar as possible on observable characteristics to the treatment students *before* participation in SBC
- Matches on two features guided by best practice in social science methods: *local*—treatment and comparison students are from similar high school environments and identical college settings, and also *focal*—treatment and comparison students are carefully matched to be statistically equivalent on baseline characteristics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, high school academic achievement, socioeconomic status) believed to predict both selection into the SBC program and outcomes of interest^{xv}
- Constructs two groups (one group of treatment and one of comparison students), who are similar on observable characteristics at the beginning of the study, or baseline, to rule out the possibility that baseline characteristics themselves account for any observed differences between SBC and non-coached students
- Uses data from BPS, MA DESE, National Student Clearinghouse, colleges in which BPS students enrolled, and the SBC program database
- Measures three outcome domains: persistence, achievement, and financial aid
- Conducts exploratory analyses to assess whether and how observed impacts of SBC vary as a function of particular student characteristics or features of coaching

2013 and 2014, who have been out of high school for three and two years, respectively, and who entered college in the falls of 2013 and 2014. Because the study uses a rigorous quasi-experimental design, it provides *causal* evidence that observed differences in outcomes between coached and similar non-coached students are due to participation in SBC.

Although quasi-experimental designs that use local and focal matching can generate causal impact estimates, and therefore can approximate results from randomized control trials,⁵ there could be confounding factors not fully accounted for in this design. The matched comparison group does not eliminate bias that a random assignment process generally does, to the extent that observed impacts reflect, in part, the influence of unmeasured individual student characteristics on both participation in coaching and college outcomes. Nonetheless, the SBC recruitment processes and the sample construction each individually and taken together help reduce the likelihood of confounding factors. Students are recruited in SBC through multiple avenues: referrals from high school guidance counselors and other community organizations; nonprofit organizations' middle school and high school programming pipelines; word of mouth; and sometimes from college referrals. The combination of recruitment pathways means that successive cohorts of SBC students likely have differential levels of motivation, attachments to the nonprofit organizations, and willingness to seek support. Also, the study sample uses the most inclusive definition of what it means to be an SBC student: all students initially recruited into the SBC program and who appeared in the program database—including those few without a single recorded interaction with a coach—are considered SBC students. Therefore, the analytic sample includes students whose engagement and participation ranges from minimal to intensive.

The analyses were limited to those students who met the following three specific criteria; they had to:

- enroll in college in the fall after high school graduation
- enroll in a college in which at least one SBC student *and* at least one potential comparison student were enrolled in that given year
- have no missing information on key baseline characteristics (free and reduced-price lunch status and high school GPA) used in the matching process

After applying these criteria, the evaluation sample included up to 722 SBC students and 2,261 non-SBC students; the specific number varies by outcome due to data availability.

The outcomes for this evaluation fall into three domains: persistence, academic achievement, and financial aid (see **Exhibit 2**). Domains with multiple outcomes, persistence and achievement, distinguish between *primary* and *exploratory* outcomes. Primary outcomes are those most closely related to the theory of change, which hypothesizes that the elements of one-on-one coaching that together address logistical, academic, financial, and emotional support topics can improve traditionally underrepresented college students'

⁴ The first report, produced in November 2015, examined how nonprofit partner organizations implemented coaching for 2013 and 2014 high school graduates (Linkow et al. 2015). The third and last report, due out in 2020, will explore long-term outcomes.

⁵ Methodological research using within-study comparisons (or design replication studies) inform best quasi-experimental design practices by comparing impact estimates based on comparison groups constructed by quasi-experimental designs versus those based on experimental designs to identify specific features of quasi-experimental designs that come closest to experimental results. See the full report for more detail.

persistence and completion rates. Exploratory outcomes are also informed by the theory of change, as they may help explain why or why not impacts are detected on the primary outcomes, the most important of which is college completion (e.g., full-time status is not an outcome in and of itself but it is useful to examine because it is related to persistence and, ultimately, completion). This brief focuses on the five primary outcomes (see the full report for a comprehensive discussion of exploratory outcomes).⁶

EXHIBIT 2

Primary outcome measures

DOMAIN	PRIMARY OUTCOME MEASURES
Persistence	Persistence into the Second Year
	Persistence into the Third Year
Achievement	Cumulative GPA
	Good Academic Standing
Financial Aid	FAFSA Renewal

The study purposively limited analysis of outcomes to the two-year period following high school graduation so as to standardize the amount of time elapsed for both 2013 and 2014 high school graduating classes (which means those results can be pooled together), with one exception: persistence into the third year is measured about two and a half years after high school graduation and is only available for the class of 2014.

Definitions of Selected Moderators

Underrepresented minority: categorized as traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education for Black, Hispanic, Native American or Other/Multiracial students and categorized as not traditionally underrepresented for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students.

Frequency: the number of interactions across all modes (in-person, text, email, phone, and social media) between students and their coaches across the same two-year time span as described above, with high frequency measured as more than 9 meetings per year and low frequency measured as 9 or fewer interactions.

The study also considered whether any observed impacts *vary* as a function of particular student characteristics or features of coaching, by exploring how student characteristics and features of coaching are related to the impacts. For example, SBC may have an impact on students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education (and not on those traditionally represented), or a differential impact for students who have experienced more coaching interactions (rather than fewer) during the academic year. In statistical terms, such characteristics and features may *moderate* program impacts.⁷ These analyses are exploratory because: (1) they investigate impacts on subsets of the sample, and because the overall study

⁶ Exploratory outcomes include: continuous enrollment, full-time status, semesters enrolled in non-credit-bearing courses, and credit accumulation.

⁷ Two subgroup categories were created for each moderator. For example, race/ethnicity was structured into two categories (underrepresented and not underrepresented) rather than one category for each of several racial/ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, White, Asian, Native American, and Other/Multiracial), chiefly to ensure that the subgroup sizes would have sufficient statistical power (or be large enough) to detect an impact of coaching, if it exists. This categorization also helps to generate easily interpretable comparisons between subgroups.

sample has been divided into subgroups, the statistical analyses may be less able to detect educationally meaningful program impacts than analyses based on the full sample; and (2) the programmatic features occur only after students have enrolled and begun to participate in the coaching program, and features may reflect students' experiences with coaching or other events. Taken together, these make it difficult to distinguish in outcomes driven by the features of the coaching experienced by students (variation in program impacts), on one hand, and other factors which do not reflect true program impacts, on the other hand.⁸ This brief highlights results for one student characteristic—*underrepresented minority*—and one feature of coaching—*frequency of interactions*.⁹

⁸ Students may experience coaching differently for multiple reasons—many of which can plausibly be accounted for by the matching process used in this study. However, because the matching uses data collected *before* coaching starts, it is still possible that either or both of the following could be related to the features of coaching *and* the outcomes of interest: a) student characteristics that were not captured in the matching (e.g., responsiveness to coaching), or b) students' experiences that occur after matching (e.g., success with college coursework). That possibility means it is not possible to causally link differences in features of coaching to differences in outcomes. For example, a student may struggle in her first year in college, for reasons completely separate from coaching and/or the specific characteristics used in the matching, and that student may seek out coaching support more frequently. In this case, more coaching would be related to poor college outcomes. On the other hand, a student who is succeeding academically, also for reasons that have nothing to do with coaching and characteristics used in the matching, may seek out coaching more frequently to learn about how to do even better. In this case, more coaching would be related to more positive outcomes. In both cases, students are self-selecting into more frequent coaching yet their outcomes are caused by factors unrelated to the effectiveness of coaching.

⁹ Other student characteristics included as moderators in the full report are: gender, high school GPA, and the type of college in which students initially enrolled. The additional features of coaching included in the full report are: duration, content focus, and implementation index score. See the full report for a discussion of variation in impacts by these moderators.

Findings

The one-on-one transition supports provided by SBC improve student outcomes along several important dimensions on the path to college completion, including how long students persist in college, their academic achievement while in college, and their timely completion of applications required to access available federal financial aid. Relying on a rigorous, quasi-experimental design—namely local and focal matching—the results demonstrate that SBC students (the “treatment group” in the evaluation) have better early college outcomes than do their carefully matched peers not participating in SBC (“comparison group”).

Persistence into the Second and Third Years of College

A key premise of the SBC model is that students are more likely to persist in college as coaches help them navigate and manage the academic, financial, logistical, and social-emotional challenges typically faced by beginning college students. To test this hypothesis, this evaluation uses two primary outcome measures to assess persistence: persistence into the second year of college and persistence into the third year of college. These two outcomes measure whether students who enrolled in college after their high school graduation returned to college in the fall of each successive academic year or had already completed a certificate or degree. Persistence into the second year of college indicates whether students in the 2013 and 2014 cohorts enrolled in the fall semester of 2014 and 2015, respectively, or had completed a degree or credential. Correspondingly, persistence into the third year of college reflects whether students in the 2013 cohort enrolled in the fall semester of 2015 or had completed a degree or credential (data on 2014 graduates’ enrollment in fall 2015 were not available in time for analyses described in this report).

SBC STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PERSIST INTO THEIR SECOND AND THIRD YEARS OF COLLEGE THAN NON-COACHED STUDENTS.

SBC students are more likely than students in the comparison group to persist into their second and third years of college. The top two bars in **Exhibit 3** show that 83 percent of SBC students (the treatment group) and 75 percent of non-coached students (the comparison group) persisted into the second year of college. The 8.1 percentage point impact of SBC on persistence is positive, statistically significant, and equivalent to an 11 percent increase in persistence. Both groups persisted into the second year at higher rates than the 72 percent national average for students who started college in fall 2014 (NSC 2016).

Summary of Study Findings



SBC coached students are **11% more likely** than non-coached peers to persist into the second year of college, and **21% more likely** to persist into the third year^a of college than non-coached students.



College GPA of SBC coached students is **8% higher** than that for non-coached students, and SBC coached students spend **10% more time** in good academic standing.



Coached students are **9% more likely** to renew their FAFSA than non-coached students.

^a Third-year persistence rates are based on the 2013 BPS graduates only.

The bottom two bars in **Exhibit 3** show that SBC has an impact on persistence into students' third year of college. The impact into the third year is estimated to be 13 percentage points—equivalent to a 21 percent increase in persistence (because this outcome is measured only for the 2013 cohort, it should be interpreted with caution). Three-quarters (75 percent) of SBC students in the treatment group persisted into the third year of college, whereas less than two-thirds (62 percent) of students in the comparison group did.¹⁰

Key to Exhibits

* Impact is significant at the 5 percent level	Persistence outcomes come from NSC data provided by BPS and MA ESE and college administrative data
† Moderator is significant at the 5 percent level	Academic and FAFSA outcomes come from college administrative data
+ Significance determined with the Benjamini-Hochberg correction.	

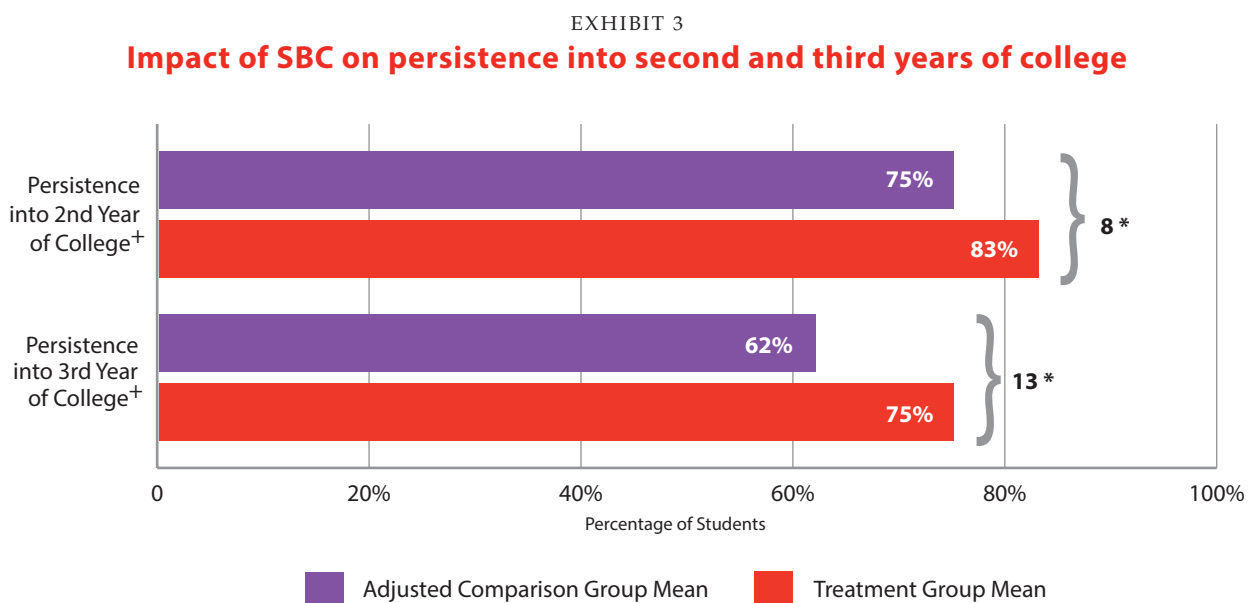


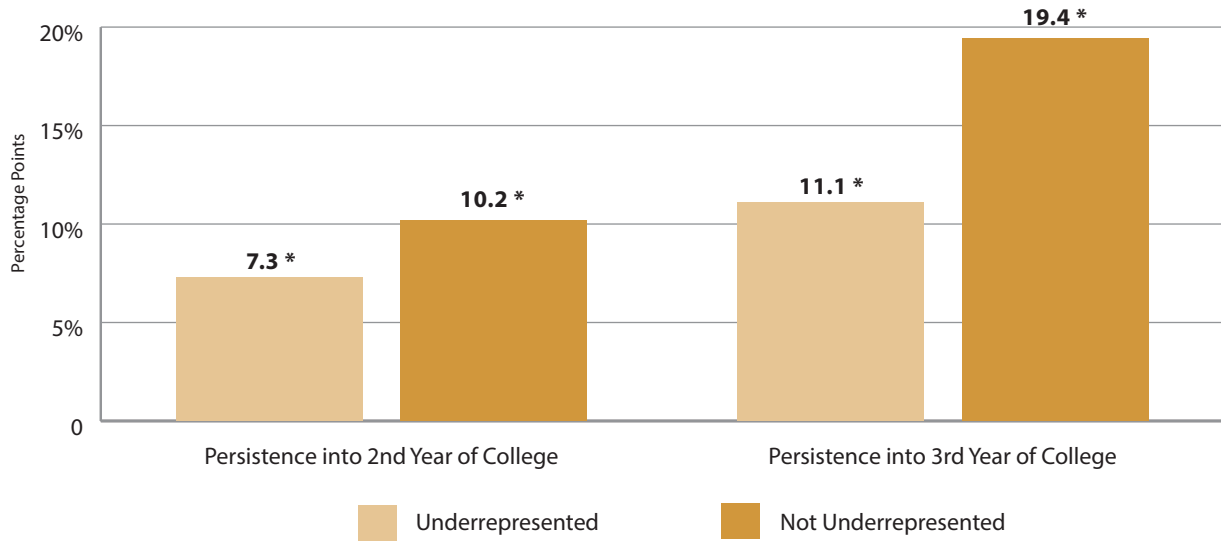
Exhibit 4 displays the impact estimates on second and third year persistence for SBC students compared with non-coached students, by underrepresented minority status. SBC has positive impacts on persistence into the second and third years for both underrepresented minority students and non-underrepresented minority students. While the estimated impacts are larger for not underrepresented students than for underrepresented students, the impacts are not statistically different from each other. That is, the results suggest that coaching is not more effective at getting White and Asian/Pacific Islander students (i.e., those not underrepresented), to persist than it is for Black, Hispanic, Native American and Other/Multiracial students (i.e., those underrepresented).

The impacts on second and third year persistence, as a function of the frequency of coaching interactions experienced by SBC students, are shown in **Exhibit 5**. SBC students who experience higher numbers of

¹⁰ Because there are multiple outcomes within the same domain, the study team applied a statistical adjustment called the Benjamini-Hochberg correction. The Benjamini-Hochberg correction allows researchers to adjust impact estimates when testing multiple outcomes within a single domain; essentially, it accounts for the false discovery rate, that is, it controls for the fact that sometimes statistical significance happens by chance.

EXHIBIT 4

Impact of SBC on persistence into second and third years of college, by underrepresented minority status

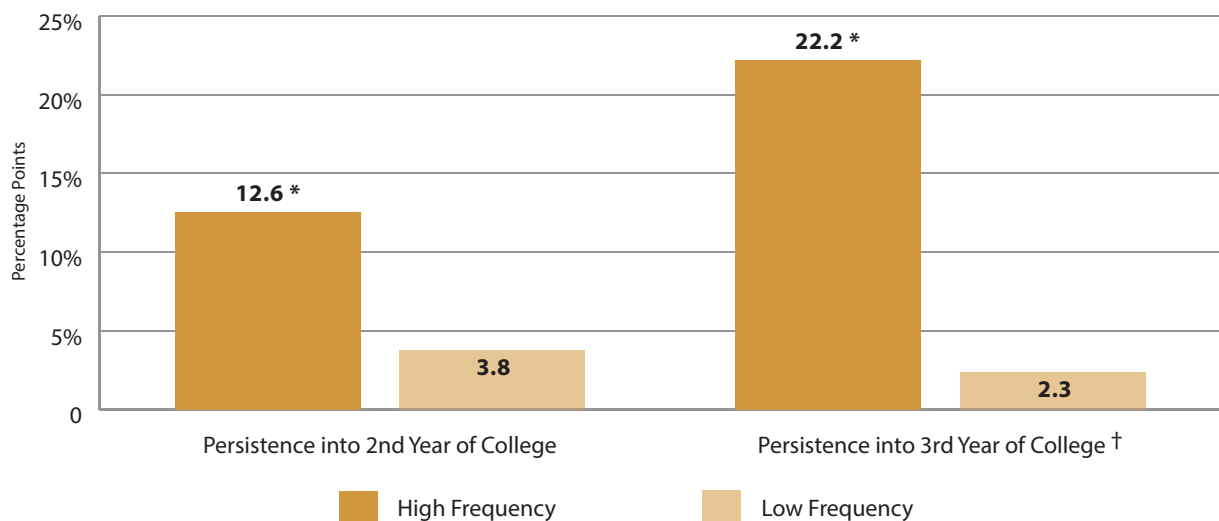


coach-student interactions are more likely than comparison students to persist into the second and third years of college. These results also suggest that the impact of SBC on persistence into the third year is strengthened—that is, larger—for those students who experience more coach-student interactions, as they have higher rates of persistence into the third year of college than students who experience fewer interactions.

The positive findings across both persistence outcomes are noteworthy for two reasons. First, these corroborate Sum and colleagues’ findings that SBC had a positive and statistically significant effect on college persistence (2013 and 2014). Second, the findings are consistent with evaluations of other coaching interventions shown to improve students’ likelihood of college persistence.^{xii}

EXHIBIT 5

Impact of SBC on persistence into second and third years of college, by frequency of coaching interactions





Achievement: Cumulative GPA and Good Academic Standing

Another key hypothesis of the SBC evaluation is that coaching supports can help students manage various academic challenges they may face in college, ranging from difficult coursework to course selection and time management. By helping students access available campus supports and cope with stressors related to collegiate academic demands, coaching can potentially help students improve their academic achievement. SBC implementation data indicate that coach-student interactions during the 2014-15 academic year most commonly addressed academic topics (e.g., reviewing course syllabi, course selection and degree planning, connecting students to on-campus tutoring services); nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of all 8,685 coaching interactions included an academic focus (Linkow et al. 2015).

The analyses described below examine the impact of SBC on two primary outcome measures of academic achievement: cumulative grade point average (GPA) and good academic standing. Cumulative GPA is based upon students' most recent semester enrolled and corresponds with the following values: A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0. Good academic standing reflects whether students maintained semester-specific and cumulative GPAs of 2.0 or better, or earned more than 66 percent of credits attempted in a given semester, and is represented as a proportion of the number of semesters spent in good academic standing out of the maximum of four possible semesters.

Cumulative GPA

SBC students are maintaining higher cumulative grade point averages (2.45 vs. 2.26) than comparison students. The impact of SBC on cumulative GPA is statistically significant, although the magnitude of the impact is fairly modest, about one-fifth of one point (see **Exhibit 6**).

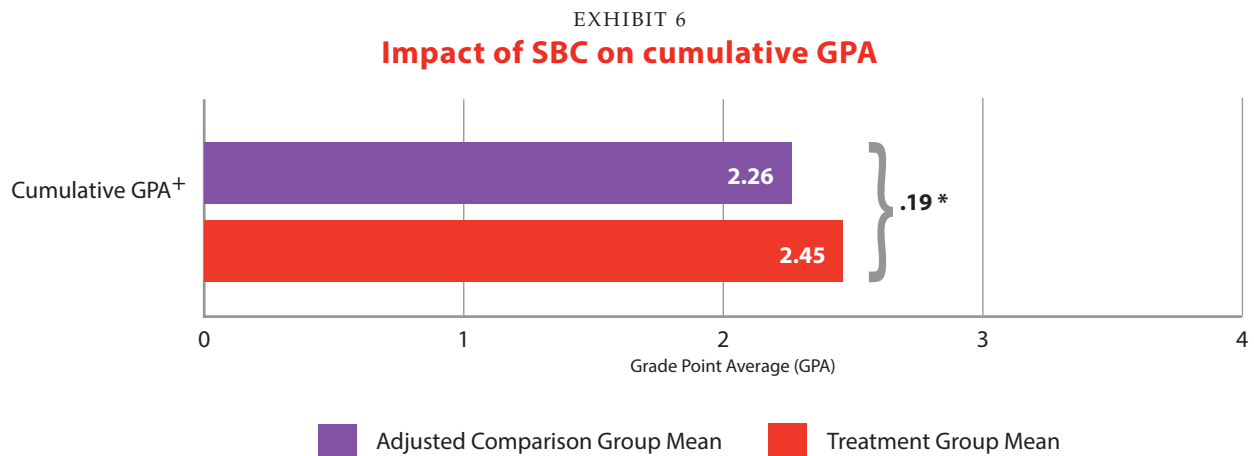
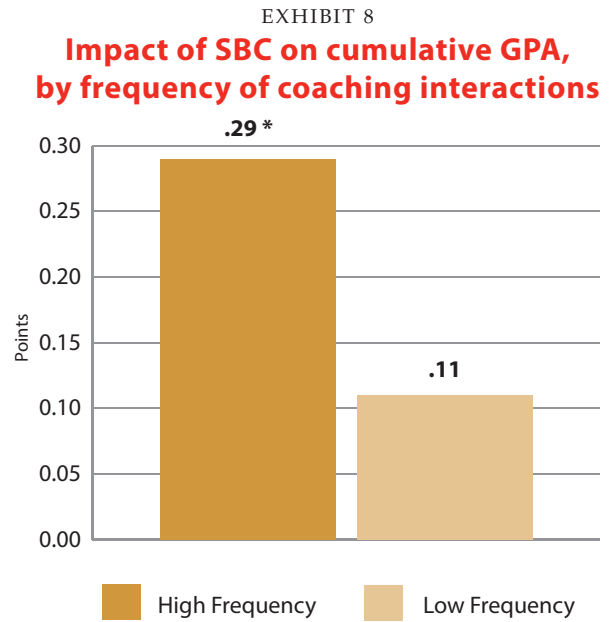
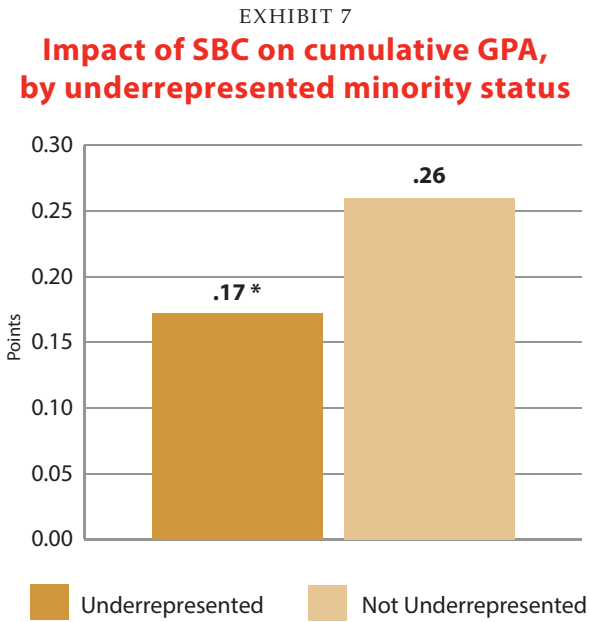


Exhibit 7 displays the impact estimates on cumulative GPA for SBC students compared with non-coached students, by underrepresented minority status. SBC students from traditionally underrepresented minority groups have higher cumulative GPAs than comparison students. While SBC students from non-underrepresented groups also have higher GPAs than comparison students, that difference is not statistically significant.

SBC students are more likely than comparison students to achieve higher cumulative GPAs if they experience more coach interactions (see **Exhibit 8**).



Good Academic Standing

SBC students are estimated to spend more semesters in good academic standing (78 percent of semesters) than are non-coached students in the comparison group (71 percent of semesters). The statistically significant 7 percentage point impact on time spent in good academic standing could translate into faster pathways to college completion, as students in good standing are not placed on academic probation, which too often means that students lose momentum whether by taking subsequent semesters off and/or losing financial aid for the next semester.

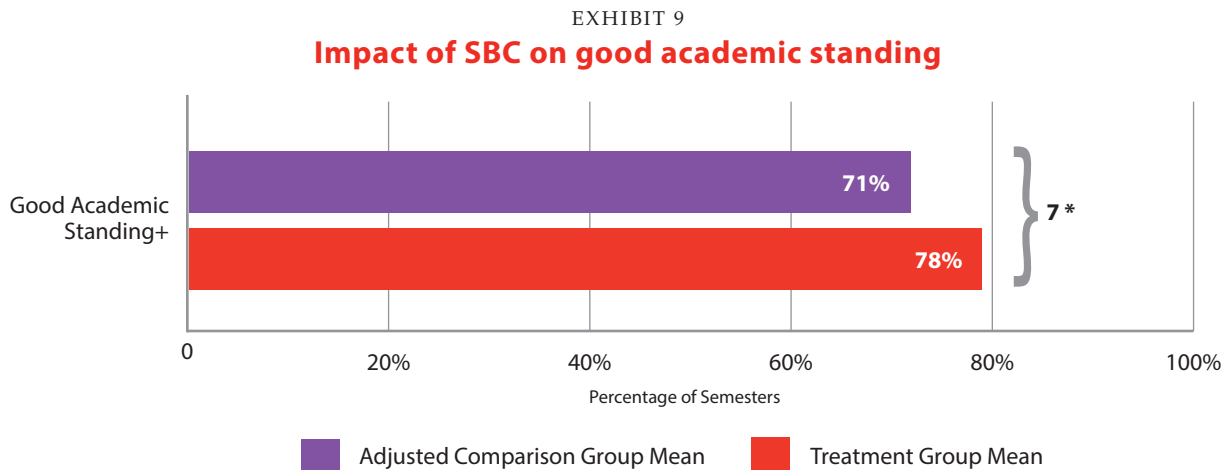
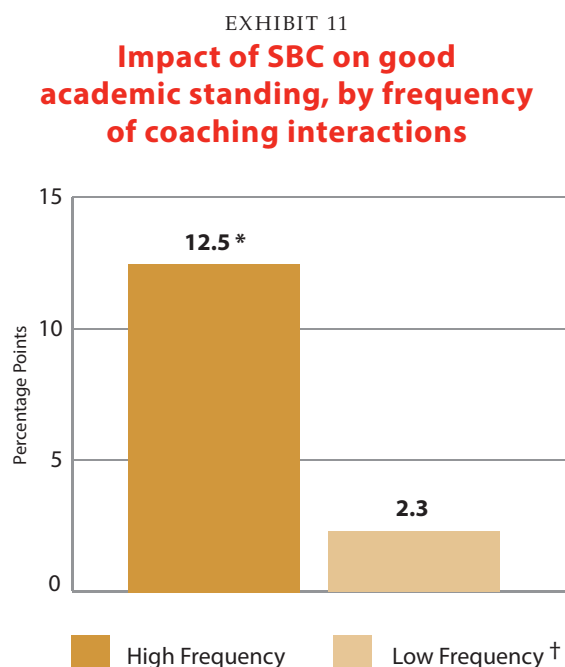
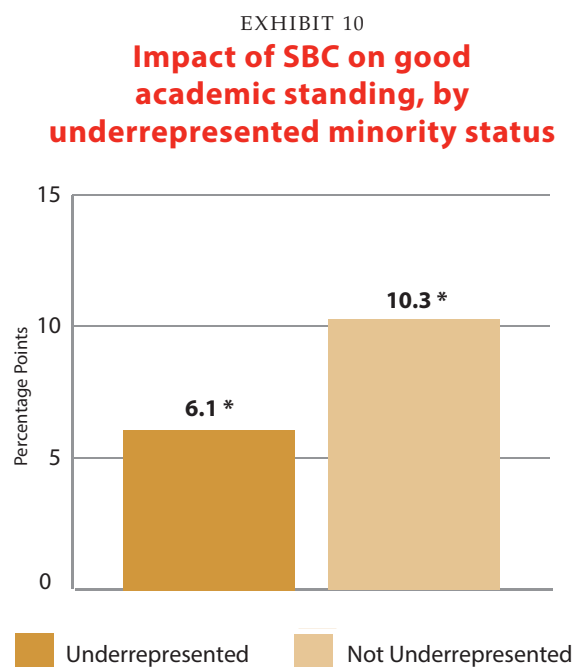


Exhibit 10 displays the impact estimates on good academic standing for SBC students compared with non-coached students, by underrepresented minority status. SBC has positive impacts on good academic standing for both underrepresented minority students and non-underrepresented minority students.

SBC students are more likely than comparison students to spend more semesters in good academic standing if they experience more coach interactions (see **Exhibit 11**). The results also suggest that the impacts of SBC on semesters spent in good academic standing are stronger for students who experience more rather than fewer interactions.

Over half of the coaching interactions recorded in 2014-2015 covered academic topics. These results suggest that this support had an impact on SBC students' academic success during their first two years in college.



FAFSA Renewal



One SBC goal is to help students navigate the financial aid process, and presumably help reduce the gap between the cost of college and what students can actually afford. Consequently, the study examines students' Free Application for Federal Student Aid renewal, to measure whether students complete and submit FAFSA renewal applications for their second year of college, unlocking access to federal student aid.

Exhibit 12 shows that although the majority of both groups of students renew their FAFSAs, SBC students in the treatment group renew at a higher rate; the difference in renewal rates (7 percentage points) is positive, statistically significant, and equivalent to a 9 percent increase. Among SBC students, 85 percent renewed their FAFSA for their second year of college, versus 78 percent of comparison students.

SBC STUDENTS WHO INTERACT MORE FREQUENTLY WITH THEIR COACH ARE MORE LIKELY THAN NON-SBC STUDENTS TO RENEW THEIR FAFSAS

That high proportions of SBC and non-coached students in the group renew their FAFSAs for their second year in college reflects the high proportion of students eligible for federal financial aid in the study sample; specifically, approximately 87 percent of SBC students and 84 percent of comparison students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in high school.

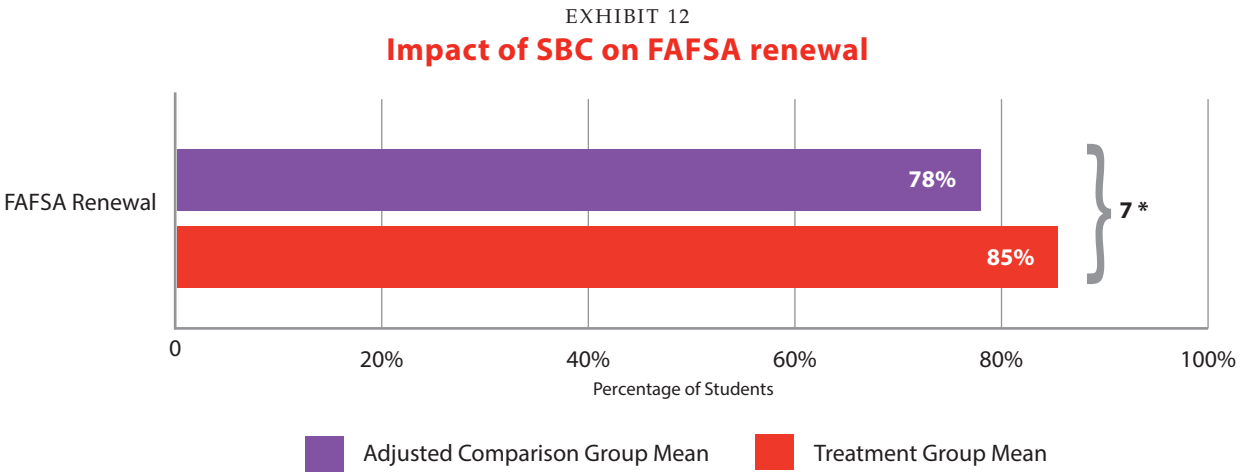
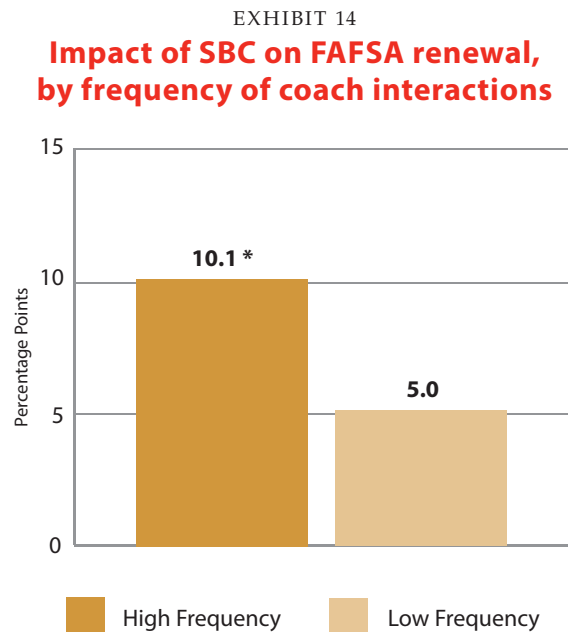
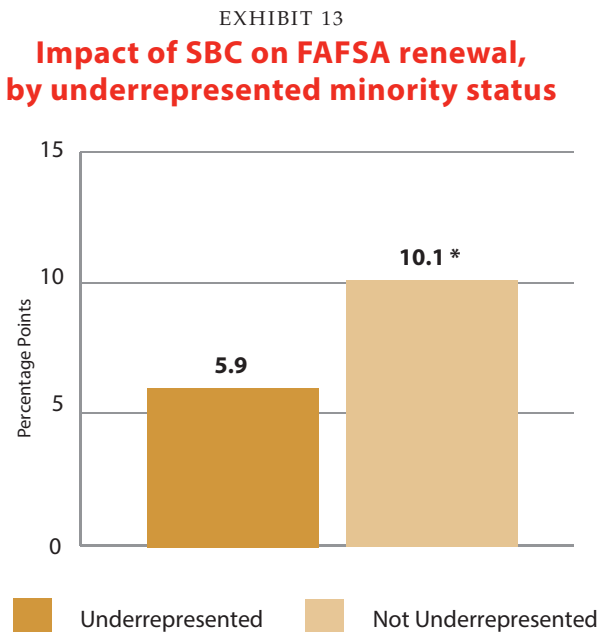


Exhibit 13 displays the impact estimates of SBC on FAFSA renewal for SBC students compared with non-coached students, as a function of underrepresented minority status. SBC students renew their FAFSAs at higher rates than comparison students if they are not from a traditionally underrepresented minority group. The impact on FAFSA renewal for SBC students from underrepresented groups, while positive, is not statistically significant.

Similar to the results for persistence, cumulative GPA, and good academic standing, SBC students are more likely than comparison students to renew their FAFSAs if they experience more coach interactions overall (see **Exhibit 14**). SBC students renew their FAFSAs at a higher rate than comparison students, which may make the second year of college more affordable for SBC students.



Discussion

Success Boston Coaching provides multi-faceted resources to participating students, including supports that, individually, have demonstrably improved outcomes for college-entering students.^{xiii} SBC supports include knowledge of the college, relationship-building, logistics assistance, nudges and reminders to complete time-sensitive tasks, proactive outreach, meeting students where they are, time management skills, helping students become more self-sufficient, and providing social-emotional supports.

THE EFFECTS OF SBC CAN BE CHARACTERIZED AS POSITIVE AND LARGE.

Perhaps uniquely so, SBC integrates these different features into a single intervention that improves students' outcomes across all three outcome domains examined (persistence, achievement, and financial aid).

The magnitude of the SBC impacts estimated in this analysis is generally comparable to those for similar programs focused on improving college student outcomes.^{xiv} These other studies have observed effects on college persistence and achievement equivalent to about 10-15 percent increases over the control group means. The estimated impacts of SBC on persistence into the third year¹¹ and on FAFSA renewal, however, are larger than typically seen in the literature. Overall, then, that means the effects of SBC can be characterized as positive and large.

The 2015 SBC implementation report documents the intensity of coaching; it describes how SBC coaches provided students with an average of four hours of one-on-one coaching, typically delivered through eight 30-minute in-person meetings. Additionally, coaches interacted with students via email and text message, corresponding to approximately 1.4 interactions a month over the academic year. The impact results suggest that the SBC model has meaningful and significant promise. A model in which professional coaches deliver sustained, proactive, and responsive support within a larger education network may not necessarily need to be "high touch" to accomplish the overarching program goal: to move more students more quickly and effectively along the pathway to college completion.

SBC HAS LARGER IMPACTS ON STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE MORE, COMPARED TO FEWER, INTERACTIONS.

Examining variation in impacts as a function of how SBC students experience coaching (e.g., frequency of interactions) provides some evidence that the impacts of coaching vary in important ways. Specifically, there are statistically significant impacts on students who experience more coaching interactions overall. The exploratory analyses also indicate that impacts vary across particular features of coaching; SBC has larger impacts on students who experience more, compared to fewer, interactions. The frequency of coaching interactions may moderate some of the impacts, such that coaching has a stronger effect when students experience 10 or more interactions during the year, or at least once a month during a typical academic year. This result can inform decisions about

¹¹ Recall that this outcome is measured only for the fall 2013 cohort.

program implementation—specifically, about how often coaches should interact with students to yield positive student outcomes.

The results reported here demonstrate that SBC is having the desired effects on students from Boston. SBC participants are persisting longer, achieving higher academic progress, and taking the necessary steps to maintain funding for college—all good signs of progress toward college completion. The study will continue to monitor students' progress over the next several years, culminating in a 2020 report on impacts as of five and six years after high school graduation. That report will help address questions about whether the positive impacts reported here persist, and whether Success Boston has continued to progress toward its central goal: at least 70 percent of BPS college entrants earning college credentials.

Endnotes

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