

Research Summary of Effective Student Support Services Models



SOVA conducted a review of research on the effectiveness of both comprehensive and smaller-scale student support service programs that have a robust evidence base, as well as research on some of the most common individual program components – advising, financial supports, etc.

In conducting this review we identified student support service programs that were included in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), a federally curated resource library that catalogues research and evaluation studies that undergo rigorous review and represent the best-in-class research available. Where the WWC was limited in specific areas of interest, we identified other high-quality research from trusted sources.

Topline Takeaways: Program Outcomes

- Large comprehensive student support service programs such as Accelerated Study in Associate Program (ASAP) and TRIO Student Support Services showed **positive outcomes in credit accrual, persistence, and completion.**
- Smaller programs offering fewer services showed some **promising, though more limited, results.**

Components of individual programs are intertwined, so implementing some but not all of the components may not achieve the outcomes identified in studies of the programs' effectiveness — the research does not demonstrate which components or combination of components would produce the best result. However, improvement of practice or expansion of services offered is likely to have some net positive effects on student outcomes above base-line.

Top-Line Takeaways: Component Outcomes

When reviewing specific support services that are commonly a part of holistic models or are delivered on their own, we find a robust evidence base for several discrete student support services programs including advising, first-year experience courses, and financial assistance.

- Advising using effective systems and practices has been found to have **significant positive effects on persistence, completion, and credit-accumulation.**
- Evidence on **first-year experience courses shows positive effects**, though the research base is limited.
- There is **mixed and inconsistent evidence that financial support** such as tuition waivers, assistance in purchasing textbooks, financial incentives, and financial counseling to reduce students' financial stress is positively related to outcomes.

What Does it All Mean?

Understanding the robust evidence around effectiveness of identified student support service programs, as well as common program components, can help guide conversations and decision-making on the most effective ways to support students. **We intend this information as a conversation starter; to be a resource for organizations looking to begin or expand their student support offerings; and to inform design and implementation of effective programs to support desired student outcomes.**

In the pages that follow, Sova provides a snapshot of the reviewed programs and common components, as well as synopses of related student outcomes.

Programs Included in Research Review

[Accelerated Study in Associate Program \(ASAP\)](#)

[TRIO Student Support Services \(SSS\)](#)

[Inside Track](#)

Meal Voucher Program (MVP)

[Single Stop USA](#)

[Opening Doors Learning Communities](#)

[One Million Degrees](#)

Comparison of Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and TRIO Student Support Services (SSS)

	ASAP	ASAP Ohio Demonstration ¹	TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSS)
Transitional Support Services²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocked Courses and Individualized Course Scheduling Approved Majors and Academic Maps Structured Pathways to Support Academic Momentum Immediate and Continuous Enrollment in Developmental Supports Winter and Summer Courses Campus-Based Recruitment Early Engagement and Community Building including comprehensive intake, enrollment in developmental supports, ASAP institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority registration and blocked courses First-year seminar Summer Courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be provided: Advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection Must be provided: Activities designed to assist students enrolled in 2-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, a 4-year program of postsecondary education Must be provided: Activities designed to assist participants enrolled in 4-year institutions of higher education in applying for admission to, and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in, graduate and professional programs
Academic Support Services³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying Student Support Levels Minimum Levels of Advisor Contact and Modes of Support. Average advisor caseload 60:1 to 80:1. Academic Support Services ASAP Career Development Services Full-time ASAP staff dedicated to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum Levels of Advisor Contact and Modes of Support in 1st semester. Starting in 2nd semester and extending through the end of the 3-year program, advisers sort students into low-, medium-, and high-need groups, for which the advising requirements differ. Typical advisor case load approximately 125 students. Career development services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be provided: Academic tutoring, directly or through other services provided by the institution, to enable students to complete postsecondary courses, which may include instruction in reading, writing, study skills, mathematics, science, and other subjects

¹ Three programs in colleges in OH based on the CUNY ASAP model: CState Accelerate at Cincinnati State; Degree in Three at Cuyahoga Community College; and Students Accelerating in Learning at Lorain County Community College

² E.g. application assistance, enrollment counseling, and assistance in course selection

³ E.g. tutoring, academic counseling, office hours, assistance applying to graduate and professional programs, and career counseling

	ASAP	ASAP Ohio Demonstration ¹	TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSS)
	comprehensive, personalized advisement and career development services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced tutoring: students in developmental education courses required to attend at least three hours of tutoring per month Advisers and program directors fully dedicated to the program in first two years of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be provided: Individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic matters provided by assigned counselors May be provided: Information, activities, and instruction designed to acquaint students participating in the project with the range of career options available to the students
Financial Support Services⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition waivers for students in receipt of financial aid with a gap need Textbook assistance Financial assistance for winter and summer course-taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition waivers for students in receipt of financial aid with a gap need Textbook assistance Monthly \$50 incentive (gift cards from stores in the area where students could purchase groceries or gas) Financial assistance for summer course-taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be provided: Information on both the full range of Federal student financial aid programs and benefits (including Pell Grants and loan forgiveness) and resources for locating public and private scholarships Must be provided: Assistance in completing financial aid applications, including the FAFSA Must be provided: Education or counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy of students, including financial planning for postsecondary education
Community-based Support Services⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach Strategies and Workshops Strategic Relationships with engaging city agencies, high schools, high school equivalency (HSE) programs, and community based organizations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be provided: Exposure to cultural events and academic programs not usually available to disadvantaged students May be provided: Mentoring programs involving faculty or upper class students, or a combination thereof

⁴ E.g. scholarship assistance, programs to improve financial and economic literacy, financial aid support, and personal budget planning support

⁵ E.g. mentoring programs, volunteer experiences, cultural events, networking opportunities, professional development, leadership training, career immersion programs, resume building, and interview preparedness

	ASAP	ASAP Ohio Demonstration ¹	TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSS)
Other Support Services⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connecting Students to Supports Outside the Program including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ campus childcare ○ counseling ○ disability services, ○ financial services such as Single Stop, an on-campus center that provides free tax preparation and screens for social service benefits. ● ASAP advisors also refer students to trusted community-based resources for a variety of needs, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ legal ○ medical ○ mental health ○ social services ● ASAP advisors encourage students to take advantage of opportunities such as student clubs, student council, and community service projects. ● ASAP Peer Mentors 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● May be provided: Securing temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for students who are homeless children and youths or were formerly homeless children and youths; and foster care youths. ● May be provided: Programs and activities specially designed for students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, students who are individuals with disabilities, students who are homeless children and youths, students who are foster care youth, or other disconnected students
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Credit Accrual: ASAP students earned an average of 48 credits in 3 years, 9 credits more than non-participating students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A comparison of the two-year results from the Ohio evaluation with MDRC’s evaluation of CUNY ASAP shows that the Ohio programs were largely able to achieve the same net 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Persistence in 2-Year Institutions: By the fall of the fourth year of college, 51% of SSS participants in the 2004/09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study

⁶ E.g. healthcare services, programs to address food insecurity, child care costs, securing temporary housing for students experiencing homelessness, financial support beyond cost of attendance, alumni programs, wellness programs, social-emotional support, and annual conferences or summits

	ASAP	ASAP Ohio Demonstration ¹	TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSS)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Completion: By the end of the study period, 40% of ASAP students had received a degree, compared with 22% of non-participating students. ● Persistence: At that point, 25% of ASAP students were enrolled in a 4-year school, compared with 17% of non-participating students. <p>Scrivener, Weiss, Ratledge, Rudd, Sommo, Fresques (2015)⁷</p>	<p>effects as CUNY ASAP, and in some cases were able to exceed them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Persistence: Beginning in the first semester, there is a statistically significant estimated effect on enrollment of 4 percentage points. The effect on enrollment grows to 12 percentage points in the second semester and remains above 9 percentage points through the end of the four-semester follow-up period. The effect on full-time enrollment, a requirement of the program, is even larger. In the first semester, there is an estimated 18 percentage point effect on full-time enrollment. The effect remains large throughout the rest of the follow-up period, ranging from 11 to 19 percentage points. ● Credit accumulation: Program participants earned roughly two credits more than the control group per semester, for a total increase of eight credits at the end of four semesters, a 37% increase in credits earned after two years. ● Completion: After two years (or four semesters), 19% of program participants had earned a degree or credential, compared with 8% of the control group, a statistically significant increase of 11 percentage points. This effect means that two-year graduation rates more than doubled (increasing by 140%). Nearly all graduates earned associate's degrees. 	<p>(BPS:04/09) who enrolled as freshmen in 2-year institutions in 2003–04 and 32% of matched nonparticipants were either still enrolled in college, had transferred to a 4-year institution, or had received an associate degree or certificate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Persistence in 4-Year Institutions: 93% of SSS participants in the BPS:04/09 and 84% of matched nonparticipants continued enrollment in the fall of the second year of college. By the fall of the sixth year of college, 58% of SSS participants and 48% of matched nonparticipants either had received a bachelor's degree or were still enrolled in college. ● Credit Accrual 2-Year Institutions: By the end of the fourth year of college, SSS participants in the BPS:04/09 who enrolled as freshmen in 2-year institutions in 2003–04 had accumulated an average of 61 college credits, whereas matched nonparticipants had accumulated an average of 41 college credits. ● Credit Accrual 4-Year Institutions: By the end of the sixth year of college, SSS participants in the BPS:04/09 who enrolled as freshmen in 4-year institutions in 2003–04 had accumulated an average of 107 college credits, whereas matched nonparticipants had accumulated an average of 95 college credits. ● Completions 2-Year Institutions: The difference in completion rates between SSS

⁷ "ASAP is really a package of services and supports. The research can neither determine the interactive or complementary effects of the components, nor disentangle the effects of each individual component. Such a rich model can help a wide range of students, since different students face different barriers and many students face multiple barriers." (Scrivener, Weiss, Ratledge, Rudd, Sommo, Fresques, 2015)

	ASAP	ASAP Ohio Demonstration ¹	TRIO Student Support Services Program (SSS)
		Sommo, Cullinan, & Manno (2018)	<p>participants and matched nonparticipants by the end of the second year of college was not statistically significant among students in the BPS:04/09 who enrolled as freshmen. However, SSS participants had significantly higher completion rates than did matched nonparticipants in later years. By the end of the third year of college, 40% of SSS participants and 28% of matched nonparticipants had received an associate degree or certificate and/or had transferred to a 4-year institution. By the end of the fourth year of college, the corresponding rates were 46% and 31% for SSS participants and matched nonparticipants, respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completions 4-Year Institutions: Among students in the BPS:04/09 who enrolled as freshmen in 4-year institutions in 2003–04, differences in bachelor’s degree completion rates between SSS participants and matched nonparticipants did not achieve statistical significance. <p>U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Student Service (2019)⁸</p>

⁸ “[T]he differences in academic attainment of SSS participants and nonparticipants... could be due to differences in the characteristics of the two groups that could not be taken into account using our analysis methods... propensity score models only account for observed student background characteristics. While the model includes information about students’ high school achievement and SAT or ACT scores, the BPS:04/09 does not include detailed measures of student academic behaviors or mindsets prior to college entry, and these, irrespective of participation in SSS, might influence college persistence, credit accrual, and completion. In addition, only 10 percent of the nonparticipants came from the same institutions as the SSS participants they were matched to; as a result, the differences in outcomes between the two groups could be related to the differences in the quality of the institutions attended (peers, instruction, faculty) and have little to do with participation in SSS. Moreover, due to the relatively small number of SSS participants in the BPS:04/09, SSS participants could not be directly matched to nonparticipants within eligibility subgroups (i.e., students who were first-generation only, low-income only, first-generation and low-income, or students with disabilities). Finally, only a small proportion of SSS participants were in the BPS:04/09, and these participants were not chosen at random; therefore, the achievements for SSS participants in this report cannot be generalized to all SSS participants in 2003–04 or to current SSS participants.” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Student Service, 2019)

Comparison of Small Program Components

	Inside Track ⁹	Meal Voucher Program (MVP) ¹⁰	Single Stop USA Community College Initiative ¹¹ Single Stop is a component of the MVP	Opening Doors Learning Communities ¹²	One Million Degrees (OMD) (OMD is operated by a non-profit organization rather than the community college)
Transitional Support Services ¹³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrollment coaching 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-credit freshman orientation course (also listed under academic support as it is part of the package of 3 courses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course registration assistance Welcoming orientation events and monthly OMD programming College success seminar
Academic Support Services ¹⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention coaching Completion coaching 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During their first semester, participating freshmen were placed into groups of up to 25 students that took 3 classes together: an English course (either college-level or developmental), an academic course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required weekly tutoring for students entering the program directly from high school for their first semester Required weekly tutoring for students in a remedial class or who

⁹ Coaches employed by InsideTrack, a nonprofit, independent coaching service interact with students via text, phone, and email.

¹⁰ **The** Meal Voucher Program was a pilot program designed to proactively identify 1st year **students** who may be at risk of food insecurity rather than wait for them to come forward. The MVP provided a debit card to students to purchase food of their choice from the campus cafeteria. It does not appear the program is still operating.

¹¹ Single Stop uses a software program called Single Stop Technologies 3.0. The cost of a Single Stop Technologies 3.0 software license ranges from \$5,000 to \$45,000 annually.

¹² Participating students are part of a group of no more than 25 students in courses that are “linked.” Professors work together to help make connections among the courses, which share a common theme, problem, and/or public issue. Students get additional support as the learning communities program has its own counselors, advisers, and other support services. To participate students had to meet eligibility criteria: (1) they were first-time incoming freshmen who planned to attend college full time during the day, (2) they tested into either developmental English or college-level English,² and (3) they were between the ages of 17 and 34.

¹³ E.g. application assistance, enrollment counseling, and assistance in course selection

¹⁴ E.g. tutoring, academic counseling, office hours, assistance applying to graduate and professional programs, and career counseling

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				required for their major, and a 1-credit freshman orientation course (orientation course also listed under transitional support)	<p>are struggling in a class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Coordinators, who are OMD staff, to provide support in registering for classes, developing academic plans, and applying for jobs or 4-year colleges. PCs have a student caseload of 65:1, significantly smaller than typical advising caseloads in community college.
Financial Support Services ¹⁵			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group financial counseling sessions focus on building lifelong money management skills followed up with individual 1-on-1 sessions as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbook vouchers \$150 stipend for two semester that can be used for any purpose, primary function of which is to promote student contact with their counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial literacy training and individual financial coaching Performance-based stipend up to \$1,000 annually (\$750 for suburban campuses) Enrichment grants that participants apply to cover select expenses Last-dollar scholarships

¹⁵ E.g. scholarship assistance, programs to improve financial and economic literacy, financial aid support, and personal budget planning support

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Community-based Support Services ¹⁶			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free tax preparation • Legal counseling to resolve issues such as housing/evictions, child care, and health care, and in some cases receive full representation • Immigration consultations with special immigration lawyers for students with immigration issues 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches - local professionals who volunteer as a mentor - who provide personalized supports, job shadowing, and networking opportunities. Coaches are supported with ongoing training by One Million Degrees. • Career exploration plans and professional development workshops • Civic engagement and leadership development workshops
Other Support Services ¹⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career coaching • Well-being coaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal card worth \$300 in the Fall 2017 semester and \$400 in the Spring 2018 semester • Extensive outreach to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility screening for government supports and application assistance. Benefits may include health insurance, food stamps, cash 		

¹⁶ E.g. mentoring programs, volunteer experiences, cultural events, networking opportunities, professional development, leadership training, career immersion programs, resume building, and interview preparedness

¹⁷ E.g. healthcare services, programs to address food insecurity, child care costs, securing temporary housing for students experiencing homelessness, financial support beyond cost of attendance, alumni programs, wellness programs, social-emotional support, and annual conferences or summits

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		<p>students who did not pick up their cards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MVP students had to visit the Single Stop office at least once to pick up their debit cards¹⁸ 	<p>assistance, unemployment, child care, WIC, Social Security funds, and more. Single Stop staff follow up with students through the benefits application process and will advocate with agencies if a student is wrongly denied.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance accessing other programs and services on campus 		
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention: While coaching was taking place during the first year, coached students were about 5 percentage points more likely to persist in college, a 9 to 12 percent increase in retention. Persistence: Coached students were 3-4 percentage points more likely to persist after 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit Accumulation: MVP students attempted and completed an average 1.5 and 2.3 more credits, respectively, compared to students in the control group. Persistence: Fall-to-spring persistence rate and GPA compared to peers in the control group were positive but not statistically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistence: Overall, students attending college for the first time who participated in Single Stop were more likely to persist in college than the comparison group. On average, 25.4% were expected to stay enrolled or have graduated by the end of spring 2017, compared to 15.8% of the comparison group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credit Accrual: The estimated effect on credits earned in year 1 of the program is an 11% increase over the control group average. The effect on credits earned was evenly split between developmental credits and college-level credits. The estimated effect on credits earned in year 1 is attributable to two factors. First, on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study examined outcomes for two subgroups: students who applied for the program while still in high school and students who applied when they were already enrolled at the institution. Program effects on initial enrollment, degree attainment, or transfer

¹⁸ The BHCC Single Stop Office, open to all BHCC students, offers students access to a mobile market and food pantry, discounts for public transportation, assistance with waiving health insurance requirements, aid in completing FAFSA, and workshops on financial literacy. The office also provides academic and career services like reminders and assistance on transferring to four-year institutions, scholarships, job opportunities, and resume writing.

	Inside Track ⁹	Meal Voucher Program (MVP) ¹⁰	Single Stop USA Community College Initiative ¹¹ Single Stop is a component of the MVP	Opening Doors Learning Communities ¹²	One Million Degrees (OMD) (OMD is operated by a non-profit organization rather than the community college)
	<p>months and 24 months. These represented roughly a 15 percent increase in college retention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion: Coached students had graduation rates 4 percentage points 	<p>significant.</p> <p>Broton, Goldrick-Rab, & Mohebbali (2020)</p>	<p>By the end of fall 2017, 13.5% were expected to persist or have graduated, compared to 8.3% of the comparison group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit Accrual: Overall, students attending college for the first time who participated in Single Stop had higher ratios of completed to attempted degree bearing credits than their comparison counterparts. The Single Stop students passed 52.8% of the degree bearing credits they attempted, versus 46.5% for their comparison counterparts. • GPA: Students attending college for the first time who participated in Single Stop, on average, had a higher weighted GPA than the similarly situated non-participants. Single Stop students, on average, had an 	<p>average, program group members attempted more credits than their control group counterparts. Second, program group members earned a greater proportion of the credits they attempted than control group members. After the first year, the magnitude of the estimated effect increased and program group members earned an average of 58.8 credits; control group members, 54.7 credits, a 7% increase in credits earned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree Completion: Following national trends, graduation rates are low for both program and control group members. The program's estimated effect on degree attainment is not statistically significant. 	<p>were statistically significant only for the high school student subgroup; there was no significant effect for the college subgroup.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study presents data on students who were offered a spot in the program and students who were offered a spot and enrolled in the program. I have only included data on students who actually enrolled in the program. • For individuals who enrolled in the program there was a 12 percentage point increase in initial enrollment. • 47% of program participants earned an associate degree within three years, compared to 39% of similar students in the control

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			<p>estimated weighted GPA of 2.591 for degree bearing courses, which was significantly higher than their matched comparisons (by 0.178 points).</p> <p>Zhu, Harnett, & Scuello (2018)</p>	<p>Weiss, Mayer, Cullinan, Ratledge, Sommo, & Diamond (2014)¹⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, it appears that the program's positive impacts on educational outcomes are fairly limited. <p>Scrivener & Weiss (2009)</p>	<p>group, a 19% increase. The impact was greater among students who applied during their senior year of high school, with 26% of these students earning an associate degree within three years, compared to 15% of students in the control group, a 73% increase.</p> <p>Hallberg, Hofmeister, Marianne, Morgan (2022)</p>

¹⁹ Learning communities vary from extremely basic (for example, co-enrollment of students in two or more classes) to multifaceted (for instance, co-enrollment, use of a tightly integrated curriculum with joint assignments and assessments, extensive faculty collaboration, and group tutoring). This study focuses solely on Learning Communities at Kingsborough Community College, part of CUNY.

Impacts of Components of Student Support Model Outcomes

The research findings presented in the tables above provide important information on the impact of holistic student support services models. Given that the components of these models are intended to be delivered simultaneously and work together as a package, it is not possible to determine the impact of a specific component of the holistic program such as ASAP or TRIO SSS.

As a result, if a partner organization or institution implements pieces of one of these programs, but does not include all of the components, the identified outcomes may not be achieved; research does not demonstrate which components or combination of components would produce the best result(s) for students. The same holds true of the small programs, but obviously to a lesser degree.

While implementation of comprehensive and holistic student support models is ideal, it is often that case that partner organizations, institutions, and other community providers of student support services will take a more piece-meal, though likely strategic, approach to expanding student support services. That being the case, below is research on the effectiveness of some of the common components of holistic student support models.

Advising Broadly

In October 2021, the What Works Clearinghouse²⁰ released the [*Effective Advising for Postsecondary Students Practice Guide*](#), which was developed by an expert panel, drawing on studies of effective postsecondary student advising systems and practices. The panel reviewed 21 studies of effective practices that meet WWC evidence standards, including studies of CUNY ASAP, the Ohio ASAP Demonstration, and TRIO SSS.

Based on the studies' findings, the expert panel made **four evidence-based recommendations** for effective advising, including academic and non-academic support, that may be helpful to Prosperity Denver Fund's partner organizations or institutions that are examining their student support service offerings or just beginning to develop them. It may also be useful as a tool for Prosperity Denver Fund in evaluating these services for reimbursement. The guide includes highlights from the field, guidance on carrying out the recommendations, potential obstacles, and examples for each recommendation.

1. **Intentionally design and deliver comprehensive, integrated advising that incorporates academic and non-academic supports to empower students to reach their educational goals.**

This recommendation is based on eight studies of comprehensive, integrated advising

²⁰ The What Works Clearinghouse is part of an initiative of the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. The mission of the WWC is to be a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education. Studies undergo rigorous review to determine if they meet WWC design standards making WWC the source of the best evidence available.

interventions. The interventions demonstrated *statistically significant and positive average effects* on progressing in college, academic achievement, and postsecondary degree attainment. The interventions deliver advising that is part of or connected to a comprehensive support structure in four ways:

- Offering **academic supports**, such as tutoring, developmental or supplemental education, college success courses, or academic workshops
- Extending **financial supports** for tuition, such as scholarships, tuition waivers, or financial aid
- Providing other financial supports, such as transportation assistance, emergency funds, or free textbooks
- Hosting **community-building** activities, such as social events and community service projects

2. **Transform advising to focus on the development of sustained, personalized relationships with individual students throughout their college career.** This recommendation is based on 10 studies. The interventions demonstrated *statistically significant and positive average effects* on progressing in college, academic achievement, and postsecondary degree attainment. The interventions involve sustained, personalized advising relationships in five ways:

- Advisors or coaches had access to data from **progress monitoring** or early warning systems, allowing them to proactively reach out to students in need of academic and/or non-academic supports
- Interventions allowed for sustained relationships by pairing students with the same advisor for the duration of their participation in a particular program
- Interventions **increased the frequency** of advisor-student interactions by granting students priority access to schedule appointments with their advisor
- Interventions intentionally designed advising to offer **social and emotional support** in addition to academic support
- Interventions featured **smaller caseloads** for advisors, allowing advisors to spend more time getting to know and meet with the students they were assigned to

3. **Use mentoring and coaching to enhance comprehensive, integrated advising in ways that support students' achievement and progression.** This recommendation is based on 12 studies of interventions that demonstrated *statistically significant and positive average effects* on progressing in college, academic achievement, and postsecondary degree attainment. Mentoring or coaching was provided through:

- Peer **mentors**
 - **Coaches** or **faculty mentors**
4. **Embed positive incentives in intentionally designed advising structures to encourage student participation and continued engagement.** This recommendation is based on six studies of interventions that include embedded incentives. The interventions demonstrated *statistically significant and positive average effects* on progressing in college, academic achievement, and postsecondary degree attainment. The studied interventions included two types of incentives:
- Student **scholarships** that were tied to academic milestones, credit hours, and/or grades
 - Monthly **incentives**—either a small stipend or transportation benefits—that students received when they participated in advising, tutoring, and/or career services

First-Year Experience Courses

A [What Works Clearinghouse intervention report](#) presents findings of four studies²¹ on first-year experience courses that meet WWC design standards. The studies revealed a medium to large outcome for credit accumulation. They found the extent of evidence to be small for two other outcomes contained in the studies — degree attainment and general academic achievement. There were no studies meeting WWC standards related to access and enrollment, attendance, or employment outcomes, so those are not included in the report.

- **Credit Accumulation:** Two studies that met WWC group design standards with reservations showed statistically significant positive effects of first-year experience courses, while one study that met WWC group design standards with reservations showed an indeterminate effect. This results in a rating of *potentially positive effects*, with a medium to large extent of evidence.
- **Degree Attainment:** One study that met WWC group design standards with reservations reported findings on degree attainment. It showed a statistically significant positive effect of first-year experience courses. This results in a rating of *potentially positive effects*, with a small extent of evidence.
- **General Academic Achievement:** Two studies that meet WWC group design standards with reservations reported findings on general academic achievement (GPA). The WWC confirmed a finding of a statistically significant difference between first-year experience course participants and comparison participants on cumulative GPA. Statistical significance and the effect size for the second study could not be determined from the information reported by the author. Thus, for general academic achievement, one study showed a statistically significant positive effect resulting in a rating of *potentially positive effects*, with a small extent of evidence.

²¹ A total of 97 studies were evaluated with four meeting WWC design standards, albeit with reservations.

Financial Support

A 2022 brief from MDRC, [“What Works” for Community College Students? A Brief Synthesis of 20 Years of MDRC’s Randomized Controlled Trials](#), presents “new evidence about key attributes of community college interventions that are positively related to larger impacts on students’ academic progress.”

Most of the programs included in our analysis for Prosperity Denver Fund include financial support such as tuition waivers, assistance in purchasing textbooks, financial incentives, and financial counseling to reduce students’ financial stress. MDRC’s results provided *mixed evidence* that financial support is positively related to impacts.

After controlling for the intensity of the other intervention components, MDRC found “*no relationship* between increased financial support and increased intervention impacts. In other words, the association between increased financial support and larger intervention impacts *may be an artifact of those interventions with greater financial support also offering other effective intervention features.*” As noted above, there is no way to pull the components of comprehensive programs apart, and the research does not demonstrate which components or combination of components would produce the best results.