Keys to Success:
NCAN Members’ Postsecondary Success Services

Analysis in partnership with the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy & Public Administration

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the National College Access Network, a team of George Washington University Master of Public Policy student researchers examined the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members drawing on the following strategies:

- Original electronic survey
- Semi-structured interviews
- Secondary analysis of NCAN’s Benchmarking Report dataset

(1) What is the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN member programs?

- The top three postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members to students who graduated high school in 2010/11 were: FAFSA renewal, connecting students to campus resources, and scholarship search services.
- Most services are provided less than monthly and are delivered both electronically and in-person.
- Success services NCAN members provide are designed to complement existing services on college campuses.
- Use of technology has helped NCAN members deliver success services but is not meant to replace personal interactions between members and students.

(2) Do students’ outcome patterns vary depending on the types of success services they receive?

- The top five success services provided by members with the top five highest average completion rates (ranging from 75 to 82 percent) included: study skills, course selection, FAFSA renewal, job search assistance, and networking.
- Other members who provided these five services also appeared to have above-average program completion rates.

While we were unable to link service provision to student-level completion rates, we were able to identify rough patterns at the program-level that NCAN can explore in the future. Perhaps most importantly, our findings show that postsecondary success services are a priority for NCAN members, that they are rapidly expanding and evolving, and that members are deeply invested in the long-term outcomes of their students.

Considering the totality of the research, we make the following recommendations:

- NCAN should ask their participating members more questions specifically about success service provisions such as type, delivery method, and dosage, on the next round of the Benchmarking Report.
- NCAN members should collaborate with institutions of higher education, use technology to complement their service provision, and strengthen personal relationships with the students they serve.
INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE

Postsecondary education is widely considered an engine of economic mobility in the United States. Economists generally agree that higher education is associated with higher earnings (Card, 1999; Humphreys, 2013; Mincer, 1997), but acknowledge that it is difficult to fully control for unobserved characteristics such as ability and motivation. Research also suggests that returns to education are influenced by a “sheepskin” effect, meaning there is a higher earnings premium for completing certain years of education over others. Finishing the final year of college (and graduating), for example, impacts earnings much differently than completing any other year of schooling (Belzil, 2006; Lemieux, 2003).

College students who finish all necessary credits for an associate or baccalaureate program, but do not graduate, are thought to receive less than one-half of the earnings premium of those who finish all necessary credits and earn a degree (Holzer & Baum, 2017). On average, those with bachelor’s and associate degrees working full-time earn approximately 59 and 10 percent more annually than those who started college but did not finish, respectively (Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). Though earnings premiums can vary greatly by field of study and individual circumstances (Hershbein & Kearny, 2014), evidence of positive returns to college completion is well-documented (Avery & Turner, 2012; Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Gulish, 2016; Belfield & Bailey, 2017; Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013).

Despite the economic return of completing a degree, only about half of students who enroll at a four-year institution graduate within six years (Long, 2018; Shapiro et al., 2016). This rate is significantly lower for students attending two-year colleges (Bailey et al., 2015; Jacob, 2018). Furthermore, college completion rates differ greatly by family income and race (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Chetty et al., 2017). Low-income students who enroll in a four-year program are over 25 percentage points less likely to complete a bachelor’s degree than their high-income peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Blacks and Hispanics are 22 and 21 percentage points less likely than whites to do so, respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Non-completion can have significant costs beyond lower earnings premiums for college dropouts. On average, relative to non-completers, college graduates are more likely to receive health insurance and pension plan coverage from their employers, less likely to be dependent on government assistance, more likely to have better health outcomes, and more likely to turn out to vote (Long, 2018; Ma, Pender, & Welch, 2016). Additionally, in 2011 and 2012, only one-third of student loan borrowers who did not complete college paid down any portion of their loan principal after three years, compared to 60 percent of borrowers who earned a degree (Baum et al., 2017). However, it should be noted again that it is difficult to fully control for the role unobserved characteristics, especially motivation, might play in these correlations.

Institutions, policymakers, and college access and success organizations are concerned about the consequences of lagging completion and are employing a variety of strategies to address the problem. The National College Access Network (NCAN) seeks to better understand the services its members provide to students once they enroll in college, or postsecondary “success” services. NCAN members, a majority of which are non-profit organizations and direct service providers, are known for their access services, which are typically provided to high school students to encourage
college enrollment (i.e. financial aid application assistance, high school tutoring, college admission counseling, etc.). Based on previous research and reports, NCAN has a somewhat comprehensive understanding of what these access services look like across its membership and how they correlate with enrollment outcomes (NCAN, 2019).

A subset of members, however, have indicated that they also provide postsecondary success services after students enroll in college. A recent NCAN benchmarking report found that, on average, students served by these members had college graduation rates 10 percentage points higher than member-served students who only received access services (NCAN, 2018). Given increasing gaps in graduation rates and the costs of non-completion, this project investigates this “10 percent effect” by carefully analyzing what NCAN member-provided postsecondary success services look like nationwide. Our aim is to answer two central questions:

(1) What is the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN member programs?
(2) Do students’ outcome patterns vary depending on the types of success services they receive?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education stakeholders have launched an array of interventions to increase college completion rates over the last decade, some of which have been rigorously evaluated. The following section summarizes these strategies, relevant outcomes, and how their structure and design may or may not relate to the NCAN services we plan to study — for instance, we consider the fact that some of the most promising completion initiatives exist at the institutional level, which means NCAN members may not be equipped to provide similar interventions. Ultimately, the purpose of this literature review is to identify which practices in the field are important to include in a study of NCAN members’ postsecondary success services.

Existing completion interventions tend to fall within three categories: financial aid, academic pathways, and individual student support. An established body of research links increased financial aid to college persistence and completion (Alon, 2011; Castleman & Long, 2016; Deming & Dynarski, 2009), particularly for low-income students. Evidence also suggests that certain academic interventions, which alter remedial education systems that often pose completion barriers for underprepared students (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2012), are associated with higher graduation rates as well (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Belfield, Crosta, & Jenkins, 2014; Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013). Researchers and practitioners tend to argue that the completion problem goes beyond financial and remedial issues, however, and that many of the barriers to postsecondary attainment should be addressed by providing consistent, individual support to students (Scrivener et al., 2015; Scrivener & Weiss, 2009), as illustrated by an intensive program at the City University of New York (CUNY).

Since 2007, the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) initiative at CUNY has provided completion interventions in all three categories mentioned above: financial aid, academic pathways, and individualized student support. ASAP’s student support services include personalized advising, tutoring, and career development services. A randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluation of this community college program found that the three-year graduation rate of
the treatment group was nearly double that of the control group (40 percent to 22 percent) and that the treatment group was more likely to transfer to a four-year college after graduating (Scrivener et al., 2015). ASAP is considered a highly promising completion intervention — the program has already been replicated in California, New York, and Ohio (Long, 2018), with positive results already demonstrated by the Ohio program (Sommo & Ratledge, 2016).

These findings suggest that a comprehensive program (individualized support plus financial aid and guided pathway interventions) may be the optimal overall package. However, unlike colleges and universities, NCAN members are generally not equipped to provide financial aid or modify academic pathways. This led us to investigate evidence of student success services provided independently. Much of the existing literature on individualized student services focuses on the impact of college access services on postsecondary enrollment (Bettinger et al., 2012; Carrell & Sacerdote, 2013). A somewhat smaller body of research examines how college success services, which are provided to students after enrollment, affect completion rates. That said, the evidence suggests these services can lead to higher completion rates.

Bettinger and Baker (2011), for example, conducted an RCT of one-on-one student coaching provided to college students over two semesters at public, private, and for-profit universities. Services included goal setting, time management, self-advocacy, and study skills training. The treatment group was five percentage points more likely to continue from their freshman to sophomore year, and four percentage points more likely to graduate in four years. Another study evaluating similar randomly assigned counseling services provided for the same duration at community colleges, however, found that impacts faded after one semester (Scrivener & Weiss, 2009). An RCT of Bottom Line, an NCAN member organization that provides advising services to college students, reported that the treatment group was more likely than the control group to live on campus and participate in student groups, but that graduation rates would not be evaluated until a future study (Barr & Castleman, 2016). While advising, mentoring, and coaching might increase a student’s self-reported confidence, engagement, and skills, there is limited existing evidence it has a statistically significant effect on academic performance (Rutschow, Cullinan, & Welbeck, 2012), or that it has lasting impacts after services end (Schneider & Clark, 2018).

Some colleges and universities are using ‘predictive analytics’ to target advising activities in a more cost-effective way. The University Innovation Alliance (2014) reported that equipping advisors with technology to catch when students exhibit risks of dropping out — such as skipping classes — and sending targeted ‘nudges’ to those students increased initial retention rates by five percent at participating institutions. Mabel, Castleman, and Bettinger (2017) also found that sending personalized text messages alerting students about deadlines and resources increased degree completion after one year by six percentage points, but only for a subset of the sample. Bryant et al. (2019) found higher retention and completion rates among colleges and universities that spend more on advising technology, integrate advising into their strategic plans, have smaller advising caseloads, and require advising for all undergraduates. Further research is needed to determine whether similar input and process elements also correlate with the completion outcomes of NCAN member-served students.

Postsecondary tutoring interventions have also been tested in recent years, especially as academic preparation has been recognized as a strong predictor of college graduation (Chingos, 2018).
These services are most successful at improving academic achievement when delivered both in-person and using computerized instruction (Fullmer, 2012; Perin, 2004; Rheinheimer et al., 2010), and when incentives are built into curricula (Sommo et al., 2014). Relevant studies do not go on to link tutoring services with improved completion outcomes, however.

Research suggests that social integration can be a predictor of college persistence (Deil-Amen, 2011; Person, Rosenbaum, & Deil-Amen, 2006), though evidence on the effects of social-based interventions is also mixed (Weiss et al., 2015). A fast-growing segment of the literature on postsecondary student success focuses on psychological factors of getting through college, particularly for low-income and first-generation students. Destin (2018) provides a thorough summary of the literature on psychological interventions to improve student outcomes, including social cognition (or ‘lay theory’) programs to build positive student mindsets of belonging and confidence (Chen et al., 2017; O’Rourke et al. 2014; Smith & Oyserman, 2015; Yeager et al., 2016) and motivation-related interventions to shape goals, identities, and values that accommodate the college experience (Browman & Destin, 2015; Harackiewicz & Prinsiski, 2018; Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014; Stephens et al., 2015). While some of these interventions have been associated with higher GPAs and improved retention, it is not yet clear that they lead to higher college completion rates.

Prior research on the effectiveness of postsecondary success services informed our methodology in several important ways. On one hand, certain studies suggest that three-pronged interventions like the ASAP program can have a positive effect on completion rates. However, looking at the broader literature on individualized success services like those NCAN members provide, evidence of a linkage between interventions and completion outcomes is both limited and mixed. This indicates that there is room in the literature for further research on postsecondary success services provided by outside organizations, especially considering that NCAN member-served students who received success services had graduation rates 10 percentage points higher than those who only received access services. While we are unable to conduct a true impact study of NCAN’s completion interventions due to time and resource constraints, we plan to build a foundation for future evaluations by detailing the scope of NCAN member-provided postsecondary success services and identifying, using student- and program-level data, any emerging patterns in how service variation might interact with completion outcomes.
METHODOLOGY

As stated previously, our two main research questions include: (1) What is the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN member programs, and (2) Do students’ outcome patterns vary depending on the types of success services they receive? To answer these questions, we selected three major components of data collection and analysis — an online survey, case studies, and descriptive statistics — which are described in Table 1. The following section outlines our justification for these methodological choices, how we constructed our samples, and how each method was operationalized.

Table 1. Primary Methods of Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey Questionnaire</td>
<td>Question (1)</td>
<td>To determine the types, volume, and dosage of success services provided to students served by a sample of member organizations, per NCAN’s request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
<td>Questions (1) and (2)</td>
<td>To highlight promising practices of member organizations and the success services they provide in conjunction with their students’ outcome patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Studies</td>
<td>Questions (1) and (2)</td>
<td>To identify, at the program level, patterns between service provision and students’ outcome patterns based on NCAN Benchmarking Report dataset and survey responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NCAN Member Program Benchmarking Report

NCAN’s Member Program Benchmarking Report is a key secondary data source for this project. NCAN, in collaboration with its member organizations, has completed five annual rounds of the Benchmarking Report between 2014 and 2018. The report tracks postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates of students served by their member organizations (NCAN, 2018). These metrics are measured against national enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates through the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. The National Student Clearinghouse controls student-level enrollment and degree completion data for 98 percent of college students in the U.S. (DeBaun, 2017). NCAN provides the National Student Clearinghouse with members’ program- and student-level data, which are collected through a convenience sample. The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center then matches these student-level data with outcome data from its nationwide postsecondary database, also at the student-level, and returns the data results de-identified to NCAN.

NCAN Benchmarking Dataset

We planned to analyze rounds 4 and 5 of the NCAN Benchmarking Report, which include program- and student-level data for the high school graduating classes of 2010 and 2011. Table 2 delineates the specific variables chosen in this analysis from the entire Benchmarking Report dataset. To
determine our sample for both high school classes, we selected only member organizations who indicated that one or more of their students received postsecondary success services while in college, using the “psed_success_svcs” nominal variable. In rounds 4 and 5 of the Benchmarking Report, the 52 member organizations provided postsecondary success services to the high school classes of 2010 and 2011 in rounds 4 and 5, representing a total sample of 8,110 students served.

Table 2. Benchmarking Dataset Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>graduation_year</td>
<td>Student’s high school graduation year</td>
<td>2010 and 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pgm_id</td>
<td>Unique program ID, can carry over across high school graduation years</td>
<td>various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study_id</td>
<td>Unique study ID</td>
<td>various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psed_success_svcs</td>
<td>Student received success/completion/retention services while in postsecondary education</td>
<td>Y=Yes, N=No, U=Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>completer</td>
<td>Student completed a bachelor’s, associate, or certificate in the six-year window</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 0 = No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persist_2nd</td>
<td>Student had an enrollment in year 1 and year 2</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 0 = No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>persist_3rd</td>
<td>Student had an enrollment in year 1, year 2, and year 3</td>
<td>1 = Yes, 0 = No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To analyze students’ completion outcome patterns, we selected three variables from NCAN’s Benchmarking dataset: “completer” which is a nominal variable indicating whether the student did or did not complete a bachelor’s degree, associate degree, or certificate in this six-year window, “persist_2nd” a nominal variable that determined whether the student did or did not remain enrolled into the second year of college, and “persist_3rd” also a nominal variable that determined if the student remained enrolled through their third year of college. These variables are described in Table 2 below. Per the 1990 Student Right-to-Know Act, postsecondary institutions are required to report students’ completion rates at 150 percent of the normal time for completion, which is six years for a bachelor’s degree and three for an associate degree (NCES, 2018).

Survey Design

Primary data collection for this project included conducting an online survey, through Qualtrics, of member organizations that provided postsecondary services to the 2010 and 2011 graduating high school classes. The survey sample included all members who indicated they provided postsecondary success services in NCAN’s Benchmarking Report. Responses to the survey were
designed to identify the types of success services NCAN members offer, how they are delivered, and how they have evolved over the last decade. The online version of the survey is found in Appendix A. The survey response rate was 52 percent, with 27 out of 52 member organizations responding. Of the 27 respondents, three members did not provide success services to the high school classes of 2010 and 2011, and one respondent did not participate in the Benchmarking Report. The remaining 25 members in the sample either started the survey but did not finish, or did not engage with the survey at all.

**Survey Format**

Member organizations were first prompted to select which of the 11 postsecondary success service categories, shown in Table 3, they provided to the high school classes of 2010 and 2011. We developed these success service variable categories based on findings from our literature review and from conversations with NCAN’s membership team.

**Table 3. Postsecondary Success Services Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Resources</td>
<td>Students were informed of and connected with campus-based resources and/or social activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Selection</td>
<td>Students received help with selecting their courses and/or major of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Assistance</td>
<td>Students received help with job or internship search and application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Students received professional networking opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>Students provided with a curriculum on study skills and/or note taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>Students were guided through budgeting their financial aid awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA Renewal</td>
<td>Students were helped with renewing their FAFSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Search</td>
<td>Students were helped with searching for and/or applying to scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>Students received mental health and/or psychological support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Bridge</td>
<td>Students received academic and/or social supports during the summer between high school graduation and entering college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>Student received tutoring services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey also helped determine if the types of success services members provided to the high school classes of 2010 and 2011 have changed, and if so, to what extent. In this survey design, the unit of analysis is the NCAN member, the treatment variable corresponds to the types and number of postsecondary success services students received, the dosage corresponds to how often the student received the services, and volume corresponds to the percentage of students served.

**Semi-Structured Interviews and Case Studies**

**Selection of Member Organizations**

The selection of members for interviews and case studies was based on both a list of selected member organizations, proposed and provided by NCAN, and on the responses of the 27 members that responded our survey. Those that did not complete the survey were not considered in this selection process. Of the members that completed the survey that were also on NCAN’s designated list, eight were selected for semi-structured interviews based on: their responses to the survey question "approximate % of postsecondary success students receiving this service?", any interesting or innovative programming they were utilizing, and changes or enhancements they reported making to the success services they provided since 2010 and 2011.

We then matched this sample of selected members with NCAN’s benchmarking dataset and the “completer” variable to determine which members also showed strong completion outcomes. The eight member organizations chosen for semi-structured interviews were diverse across size and program model. This selection process served to highlight member organizations that showed promising practices of providing strategic and effective postsecondary success services to students in a case study. Of the eight member organizations selected for interviews, seven gave their consent to be interviewed, one opted out, and two were chosen for these case studies.

**Data Collection**

Data collection included semi-structured interviews of staff of the seven member organizations selected, where six were over the phone, and one included a local site visit. The interviews focused on a more detailed discussion of the member organizations’ organizational goals, success services delivery methods, student demographics and outcomes, perception of their students’ success, and data tracking methods. The interview questions asked during the semi-structured interviews of the seven member organizations are found in Appendix B.

**Descriptive Statistics**

We found descriptive statistics to be an especially powerful tool in displaying any potential patterns between service provision and completion outcomes of survey respondents. We originally hoped to run a regression of the postsecondary success services on student outcomes. However, due to a small sample size, relatively low survey response rates, and possible selection bias among organizations who elected both to complete NCAN’s Benchmarking Survey and our online survey, we decided to forego identifying any correlation or causal relationships through regression modeling.
The survey component of our data collection served to provide further insight into the types and frequency of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members, and the distribution of students served. We show the frequency of: members that provide each of the 11 postsecondary success services, method of delivery of services provided, and dosage of services provided. The final component of the survey questionnaire asked members to report current changes (if any) to the services they provided to the 2010 and 2011 high school classes. Since this was an open-ended question with a text box as the response format, the nature of these responses was qualitative, and will be further discussed in the analysis and findings section. Information obtained from our interviews (see Appendix B for interview structure) served to supplement the survey responses with additional information.

To answer our second research question, we used the “completer” variable from the Benchmarking dataset, to determine students’ completion rates for all students served by the 26 member organizations that responded our survey and that provided outcome data to NCAN’s Benchmarking Survey. To show possible patterns between completion rates and types of services provided, we describe the service provision of members with the highest average completion rates and compare to the service provision of remaining members. This method of analysis of our second research question was met with certain limitations further explained in the findings section.
FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

The following sections detail the results of our survey and general trends from interviewing seven NCAN members providing postsecondary success services (including two case studies). We conclude with a brief discussion of how service provision might interact with program completion rates. Our analysis is organized based on our two research questions: (1) What is the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN member programs, and (2) Do students’ outcome patterns vary depending on the types of success services they receive?

Question 1: What is the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN member programs?

Many organizations, including NCAN and its members, are concerned about lagging completion rates of disadvantaged students and are taking action to address the problem. Many students served by NCAN members receive access services; but fewer students receive success services. Of 73 members who participated in the Benchmarking Survey, 51 members provided success services to students. A smaller subset of these members participated in our online survey. Figure 1 below shows which NCAN members are subject to our report.

Figure 1. NCAN Member Organizations and Data Flows

Services Provided to the High School Classes of 2010 and 2011

Our online survey was designed to determine the types of postsecondary success services NCAN members provided to students in 2010 and 2011 (the years for which we have student outcome data) and how these services have evolved over the last decade. As stated in the methodology section, 27 out of 52 members responded, for a total response rate of 52 percent. One of these members does not participate in NCAN’s Benchmarking Report, therefore our sample for research question two excludes this member (totaling 26).

Table 4 compares characteristics of survey respondents and non-respondents to investigate whether there were fundamental differences between the students served by members who filled out our survey and those that did not. As shown in the table, respondents and non-respondents
served a similar total number of students (3,959 and 4,151) and had similar profiles with only minor differences in student characteristics. Survey participants were slightly behind nonparticipants in completion rates (5 percentage points) and in persistence rates (7-8 percentage points). Non-respondents served a larger share of American Indian and White students, while respondents served a larger share of Asian and Hispanic students. Overall, the student pool and outcomes of responding organizations were fairly similar to those of non-respondents.

Table 4. Students Served by Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Responded</th>
<th>Did Not Respond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Students Served</strong></td>
<td>3,959</td>
<td>4,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. completion rate</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. 2\textsuperscript{nd} year persistence rate</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. 3\textsuperscript{rd} year persistence rate</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Selectivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No criteria</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial criteria</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic criteria</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both academic and financial criteria</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Percentages are calculated using NCAN Benchmarking Survey data for the 51 member organizations surveyed.

Results from our survey offer important insights into the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members and how they have changed. Figure 2 is a snapshot of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members to the high school classes of 2010 and 2011. Members primarily provided financial aid advising services (e.g. FAFSA renewal and scholarship application assistance) and academic advising services (e.g. campus resources and study skills training). As shown in Figure 2, a large majority of respondents (20 of 27 members) provided FAFSA renewal services. About two-thirds (16 members) provided campus resources and scholarship search services. The top three services provided by member organizations were FAFSA
renewal, campus resources, and scholarship search. Fewer members went beyond that and offered tutoring and mental health support services (5 members). Considering the services that NCAN members are already providing to their access students, it is not surprising that many NCAN members continue to provide services, such as financial advising, to their success students as well.

**Figure 2.** Postsecondary Success Services Provided by NCAN Members in 2010 and 2011

Additionally, NCAN members deliver success services through a variety of methods including in-person, text, email, and/or through social media. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of how postsecondary success services were delivered (electronic only, in-person only, or both in-person and electronic). A majority of success services (62 percent) were provided through a combination of electronic and in-person methods. Out of all success services, 32 percent were provided in-person only and six percent were provided through an electronic method only. These findings reflect a sentiment shared by many members in our survey.

**Figure 3.** Postsecondary Success Services Provided by NCAN Members by Method
and in our interviews: there are limits to the role technology can play in service delivery – and success programming broadly – especially compared to the value of human relationships with students.

We continue to consider delivery methods in Figure 4. This chart shows the breakdown of method type for each of the 11 postsecondary success services we asked about in our survey. A majority of success services were provided through a combination of methods. In fact, 100 percent of members who offered networking services delivered them both in-person and electronically. Scholarship search services were also mainly provided through a combination of services (81 percent). Budgeting, summer bridge, and tutoring services were mainly offered through an in-person method. Very few services were offered through an electronic method only. Again, these findings demonstrate the value of relationships with students in success service delivery.

**Figure 4. Percent of Each Service Provided by Method**

Service dosage was also a key factor in examining the nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members. On our survey, members indicated whether a service was provided less than once per month, one to two times per month, three to four times per month, five to six times per month, or seven or more times per month. Out of all success services provided, Figure 5 shows that a majority of services (55 percent) were provided less than once per month. Following that, 23 percent of services were provided once or twice per month. Five percent of services were offered five to six times per month.
Throughout our interviews, we heard from members that they try to avoid duplicating services that institutions provide. This may explain why members are providing many of their services to students less than once a month since many students are receiving services throughout the year from their institution.

**Figure 5. Postsecondary Success Services Provided by NCAN Members by Dosage**

**Figure 6. Percent of Each Service Provided by Dosage**
Figure 6 shows the percent of postsecondary success services provided by dosage level. This figure shows that a majority of service categories (eight) were provided less than once per month. Campus resources, budgeting, and tutoring are more frequently provided, as they are services that students need to maintain enrollment. Some services, such as campus resources (56 percent provided once to twice a month), mental health support (40 percent provided two to three times per month), and tutoring services (40 percent provided two to three times per month) are provided more frequently due to greater student need.

Not all success services provided by members were captured in the closed-ended portion of the survey. We also asked respondents: “Are there postsecondary success services you provided in 2010 and 2011 that have not been designated? If so, please describe them below.” Responses to this question included:

- Transfer support to community college students, peer mentor training, and leadership development
- Bi-monthly College Scholar check-in’s, CSS Profile reapplications, resume support, and post-graduate planning
- Time management, syllabus review, using a planner, and how to be an engaged student

Many of these additional services (e.g. transfer support for community college students, leadership development, resume support, and time management) were provided by more than one member.

**How Services Have Changed Over Time**

Now that we have established the nature of the postsecondary success services provided in 2010 and 2011, we examine how these services have changed over time. In the survey, we asked members to report how the services they provided in 2010 and 2011 changed and what new services they currently provide (See Tables 5 and 6). Many changes are characterized by a more formalized curriculum, use of new technology, increased staff sizes, and referrals to existing services on campuses and in communities instead of providing the services in-house. To make much of this possible, NCAN members have also developed closer and more formalized relationships with on-campus and community service providers. This indicates that member organizations have recognized where they need to add and change services to best meet students’ needs.

Our qualitative analysis of the written survey responses also found that many respondents are now providing new services such as webinars, life skills training, summer melt curriculum, and resources and advising for transfer students (See Table 6). Many of the services shown in Table 6 are now provided across responding members (e.g. webinars, increased advising/mentoring), but some services (e.g. a seven-year formalized curriculum) are provided by single members after examining students’ needs.
Table 5. Changes in Member Provided Services since 2010 and 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Given the current work of your organization, how have the following success services provided by your organization changed since 2010/2011?” | • Social media outreach and increased use of technology Provide interactive workshops on campuses and through webinars  
• More formalized curriculums  
• Inform students of what services are available on their campuses and encourage them to use what’s there (vs. replicate in-house)  
• Larger staff with more capacity to develop relationships/MOUs with key service providers on campus  
• Campus connection is much more formalized  
• Connections of skills and education to jobs are more explicitly called out  
• Activities focus on resume writing and finding a job |

Table 6. New Member-Provided Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Survey Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| “Are there postsecondary success services you provide now that are not listed above? If so, please describe them below.” | • Navigate college transfers and manage any other issues or barriers to service  
• Use of a new student-facing mobile app  
• Career Connections advisor to assist our scholars with internships and career goals, and resources for mental health  
• Activities on campus or through webinars such as: time management, resume workshops, financial literacy, and dream/goals boards.  
• Newsletters to students to keep them in the know of what resources and activities are happening at their campus  
• Seven-year core curriculum that follows students from 10th grade to college graduation  
• Intrusive advising provided to all college students and high school graduates (academic, financial, socio-emotional)  
• Visits with students on their campuses |

In addition to the survey we distributed, we conducted six phone interviews and one in-person site visit with NCAN members. The interviews served two purposes: first, to obtain additional information to augment our survey results; and second, to identify promising practices that could be elaborated on in our case studies. Findings from our interviews suggest programs have changed substantially over the last five years:
(1) Capacity and Scale

- The number of students served by 10,000 Degrees more than doubled from about 800 students five years ago to about 2,000 students this year.
- The number of campuses Degrees of Change directly works with increased from seven to sixteen in their Act Six program.
- Over the same period, Degrees of Change launched its “Ready to Rise” program which now operates at seven public institutions in central and eastern Washington.

(2) Career Focus

- Bottom Line now focuses much more “on career exploration, career research, helping to place students in internships and jobs, and just generally making sure they have the skills and the experiences that they need to be employable or head to grad[uate] school when they’re done with college” (E. Harris and M. Barton, personal communication, April 1, 2019).

Most interview questions, however, centered on the current state of success services and how members have organized their programs. While semi-structured interviews are inherently qualitative in nature, selected comparable information is displayed in Table 7.

Beyond the data that was easily comparable, the interviews revealed how members are organized and their relationships with institutions. The Degrees of Change model of collaboration between local community organizations, such as local chapters of YMCAs and nearby institutions, is unlike most of the other NCAN members we interviewed. Degrees of Change provides curriculum, training, operational support, research/evaluation, and input on hiring of staff to its affiliates, while the affiliates actually provide the success services to local students.

Bottom Line shared an interesting perspective on how emerging success programming on college campuses has affected their decision-making: “We are now a little bit more thoughtful about accepting students who are already enrolled in one of those programs and really looking for students who have been accepted via general admission and are not going to have that kind of intensive one-on-one support” (E. Harris and M. Barton, personal communication, April 1, 2019). Many students at The State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh participate in the Opportunity Program (an intensive success program on campus), so Bottom Line established a memorandum of understanding with the school designed to prevent duplicated services: “[W]e are] trying to share information about what we’re covering so the student feels that they’re getting value-add from both programs” (E. Harris and M. Barton, personal communication, April 1, 2019). On the other hand, 10,000 Degrees co-designed a summer bridge program with a local institution; “now it’s fully run by the college, now it’s in the catalogue--it’s official now” (T. Lanier, personal communication, April 2, 2019).
Table 7. Comparable Data on Success Services from Member Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Students Served</th>
<th>Institutions Attended</th>
<th>Staff Ratio</th>
<th>Tech/ Software</th>
<th>Data Sharing and Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert and Janice McNair Educational Foundation</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1:200</td>
<td>GradSnapp</td>
<td>Data sharing agreement with at least one community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond 12</td>
<td>~2,000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1:120</td>
<td>MyCoach</td>
<td>Data sharing agreements with institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Change</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1:14</td>
<td>Microsoft O365, ForAllRubrics, Foyost Visualizer</td>
<td>Data sharing agreements with their affiliates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom Line</td>
<td>6,707</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1:25</td>
<td>Salesforce</td>
<td>Data sharing with some institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Kent Cooke Foundation</td>
<td>~420</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>1:125</td>
<td>SmartSimple</td>
<td>All scholars are required to complete an annual report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 Degrees</td>
<td>~2,000</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1:120</td>
<td>Salesforce</td>
<td>Starting to track students’ engagement in learning communities on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CollegeTracks</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1:70</td>
<td>Salesforce</td>
<td>None specified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At our site visit with CollegeTracks, the College Success Director, Jennifer Adams, provided an interesting perspective on success services that other members did not explicitly mention. In response to a question about what they would do with additional financial and staffing resources, Adams said they would expand their career development program. (J. Adams, personal communication, April 3, 2019). She noted that completion does not necessarily guarantee employment anymore, so CollegeTracks needs to do more to prepare students for the workforce. She speculated that this could potentially serve as a feedback loop for increasing completion rates by emphasizing that higher education attainment can be the bridge for students to achieve realistic career goals.

Across our survey and interviews, NCAN members are providing a wide array of success services to their students, many of them based on research, and are using several different models to do so. Throughout the project, a few clear trends have revealed themselves.

(1) The services NCAN members are providing are intentionally meant to complement—not compete with—the success services institutions are providing.
While the use of technology has certainly increased, and in many cases has made service delivery easier (or at least more scalable), members go out of their way to emphasize that technology is not a sole solution.

Members have a simultaneous desire to increase the scope and scale of their programs, while being cognizant of the limitations to do so.
Case Study #1: Robert and Janice McNair Educational Foundation

Our team conducted a phone interview with the foundation’s Executive Director, Monica Lee, to ask about the development of McNair’s success program, which is now operating in its third year. This program was selected for a case study because it serves as a promising example of ways to establish and build an adaptive postsecondary success program that responds to gaps in student outcomes.

Key Promising Practices:

(1) Responded to a clear gap in college graduation rates among a subset of students by establishing an RCT of a postsecondary success service pilot program.

(2) Maintains a strong working relationship, including a data-sharing agreement, with Isothermal Community College, where the majority of McNair’s success students attend.

(3) Networks with others in the field to expand success programming and maximize usage of high-quality service delivery and data tracking software.

(1) Responding to a Gap: RCT Pilot Program

As part of its access program, McNair awards scholarships of $5,600 to around one-third of its students for their first year of college — these scholarships are awarded to students with GPAs above 3.0 who meet UNC System admissions requirements and demonstrate a degree of ‘academic rigor and character’. In 2015, McNair gathered enough data from the National Student Clearinghouse to discover a significant discrepancy between the graduation rates of their access students who did and did not receive this college scholarship. Eighty percent of access students who received the scholarship went on to graduate college, while only 19 percent of access students who were not awarded the scholarship ended up graduating.

In 2016, McNair responded to this gap by launching a pilot program offering postsecondary success services to the foundation’s access students who were not awarded the scholarship. The foundation randomly assigned program participants to a treatment and control group — of the 80 students in the treatment group, 30 students received “intense services” (e.g. frequent in-person meetings with a coordinator to establish short- and long-term goals, work out course scheduling, and connect students with campus services) while 50 students received only scheduled text messages to remind them of academic and program deadlines. The 89 students in the control group did not receive any success services. Monica indicated that the RCT is still underway, thus results have not yet been evaluated. McNair’s process of establishing a success program (i.e. identifying a gap and responding by implementing an RCT) should be considered by other members.

(2) Institutional Collaboration

In launching the success pilot program, McNair hired a full-time success coordinator to staff all touch-points with over 200 students and institutions, like Isothermal Community College in Spindale, NC. Because so many of their access students go on to attend Isothermal, McNair was already hosting events and tours on campus as part of its access programming. However, once the
success coordinator was hired, direct communication and coordination with offices on campus increased considerably every month.

When asked which aspects of McNair’s relationship with Isothermal are most beneficial to students, Monica pointed to their data-sharing agreement with the institution — the success coordinator is able to access student records, including grades and course schedules, directly through the college, which allows him to be more responsive to student needs and better individualize services. McNair’s relationship with Isothermal also centers around resource referrals and connecting students to services already available on campus. McNair’s relationship with Isothermal Community College stood out among our interviews with NCAN members — by consistently sharing data, communicating with key campus offices, and collaborating on program development. McNair demonstrates a promising model of campus cooperation for other emerging success programs.

(3) Expanding Student Management Software

While attending an NCAN annual conference, McNair learned about GradSnapp at the exhibitors’ booth and later followed up for a product demonstration. GradSnapp is an extensive cloud-based student management platform designed for college retention and success teams. The software includes information about the student’s participation, financial needs, personal life, educational deadlines and more. It also serves as a communication and survey tool for staff, volunteers, and students. The platform also integrates National Student Clearinghouse data that will provide the most recent student information available. Following this conversation, McNair developed a virtual mentoring program staffed by volunteers: “We figured if we did this virtually, then there’s really no major commitment for anybody but you’ve got somebody who’s built a relationship with these students, who’s checking in with them,” and identifying when a success coordinator needs to step in.

McNair’s virtual mentoring program will be administered by alumni of their access and success programs, who will follow curriculum tailored to the time of year and semester. Because alumni are already familiar with the organization, understand the challenges that rural and first-generation students face, and are recent college graduates themselves. McNair views this new approach as a cost-effective way to optimize the success coordinator’s time and to reach more students. It will be interesting to see if and how the results of the pilot program RCT influence the development of this virtual program.

Conclusion

Though McNair’s success program is shifting toward virtual delivery, the foundation maintains a strong commitment to building and maintaining relationships with students. When asked what aspect of McNair’s services she believes best helps students to graduate from college, she said, “Having one person [students] are comfortable with, that will get them connected and explain to them how to use resources. We know that makes the difference for [students].” Near the end of the interview, Monica said “I’m looking forward to being able to connect to some of the other programs that are doing this ... I hope that’s something that comes out of all this, is to connect those of us who are doing the work".
Case Study #2: Beyond 12

Our team conducted an interview with Beyond 12’s Director of Data and Research, Eve Shapiro, to discuss Beyond 12’s “business-to-business” (B2B) model. Beyond 12 is a revenue-generating nonprofit that provides services and technical support to 120 national partners (high schools, college access and success organizations, scholarship organizations, citywide partnerships and colleges), tracking over 50,000 students and coaching over 2,000 each year. In contrast to McNair, this program was selected for a case study because it serves as a promising example of ways to expand and scale a postsecondary success program that reaches large numbers of students.

Key Promising Practices:

(1) Developed an in-house virtual coaching program and shares promising strategies and tools with broader service landscape.
(2) Maintains a strong working relationship with partners throughout the field (both providers and institutions).
(3) Excels the postsecondary success field through intentional data collection and student tracking.

(1) Virtual Modeling

During the first three years of the program, Beyond 12 explored ways to implement their coaching services and encountered a few challenges along the way. Initially, they considered using volunteer and peer-coaching for their virtual model, but quickly discovered neither were a good fit due to ‘commitment concerns’. “[Peer coaches’] capacity to provide transactional and inspirational support is limited” (personal communication, March 27, 2019). Beyond 12 ultimately decided on a paid staff, near-peer model so that coaches would reflect students’ socio-economic, race, and educational backgrounds while also having strong performance incentives. When asked about which services help students graduate from college the most, she highlighted that the near-peer coaching model “is very powerful” for students to receive support from people with similar experiences and trajectories.

Coaches are provided with substantial training and a structured program to follow throughout the year. Their coaching uses a co-active coaching model that assumes that students are creative, resourceful, and whole, and centers a collaborative relationship between coaches and students to identify challenges and develop solutions. Coaching provides both transactional support, navigating the tasks related to matriculation and college life, including normalizing the use of campus services so that students can take the initiative to seek assistance on their own, as well as motivational support. Coaches reach out to students twice per month and are responsive to student outreach. Beyond 12’s near-peer model was also developed to share gained insights about to students to help identify which needed their partners’ support.

(2) Strong Partnerships

In developing their network, Beyond 12 began offering data tracking and coaching services. Currently, they partner with 120 organizations that serve roughly 50,000 students nationwide. Each partnership varies in intensity of coaching and tracking, however all require a data sharing
agreement. With so many students served, we asked about the frequency of communication between Beyond 12 and their partners. Eve emphasized that a student’s success is a shared responsibility, and they typically communicate with partners on a monthly basis to discuss student engagement and outcomes (personal communication, March 27, 2019). She also noted that partners who require coaching tend to see higher engagement from their students.

(3) Data Tracking

Although Beyond 12’s programming is based in technology, they seek to find a balance between in-person and virtual services. Each partner provides their own services and Beyond 12 supplements their work with virtual coaching and tracking software:

(1) MyCoach is a student-facing application used by success program service providers. This app helps students with academic deadlines, campus resources, and motivation.

(2) Alumni Tracker is offered by Beyond 12 to organizations looking to measure student outcomes and conduct outreach. This software includes students’ current employment status, post-graduate studies, contact information, and other important variables.

Conclusion

Beyond 12’s business-to-business model allows them to experiment with direct service delivery on a small scale (including staffing methods, delivery platforms, and evaluation strategies), then extend tested practices, tools, and assistance to a much broader network. They stood out as a highly promising example of a scalable model.
Question 2: Do students’ outcome patterns vary depending on the types of success services they receive?

While the previous section characterized the general nature of postsecondary success services provided by NCAN members, we now examine whether the service activities members reported relate to their program-level completion outcomes. Though the Benchmarking dataset includes student-level outcomes, we were unable to assign service provision information to each individual student, as our survey was administered at the program level. Thus, we are only able to examine patterns among program-level completion averages in this section. Even this has limitations as we cannot fully control for program selectivity, resources, region, demographics, and more. Nevertheless, the rough relationship is worth exploring to see if any clear patterns emerge. To reiterate, one member who filled out our survey does not participate in NCAN’s Benchmarking Report, so our sample for research question two excludes this member (totaling 26).

Our analysis focuses on the service provision of members with the top five highest average completion rates — which range between 75 to 82 percent — to see how their service combinations differed from our broader sample. Figure 7 compares the percentage of members providing each service among the best-performing members and the remaining 21 members.

**Figure 7. Postsecondary Success Services Provided by Members with the Top 5 Completion Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs with Top 5 Completion Rates</th>
<th>Remaining 21 Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills 100%</td>
<td>FAFSA Renewal 76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Selection 80%</td>
<td>Campus Resources 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA Renewal 80%</td>
<td>Scholarship Search 62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Assistance 80%</td>
<td>Budgeting 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking 80%</td>
<td>Study Skills 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting 60%</td>
<td>Course Selection 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Resources 60%</td>
<td>Summer Bridge 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship Search 60%</td>
<td>Mental Health Support 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Bridge 40%</td>
<td>Job Search Assistance 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring 40%</td>
<td>Tutoring 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Support 0%</td>
<td>Networking 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Programs (5 total) | Percent of Programs (21 total)
The top five services provided by the top five members were study skills, course selection, FAFSA renewal, job search assistance, and networking. With the exception of FAFSA renewal services, these two groups of members did not necessarily prioritize the same services. In addition to having different prioritized services, the remaining members are providing some services that the members with the top five completion rates are not, such as mental health services (provided by none of the top five members and 24 percent of the remaining members).

Next, we zoomed in on the five services highlighted in blue on Figure 7 (i.e. the most common services provided by programs with the highest graduation rates) to examine whether the remaining programs (shown on the right-hand panel of Figure 7) that provided those five services had higher completion rates than those that did not. Figure 8 shows that the graduation rates of remaining programs that provided these services were at or above the remaining program average in each category. While this certainly does not imply causality, it indicates that these particular services could be linked to higher completion rates.

**Figure 8. Completion Averages of Remaining Programs that Provide Top 5 Services**

![Graph showing completion rates of remaining programs providing top 5 services.](image)
Finally, we explore trends in coverage between top-performing and remaining programs providing each of these five services. As shown in Figure 9, across four of the five services (all except networking), the top five programs served a larger share of their total students than remaining programs. Programs with the highest graduation rates appear to prioritize broader coverage compared to other programs, though future research is needed to identify a causal relationship.

**Figure 9. Service Coverage of Top 5 and Remaining Programs**

Again, because we were unable to control for many program-level characteristics that could be driving completion rates, these findings only hint at patterns in service characteristics of the top five programs to the remaining 21. In fact, as shown in Table 8, all five of the top programs were selective based on financial and academic criteria. This suggests that, due to possible selectivity bias, service provision was likely far from the only factor contributing to those programs’ high completion rates. Table 8 further indicates that the two groups served similar populations in general, though top programs served a much larger share of first-generation students (86 to 48 percent) — an unexpected finding considering that, nationally, first-generation college students drop out at a rate twice as high as students whose parents have a degree (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018).
### RECOMMENDATIONS

For NCAN itself, we recommend:

- Creating a postsecondary success service supplement to their annual Member Program Benchmarking Project and accompanying report. The exact components of this would obviously be limited by the length of the overall survey, but NCAN should use our survey to inform what questions and topics to include.

- Entering into data sharing agreements with some of its members in order to match assignments and dosages of postsecondary success services to individual students, therefore making a potential impact evaluation of certain services possible. This could augment, and potentially facilitate, the first suggestion.

- Continuing to leverage its upcoming national conference, Racing Toward Postsecondary Success, to create venues of idea sharing among members. In particular, NCAN should facilitate conversations around data sharing and tracking, scalable models, and collaboration with institutions.

For NCAN members, we are unable to confidently single-out any one group of postsecondary success services that are most likely to increase completion rates (though we identify some

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**Table 8. Students Served by Top 5 Programs and Remaining Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Top 5 Programs</th>
<th>Remaining 21 Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Cohort Size</strong></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-generation Students</strong></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Selectivity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No criteria</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial criteria</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic criteria</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both academic and financial criteria</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
preliminary patterns in our findings section). However, we recommend the following actions to maximize the effectiveness of existing programs:

- Continue and expand the coordination of programming with institutions, across various departments and areas of service delivery on campuses.

- Participate and engage highly in opportunities to share ideas and models between other NCAN members. In addition to these venues, members should find other opportunities to partner and connect with other members on their own.

- Expand and improve data tracking systems of students. There are countless benefits to doing this, but some include: anticipating the service needs of students based off previous behavior of other students; being able to hold staff accountable based off of performance; and, contributing to a data collection pool on which future impact evaluations could rely.

**CONCLUSION**

On average, earning a postsecondary degree has a high payoff for students who complete college, but less than half of students who enroll currently graduate within 150 percent of normal time. Non-completion has significant costs for students and families, which is why many NCAN members are providing services to students during college to keep them on track to graduate. This project took a first look at these services across NCAN’s membership, how they have changed over the last decade, and how service variation might interact with program-level outcomes. Our findings suggest that the success service landscape is rapidly growing to help students better navigate financial aid systems, access services available on campus, and manage their career paths. As the field expands, we encourage NCAN to keep close track of postsecondary success activities at the student level in order to more comprehensively study their impact on key outcomes in the future.
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Appendix A:

Survey Questionnaire to NCAN Member Organizations Providing Success Services

Thank you for committing to completing this survey and informing the college access and success field about your services! As you will see, the survey begins by asking about the nature of the postsecondary success services you provided to the high school classes of 2010 and 2011, then shifts to asking about how they compare to the services you provide now. Your responses will be used to analyze the impact of postsecondary success services on college completion outcomes.

Looking back, what postsecondary success services did you provide for the high school classes of 2010 and 2011? Select all that apply. (page 1 of 3)
What was the nature of the postsecondary success services you provided for the high school classes of 2010 and 2011? (Page 2 of 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>In-person</th>
<th>Text message</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Video chat</th>
<th>Social media</th>
<th>How often was this service typically delivered?</th>
<th>Approximate % of postsecondary success students receiving this service</th>
<th>Who delivered these services? (check all that apply)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising: Connect students with campus-based resources, social activities</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Your paid full-time employees ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Advising: Course/Major Selection</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Your paid part-time employees ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development: Job-Internship Assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate students ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career development: Professional Networking Opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum on study skills/note taking</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer-mentors ✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Advising: Budgeting</td>
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<td>Financial Aid Advising: FAFSA Renewal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Advising: Scholarship Search/App Completion</td>
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<td>Mental Health/Psychological Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Bridge Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutoring Services</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are there postsecondary success services you provided in 2010 and 2011 that have not been designated? If so, please describe them below.

[Blank Space]
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Question Format

Introduction:
• Thank you for your participation in our survey and this interview.

Logistics:
• We’d like to ask you a few questions about the services your organization provides to students after they enroll in college (or “success” services).
• We’re grateful that your team filled out our online survey, and those results are confidential. However, your organization seems to be providing a very promising set of services and we’d love to be able to highlight you as one of the case studies in our report.
  o Would it be OK if we cited your comments with the name of your organization and ideally your name too? Or you can wait until the end of our chat and tell us then depending on how you feel the interview goes.
  o Also, we are hoping to record this conversation so we don’t miss anything in our notes, is that ok with you?
• Great, now we’ll start getting into our main questions. We’ll begin by asking some general questions, then we’ll ask you about your relationship with the colleges your students attend, how your program is staffed, what your services look like, and, finally, how you measure success.

General questions:
• What is your role with X member organization and how long have you worked with the organization?
• How many students does your success program currently serve?
• Approximately how many new students enter the program each year?
• Has your success program grown in the last five years in terms of staffing, student population, and locations?
• About how many universities do your students attend?

Institutional characteristics:
We’d like to ask a few questions about your relationship with the college(s) your students attend.
• First of all, do you coordinate programming with the college? If so, how?
• What offices on campus do you communicate with most?
• How often are you in contact? Is this occasionally, monthly, or more than monthly?
• What aspects of your relationship with colleges do you see as most beneficial to your students?
• As you are probably aware, colleges across the country are starting to build their own comprehensive support programs on campus to help more students graduate. Have you noticed any programs emerging on the campuses you work with? If so, has that affected how you work with your students?
Staff:
- What is your average student-to-staff ratio?
- From your survey, we noticed that a lot of your advising work is done by X.
- Do you provide training to these X and if so, what does that training look like?
- Have you noticed any benefits or challenges from using X?
- What changes to staffing has your organization made to meet students’ needs in the last five years?
- If you had additional financial and staffing resources, what services or activities would you add to your success programming?

Service delivery:
On our survey, you indicated that your college success services include X, X, and X services.
- Are some of the services you provide more refined than others?
- Can you talk about the degree to which your services vary in their intensity?
- Where are your in-person services typically provided? (your location or the college?)
- How long do you typically work with a student? For ex. Do you only work with beginning college students? Or do you start earlier in high school?
- We recognize that any program that provides a social service will have drop-off. Can you talk about the attrition rate of the high school students you serve who decline success services in college?
- What about the drop-off rate of students who start receiving success services while in college, but eventually stop participating?
- What methods do you use to keep track of students’ participation in the program and how often (attendance, records, student self-evaluations)?
- How do you ultimately determine which students’ outcomes count toward your program- or cohort-level outcomes?

Measuring success:
- How does your program measure success and impact?
- What are some of the leading indicators (“indicators you monitor to see if you’re on-track”) and some of your summary indicators?
- Which services do you believe were the best in helping students to graduate from college and why?