

Realizing the Promise: From Access to Academic Success

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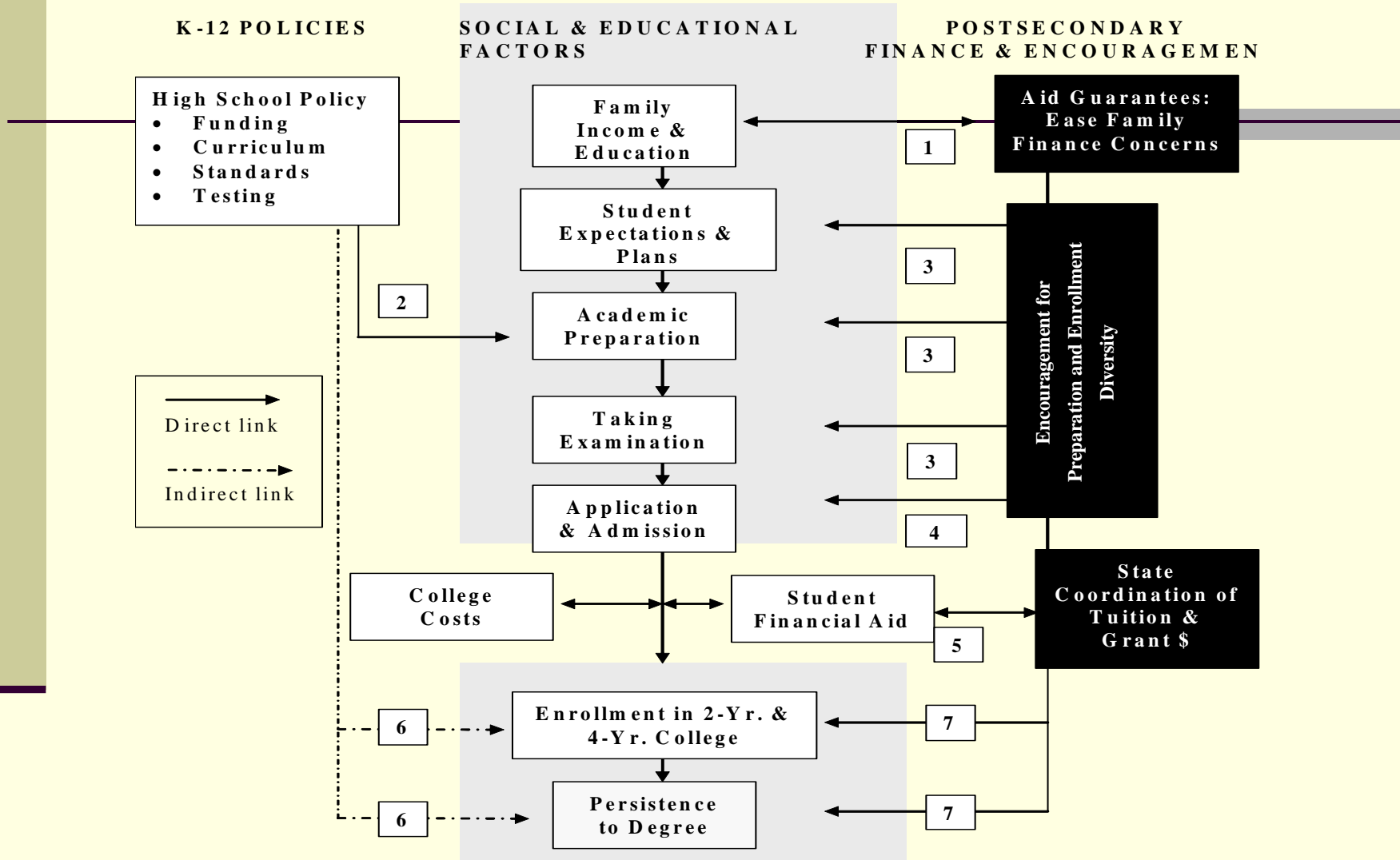
Realizing the Promise: From Access to Academic Success

- Realizing the Promise: Framing Evaluation Research
 - The Role of Aid Guarantees for Low-Income Students
 - Balanced Model for Research on Access and Academic Success
- What have we learned from studies of other programs?
 - Twenty-first Century Scholars
 - Washington State Achievers
 - Gates Millennial Scholars Program
- Implications for Evaluation of North Carolina Covenant
- Concluding Reflections

The Role of Aid Guarantees for Low-Income Students

- Potential Outcomes
 - Early guarantees can improve
 - Aspirations for college
 - Preparation for college
 - Application for college
 - Guaranteed Aid at Admission
 - Opportunity to enroll in selective college
 - Academic and social engagement during college
 - Persistence and degree attainment
- Evaluation challenges
 - Use sound logical models in evaluation designs
 - Consider competing explanations of outcomes
 - Use data with comparable students that do not receive similar awards (e.g. random assignment), or
 - Address selection issues (consider instrumental variables or regression discontinuity)
- Evaluation studies of program that provide aid guarantees

FIGURE 1
A Balanced Framework for the Study of College Access and Success: Linking K-12 and Postsecondary Policies to Preparation, College Choice, and Persistence



Source: Adapted Balanced Access Model from St. John, 2003

Programs With Aid Guarantees

- Twenty-first Century Scholars
 - Guarantees aid for low-income 8th graders who take pledge
 - Encourages college preparatory curriculum
 - Requires college application
 - Some colleges align support services and aid
 - Student receive supplemental funding if they enroll in-state
- Washington State Achievers
 - Funds high school reforms in selected high schools
 - Selects students during junior year for scholarship program (using non cognitive variables)
 - Encourages academic preparation and requires application
 - Provides mentoring in high school and college
 - Provides “last dollar” grant up to fixed maximum
 - Students receive grants if they enrolled in-state as freshman (transfer possible)
- Gates Millennial Scholars
 - Qualified students of color: high GPA, low-income, leadership
 - Selects 1,000 students per year
 - Selection based on non cognitive variables
 - Last dollar no limit for awards for
 - Undergraduates in any college
 - Graduates in preferred fields

Twenty-first Century Scholars

- Studies to date
 - Used 1999 high school seniors (8th grade survey, aid applications, college enrollment)
 - Initial study: Improved odds of enrollment, especially in two-year and private colleges
 - Follow-up study: Four-year persistence and degree attainment similar for awardees and other aid recipients (and other low-income students)
- Planned studies
 - Qualitative studies of student (by IUPUI and Purdue)
 - Six-year persistence attainment with 1999 cohort (with tests for selection and, if necessary, instrument variables)
 - Analyses of preparation and persistence with 2000 cohort (includes College Board data on preparation)
 - Development of a new cohort to examine effects of utilization of program services
- Study findings are encouraging, but need to
 - Explore new questions, and
 - Refine evaluation methods

Washington State Achievers

- Studies of students in WSA and 'comparison' high schools
 - Demographic analyses indicate school effects on college enrollment in four-year colleges in third year (Charles Hirschman and colleagues, University of Washington)
 - Evaluation studies indicate impact on aspirations, enrollment, and (especially) enrollment in four-year colleges; also confirm third year effect (St. John & Hu)
- NORC tracking study of scholarship applicants (recipients/non recipients)
 - Evidence of more leadership activities by recipients than non recipients (Sedlacek, University of Maryland)
 - Evidence from evaluations of improved
 - Choice of four-year colleges, especially private institutions
 - Persistence, through improved college choices
 - Student academic and community engagement, through improved college choice and aid awards (St. John & Hu)
- In Process:
 - Tracking study of students in treatment and comparable high schools
 - Enable further testing of issues related to selection Re: school & aid effects

Gates Millennial Scholars

- NORC longitudinal files of Qualified Applications (Recipients/Non recipients)
- Recent studies have tested for selection bias
 - Tests of selection bias indicate no selection problems for analyses of student academic success and persistence, although more analyses of selection were recommended (DesJardins)
 - Regression discontinuity analyses of selection cut point for key outcomes indicates effects on persistence and grades (DesJardins & McCall)
- Evaluation studies using NORC Surveys indicate receipt of GMS improved
 - Choice of four-year college, private college, and selective colleges
 - Academic and social engagement during college (possible interaction with non cognitive selection variables)
 - Enrollment in graduate school, especially in education
 - Taking jobs related to academic majors (employment congruence)

What Have we Learned?

Summary of Evidence

- Strong evidence that early grant guarantees improve
 - Preparation and application (especially when coupled with school reforms)
 - Enrollment in four-year colleges
- Strong evidence that receiving adequate aid (sufficient to reduce unmet need and borrowing) improves academic success for low-income students, including
 - Persistence and degree completion
 - Academic and community engagement during college
 - Graduate education (when additional aid provided)
 - Employment in related fields
- We need to continue to refine data collection and analyses methods for evaluations of student aid programs, especially when guarantees are used to encourage low-income students

Implications for Evaluations of North Carolina Covenant: Evaluating Effects on Applications and Enrollment

- Potential impact of “promise”
 - Increased applications for low-income residents and non residents
 - Improve qualifications low-income applications
 - Improved enrollment by accepted low-income applicants
- Potential data sources
 - Multiple years of applicant and enrollment data and UNC (approach used in institutional research)
 - State level cohort data (similar to Indiana studies)
 - Tracking studies of high school students problematic, given limitations of ‘choice’ (i.e., surveys of high school students tracking into college)

Implications for Evaluations of North Carolina Covenant: Evaluating Effects on Academic Success

- Potential Outcomes Related to Academic Success
 - Major choices (eliminating/reducing effects of debt)
 - Academic and community engagement (requires NSSE or other surveys)
 - Achievement in college (grades and other intermediate outcomes)
 - Persistence and degree attainment
- Potential data sources
 - Tracking student population (UNC cohorts)
 - Surveys of students: Expanding NSSE and initiating new surveys
 - Tracing NC cohorts (Indiana approach)
 - Surveys tracing applicants, including students who do not enroll (GMS approach)
- Analysis issues
 - Non random assignment of awards
 - May need either instrumental variables or regression discontinuity

Concluding Reflections

- Research indicates a critical need for programs that ensure low-income students the opportunity to enroll and persist in four-year colleges
- The early research on programs with aid guarantees indicates improved opportunity to:
 - Enroll in four-year colleges
 - Engage academically and socially during college
 - Complete degrees
 - Find employment compatible with degree
- The standards for evaluation research are changing, so the research community is responding
- We should learn from this history in research of the UNC program and others that provide aid guarantees

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 - Early academic behaviors of Washington State Achievers, William E. Sedlacek and hung-Bin Sheu (195-210)
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