Early Commitment
Financial Aid Programs—
Do They Increase Access?

Presentation to
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Association (NSPA)
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Purposes:

Encourage further education for economically disadvantaged student

By guaranteeing financial aid, if they act responsibly

(i.e., they meet prescribed requirements)
Core Criteria

(1) a guarantee of financial assistance for college,

(2) available only to economically disadvantaged students who, without special support, are not likely to go to college, and

(3) students enter the program while they are in elementary, middle, or early secondary school.
Overview

- Types
- Characteristics
- Research
- Guidelines
Private Types

- I Have a Dream
- Taylor Plan
- Project GRAD
- Washington State Achievers Program
Public Types

- Indiana’s Twenty-first Century Scholars Program
- Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program (OHLAP)
- Rhode Island’s Children Crusade
- GEAR UP
- D.C. Tuition Assistance Program (TAG)
- More Coming Along Each Year
Related Programs

- **State financial aid programs**
  - Georgia’s Hope Scholarship
  - Florida’s Bright Futures
  - Nevada’s Millennium Scholarship
  - New Mexico’s Lottery Scholarship

- **Institutional financial aid programs**
  - Princeton
  - Carolina Covenant
  - University of Virginia’s UVAccess
  - Compact for Success – San Diego State University and Sweetwater Union High School District
  - Et al copy cats (Colorado, Washington, etc.)
Program Characteristics
(And Strengths & Weaknesses of Each)

- Promise from both the provider and recipient
- Graduation from a high school in the state
- Achievement of a minimum grade point average
- Successful completion of a core curriculum or specific coursework
- No use of illegal drugs or alcohol or involvement in criminal activity
- Application for admission to a public, and sometimes a private, postsecondary institution in the state
- Submission of a federal and state financial aid application form
- Participation in support activities for students selected to be in the early commitment program.
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Research

- Twenty-first Century Scholars
- Washington State Achievers
- OHLAP
- Project GRAD
- D.C. TAP
Indiana’s Twenty-first Century Scholars

• Eighth graders who participated were more likely to apply to college than their peers (St. John, et. al.)

• 64 percent of scholars enrolled in Indiana public institutions, 15 percent enrolled in private colleges, and an estimated 5 percent probably enrolled out of state, leaving about 15 percent who did not enroll in any postsecondary institution.

• In contrast, 44 percent of non-Scholars did not enroll in college.
“Because the Twenty-first Century Scholars awards increased the chances that low-income students will enroll in college, and because these students persisted as well as did other financial aid recipients, we can conclude that the program substantially increased the number of low-income students who attained at least one year of college.”
Washington State Achievers

- Students who did not apply for the Achievers program had lower odds of enrolling in college than students in comparison schools
OHLAP

- OHLAP students enroll in higher education the year following high school at a much higher rate than all Oklahoma high school graduates
  - In 2003: 81% of OHLAP graduates went on to college compared to 56% of all Oklahoma high school graduates

- 6-year degree completion rate was higher for OHLAP students than all students
  - Class of 1998: 56.7% of OHLAP scholarship recipients completed a bachelor’s in state vs. 42% of all first-time freshmen
OHLAP college freshmen:

- Fewer required remediation than did all freshmen
- Higher percentage had a GPA of 2.0 or more than did all freshmen
- Higher percentage enroll full time than did all undergraduates
Project GRAD

- Prior to starting a GRAD program, one of the Houston high schools had fewer than 20 graduates enroll in college annually. Since the first class of graduating scholars in 1992, the school has seen an average of 110 per year.

- But program sustainability is an issue.
D.C. residents can attend public institutions in other states at in-state rates; students selecting private nonprofit institutions in the D.C. metropolitan area or any private non-profit historically black institution receive grants.

- **23 percent increase** in the number of D.C. residents reported as first-time freshmen by colleges and universities in the nation between 1998 and 2002 (Kane, 2004).

- Additionally, between 1999 and 2001, there was a **15 percent increase** in the number of FASFA applications submitted by dependent first-time freshmen in D.C.

- **21 percent increase** in the number of first-time freshman Pell Grant recipients from D.C.

- The number of high school graduates remained flat over this period.
Research

- Very limited
- Often only descriptive in nature
- Not easily available
- For national programs, incomplete
  - Not strong results apparent from TRIO programs
Guidelines

- Be clear on program goals and expectations
- Provide for fiscal sustainability (and leadership transferability)
- Require periodic program assessment
- Invest in support programs and outreach
- Explore the value of public/private partnerships
- Link early notification and qualification to other federal programs
Do early financial aid commitment programs increase access?

- Research suggests: yes, but…
- At what price?
- For whom?
- For how many?
- Just access, or success, too?
WI CHE Projects on Financial Aid

- Changing Direction - Lumina Foundation

  - State Financial Aid: Policies to Enhance Articulation and Transfer
  - Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy: The State Legislative Perspective
  - Linking Tuition and Financial Aid Policy: The Gubernatorial Perspective
  - Informing Public Policy: Financial Aid and Student Persistence
  - Integrating Financial Aid and Financing Policies: Case Studies from Five States
  - Policies in Sync: Appropriations, Financial Aid and Financing for Higher Education
  - Accelerated Learning Options: State and Institutional Policies and Practices
Studies To Come

- In Process:
  - Portable Financial Aid
  - Projecting State Need-based Aid

- Proposed:
  - Residency: State Policies and Practices
Other Resources

- *Knocking at the College Door* - projections of graduates by family income
- E-mail *Policy Alerts*
- E-mail *Stat Alerts*
- SPIDO (State Policy Inventory Database Online)