A Closer Look at Bottom Line’s RCT Results

Across the country, millions of dollars are being invested to improve college attendance and graduation rates for low-income, first-generation students. Bottom Line is one of the first college success organizations in the country to assess its program with a rigorous, long-term Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) evaluation.

Our project commenced in 2015 with the support of the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. Professors Ben Castleman (University of Virginia) and Andrew C. Barr (Texas A&M University) began a study of our combined college Access and Success programs to determine if our model of a third-party partnering with students can make an impact on the college persistence and graduation rates for at-risk students, a problem experienced at colleges across the nation. The evaluation follows a group of students (randomized into treatment and control groups) from the high school graduating classes of 2015 and 2016 for up to six years through their time in college.

Our first report, completed in April 2016, showed empirically that Bottom Line’s direct service model is having an important impact on students. Our second report, released November 2016, shows continued impact on both enrollment and persistence.

The enrollment results of the Class of 2016 mirrored results from the prior year. Impacts were most pronounced for particular subgroups such as Hispanic students, first-generation college students, and students with below-median GPAs.

Impacts were more pronounced for Black students and students with below-median high school GPAs.

The evaluators will continue following both the class of 2015 and 2016 through 2022. Reports will be released semi-annually.

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**ENROLLMENT RESULTS**

10 percentage points

Students assigned to participate in Bottom Line’s Access and Success programs were 10 percentage points more likely to enroll at a four-year institution.

Bottom Line students also attended institutions with significantly higher graduation rates and lower cohort default rates.

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**PERSISTENCE RESULTS**

10 percentage points

Class of 2015 students assigned to participate in the Bottom Line’s Access and Success programs were 10 percentage points more likely to be continuously enrolled in college since high school than control students.

14 percentage points

During the Fall 2016 semester, Bottom Line students were 14 percentage points more likely to be enrolled at a four-year institution than control group students.