Success Coaching for Student Success: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial Validation Study

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DVP-PRAXIS LTD
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First in the World

“I want us to produce eight million more college graduates by 2020.”
- President Barack Obama

• In 2009, President Obama called for the United States to become first in the world, again, in college graduation by the year 2020.

• Increase % of people ages 25 to 34 who hold an associate’s degree or a bachelor degree from 40% to 60%.
Carolina Works Initiative

• U.S. Department of Education First in the World Grant, 2015
• Validation Grant: Bettinger & Baker (2014)
• Randomized Controlled Trial
• 21 Success Coaches across 10 North Carolina Community Colleges
• Technology-enabled coaching – Aviso Retention
What is Success Coaching?

• Success Coaches are professional staff who build relationships with a defined caseload of students

• Success Coaches are part of a broader movement to provide a holistic, personalized approach to supporting students

• Success Coaches:
  • Proactively reach out to students
  • Leverage predictive analytics and early alert systems to prioritize outreach
  • Connect students to resources on- and off-campus to address basic needs, academic challenges, and financial barriers
Student Perspectives

- Reliable, caring, and proactive personal connection
- Mentor identifying barriers and building capacity
- Source of encouragement and accountability
- Bridge to resources and personnel
- Guide to academic and career goals

“[I was scared when I decided to go to college but after meeting with my Success Coach, the college did not look so big – a friendly face goes a thousand miles. Knowing you have this person, this go-to person, made college easier for me. It was no longer overwhelming. Having a Coach was calming.]”

-FITW Student
RCT of Carolina Works

Analytic sample
New students enrolling in Fall 2016, Fall 2017, or Fall 2018 terms
10,768 students across 10 North Carolina community colleges

Treatment condition
Assignment to a Success Coach

Control condition
‘Business-as-usual’ services at colleges
[50/50 randomization]

Outcomes
Retention (Fall-Spring, Fall-Fall, Fall-to-2nd-Spring)
Credential completion
Implementation Study: Key Activities

**In-Depth Site Visits**
Interviews and focus groups with project leadership, Success Coaches, senior administrators, faculty, and staff

**Assessment of Implementation Fidelity**
Key institutional and contextual factors affecting successful implementation of Coaching

**Engagement with Students**
First-hand perspectives from students about their experiences with a Success Coach
Implementation Fidelity

**Core components** of implementation fidelity

- Success Coach fidelity to coaching model
- Faculty & Staff fidelity to coaching model
- Fidelity to RCT design

**Institutional drivers** of implementation fidelity

- Project leadership
- Campus communication and engagement
- Technology adoption and use (Aviso)
Characteristics of FITW Sample

- Two-thirds female
- More than 40% “non-traditional” aged students (25 or older)
- More than 40% enrolled part-time (<12 credits)
- 30% students of color
- > 50% received Pell
- Randomization worked!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Treatment (n=5,402)</th>
<th>Control (n=5,367)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pell recipient</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior academic performance and enrollment characteristics at baseline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolled in Developmental Ed</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior credits earned</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolled part-time (&lt;12 credits)</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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</table>
Positive Impacts of Coaching on Longer-Term Retention

N=10,768
Students Benefit More From Success Coaching When…

Colleges Implement with Fidelity
Students in colleges implementing with high fidelity saw the greatest boost in outcomes from coaching

Coaches Don’t Turn Over
Students in colleges where coaches remained in place for the entire study period experienced greater benefits from coaching

**Treatment Effects**: Percentage Point Difference in Outcomes between Students Assigned a Coach and Students Without a Coach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Fall to Fall</th>
<th>Fall to second Spring</th>
<th>Credential completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Colleges</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
<td>+0.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 3 colleges, implementation fidelity</td>
<td>+2.7%</td>
<td>+2.8%</td>
<td>+3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 colleges with Coaches in place for entire study</td>
<td>+4.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>+3.4% +3.3%</td>
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</tbody>
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Fall to Fall  | Fall to second Spring  | Credential completion
Some students experienced greater benefits from coaching...

Male students experience large benefits from coaching across all outcomes

Black students with a coach see a notable boost in longer-term retention
Spotlight on Randolph Community College

Highly proactive coaches who empower students to advocate for themselves

Coaches in place for duration of study

Strong academic leadership and faculty buy-in; coaches embedded within academic division

Coaching tied to large increases in retention and completion for students overall, and particularly for Black students and part-time students

![Bar chart showing comparison between Business as Usual and Assigned a Success Coach for credential completion from Fall to Fall, Fall to Second Spring, and Credential completion.](chart.png)

N=1,628
Spotlight on Roanoke-Chowan Community College

Extremely persistent coach who “meets students where they are”

Coach in place for duration of study

Campus culture of providing personalized supports

Black students assigned a coach had notable boosts to retention and completion outcomes

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<th>Credential completion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Business as Usual</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assigned a Success Coach</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

N=334
• Students meeting with Coach are HIGHLY more likely to be retained and to complete, controlling for factors associated with higher retention and meeting with Coach.

• These findings are outside the experimental design, and can’t fully account for unobservable factors driving both engagement with Coach and positive outcomes.
Evaluation Takeaways

• Trusting relationships are a key foundation for successful coaching, and these relationships can take time to develop.

• The more buy-in from college leadership and enthusiasm from faculty, the more engaged success coaches can be - with benefits for their students.

• Student groups that are underserved within higher education may benefit more from coaching, and intentional targeting of coaching services can help close equity gaps.
Thank you, What questions are there?

• Stay in Touch!
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