

Community college student success may be improved by one-stop social services, study finds

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As community colleges across the nation struggle to improve completion rates, a new RAND Corporation study of an innovative effort providing students with a comprehensive range of support services finds the potential to improve college outcomes.

The study examines the participation of four [community college](#) systems in the Single Stop U.S.A. Community College Initiative. The study finds that students participating in the program were more likely to persist in attending community college. Single Stop users were at least 3 percentage points more likely to persist into the second year of community college as compared to similar students who did not use the services.

"These findings suggest that having a one-stop shop for nonacademic wraparound services and financial support can play a valuable role in promoting student success in college," said Lindsay Daugherty, lead author of the study and a policy researcher at RAND, a nonprofit research organization.

The Single Stop U.S.A Community College Initiative is designed to improve the wellbeing of low-income communities by connecting individuals to public benefits and other institutional and community resources in an effort to address nonacademic barriers to college completion.

The initiative provides assistance to college students with applications for public benefit programs and other wraparound services that can provide support for housing, food, taxes, childcare, legal services and other essential needs all in a single location on campus.

RAND researchers evaluated the Single Stop program and its impact on student post-secondary outcomes. The study examined the experiences of first-time students who made use of Single Stop programs at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, City University of New York, Delgado Community College in New Orleans and Miami Dade College.

The study finds positive impact on postsecondary outcomes at three of the four participating institutions, despite differences in aspects of implementation and student populations.

While researchers were unable to examine the impact of many specific services, the study found that tax services had a strong relationship with postsecondary outcomes. One possible explanation of the impact of tax services is the ability to provide students with access to additional funds through the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

The study also found that outcomes were more positive for adult learners age 25 or older and independent students.

RAND researchers say the study provides important evidence of the value of an effort that connects students to a network of support programs and access to public benefits as a source of financial support.

Institutions should consider how they might offer programs like Single Stop to create a central location for students to access wraparound supports, and to provide students with greater access to government benefits programs and other critical services

RAND researchers caution, however, that more work is needed to attribute causal effects to the [program](#) and determine how the implementation and context might matter.

"This study is just a first step to understanding how programs like Single Stop may benefit community college students," Daugherty said. "More research is needed to understand the effectiveness of programs that connect [students](#) to wraparound supports, and to determine how these programs might be effectively scaled to other colleges across the United States."

More information: The study, "Research for Connecting College Students to Alternative Sources of Support," is available at www.rand.org

Provided by RAND Corporation

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