

The Career Academy Impact Evaluation

Implications for Career Technical Education and High School Reform

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www.mdrc.org

<http://www.mdrc.org/publications/366/overview.html>



What Can Career Academies Offer Evidence-Based Policy?

Practice

- 34-year track record of implementation, planned expansion, and efforts at continuous improvement
- Intervention with goals and core features aligned with prominent policy options for career technical education, high school reform, and transitions to college and work

Research

- 25 years of non-experimental research and a commitment to learning what works
- 10-year random assignment field experiment involving 9 sites, over 1,700 students, and 8-years of follow-up
- Positive effects on labor market outcomes without compromising on academic goals

Program Characteristics and Goals

- **Key Features**

- *Small Learning Communities* to promote interpersonal supports and program coherence
- *Career theme* to combine academic curriculum with career-related course sequence
- *Employer partnerships* to support career awareness and development activities and work-based learning

- **Goals**

- School engagement and dropout prevention
- Academic achievement and career development
- Pathways to post-secondary education and labor market opportunities

Features of the Evaluation

- 9 sites reflecting “typical” Career Academy implementation and urban contexts
- Random assignment field experiment involving over 1,700 students who applied to Career Academies in 1993, 1994, 1995
- Qualitative information on program implementation and context
- Data sources:
 - Surveys administered during high school (4 waves)
 - School records data
 - 1-year post-high school follow-up survey
 - 4-year post-high school follow-up survey

Key Findings for High School Years

Strengths

- Higher level of interpersonal supports from teachers and peers
- Increased exposure to career awareness activities, work-based learning, career-technical courses
- Greater benefits to “higher risk” students

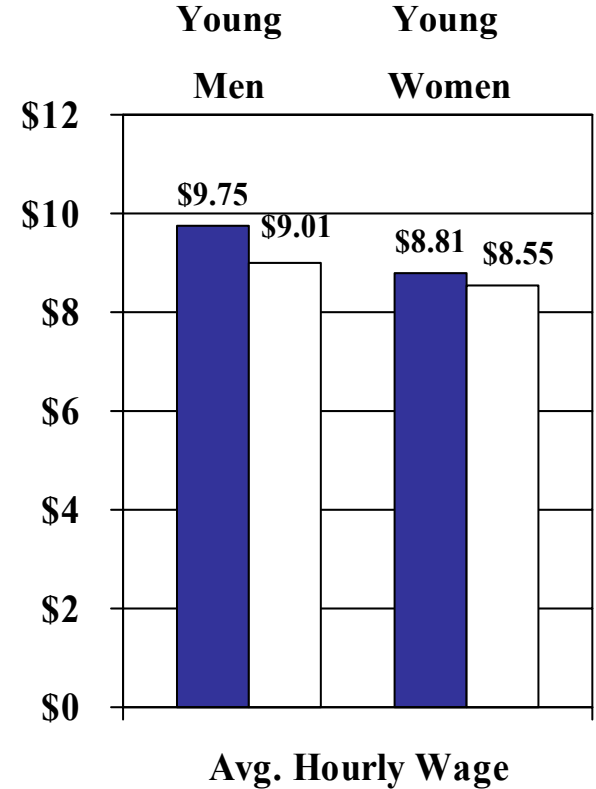
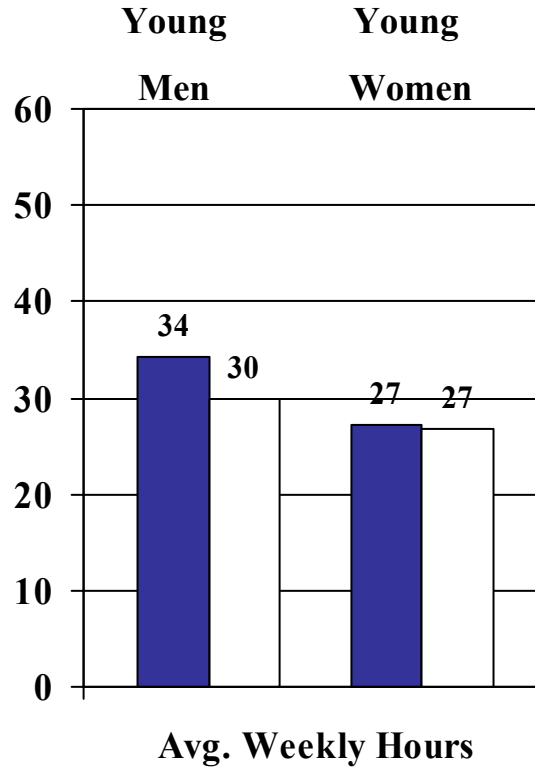
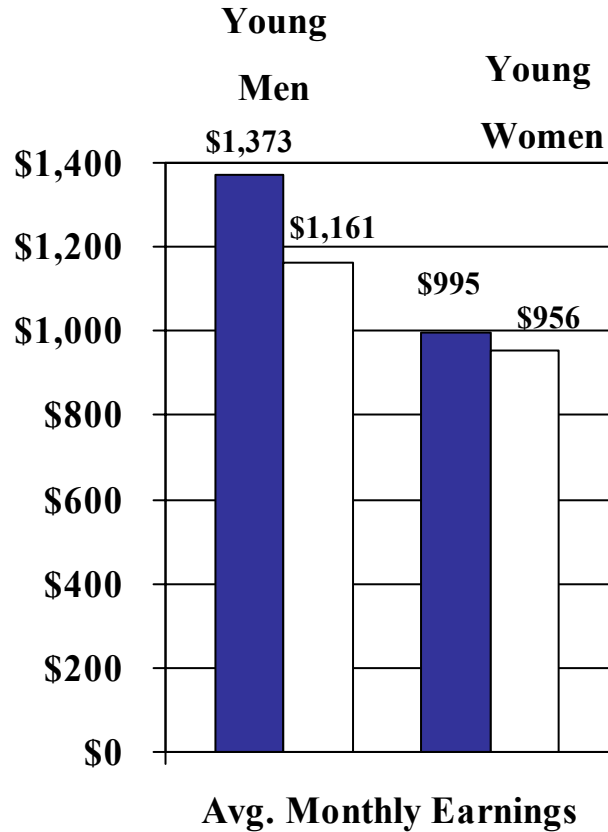
Potential Limitations

- High attrition rates
- Uneven quality of curriculum integration and internships
- Little or no impact on academic performance indicators

Key Post-High School Findings

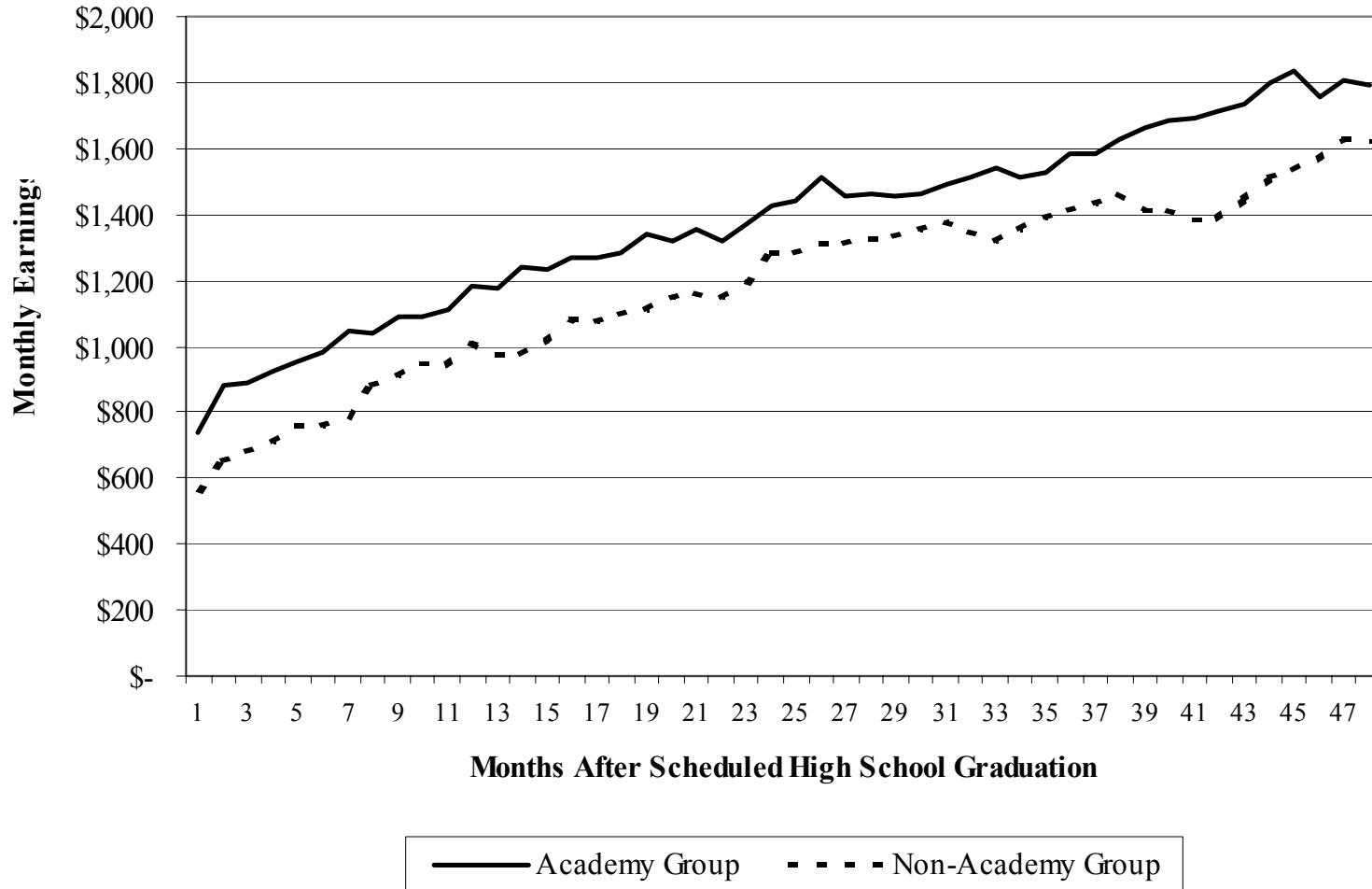
- **Relatively high outcome levels**
- **Large and sustained impact on employment and earnings for young men**
- **No impact (positive or negative) on high school graduation and post-secondary education outcomes**
- **Exposure to career development opportunities and employer-based experiences are most likely candidates as sources of impacts**

Impacts on Employment and Earnings By Gender



Academy
 Non-Academy

Impacts on Monthly Earnings Impacts For Young Men



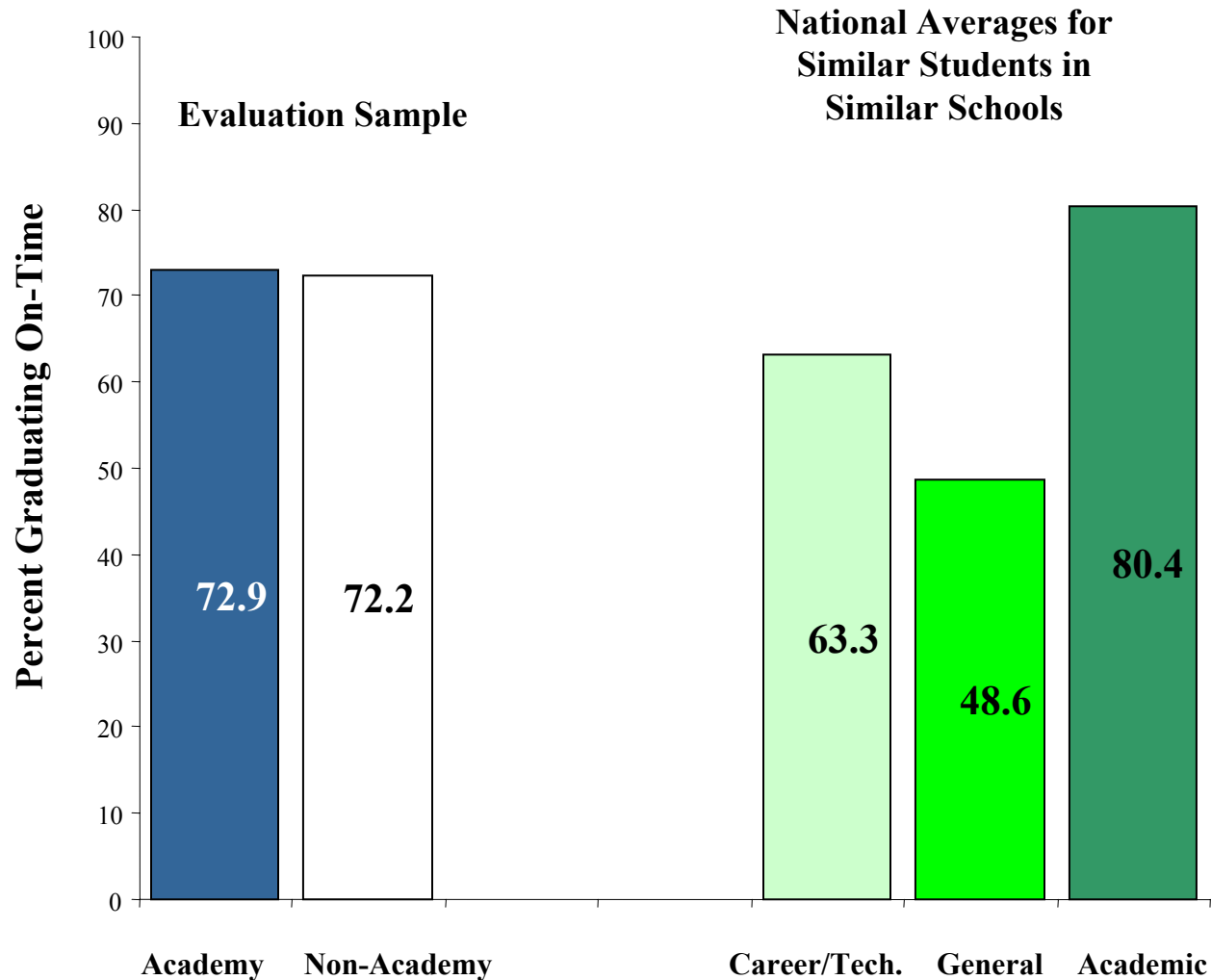
Context for Earnings Impact

Monthly Earnings “premium” for young men with some college or AA compared to those with only high school diploma or GED*	\$136
Career Academy impact on monthly earnings for young men	\$212

* Derived from Pond, Sum, and Trub'sky, 2002

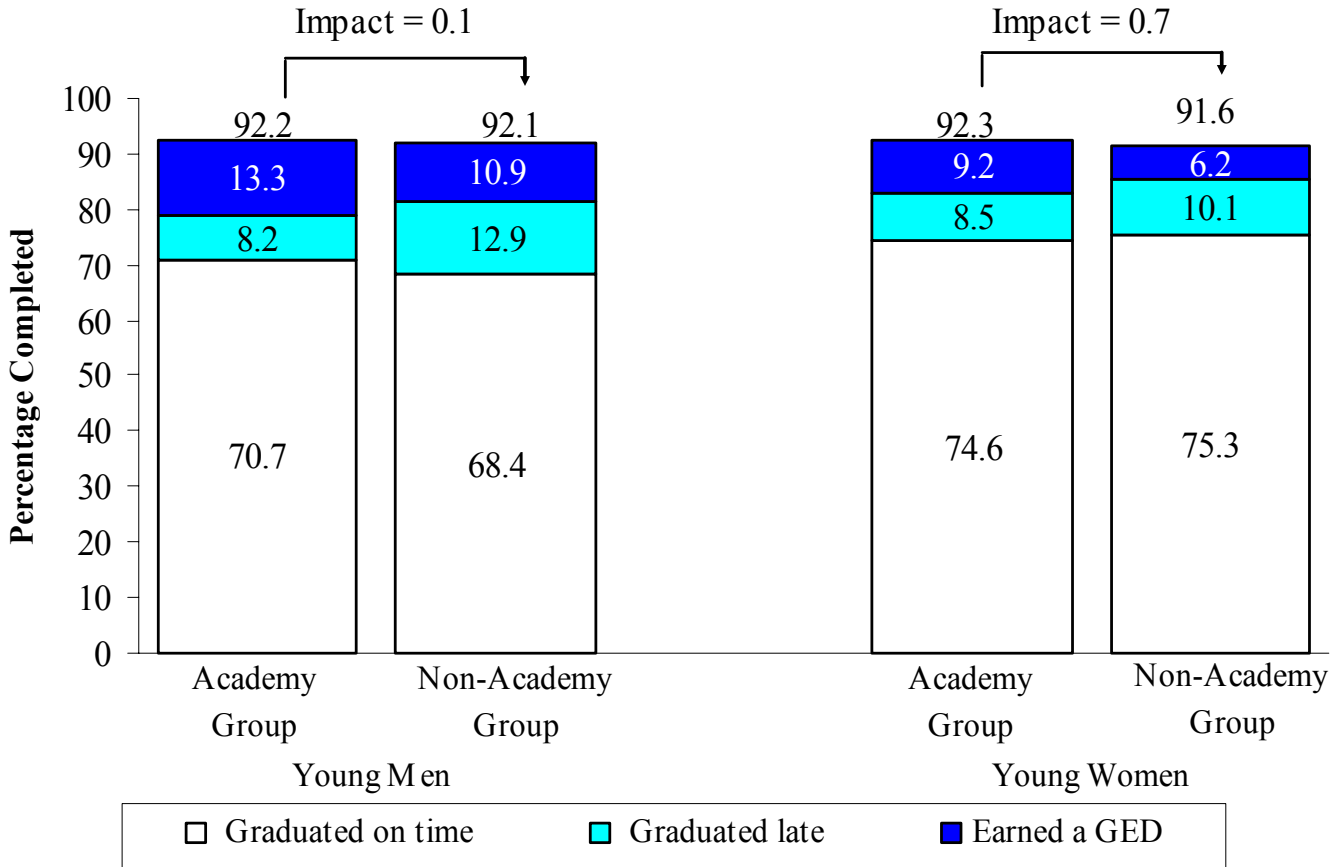
Impact on On-Time Graduation

High Outcomes/No Impact

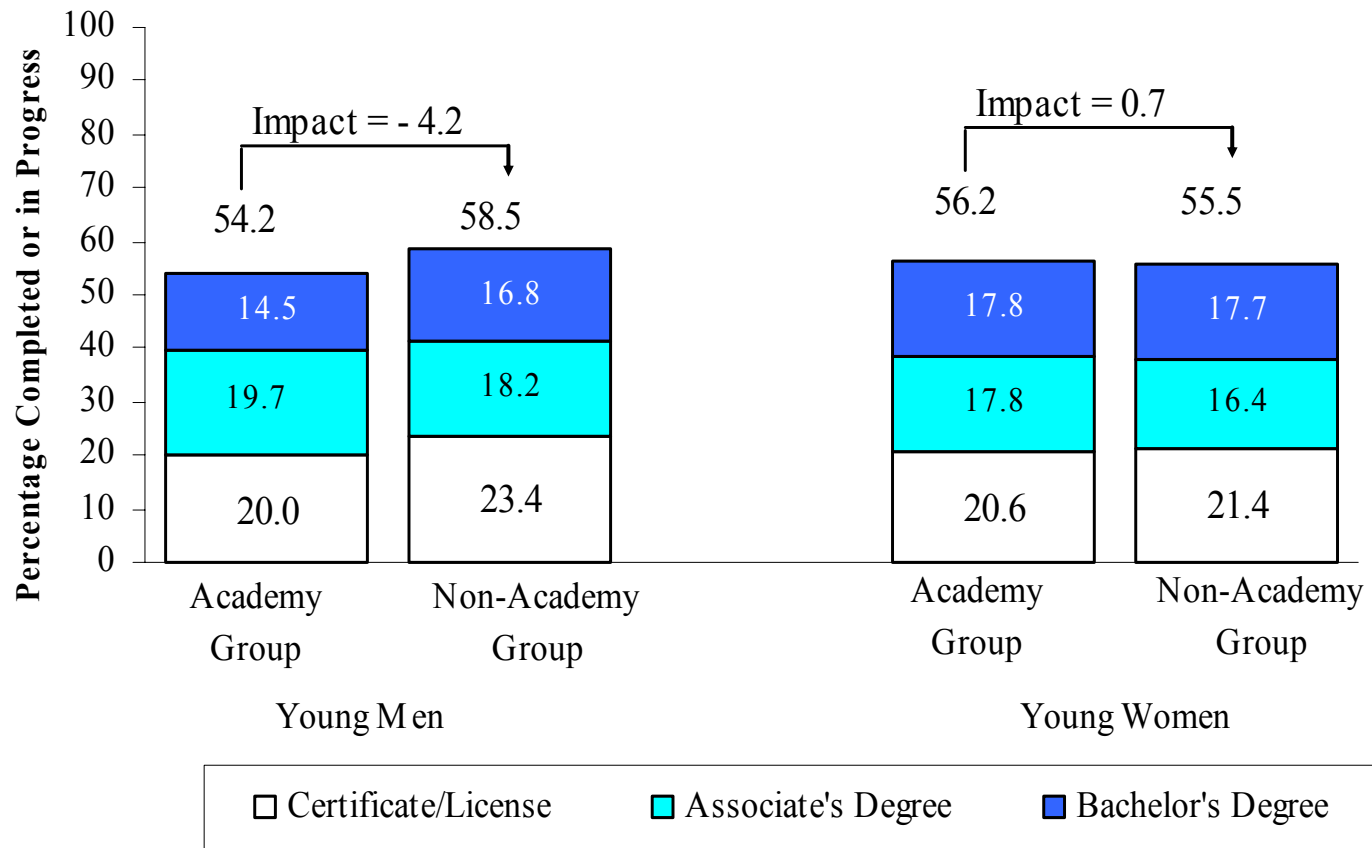


Note: National average estimates are adjusted to represent a sample with the same background characteristics as those in the Evaluation Sample.

Impacts on High School Completion By Gender



Impacts on Post-Secondary Education By Gender



Implications

- **Evaluation demonstrates feasibility, challenges and benefits of using random assignment field experiments to study school-based interventions.**
- **Increased investments in career-related experiences during high school can have substantial payoff in the labor market, at least for young men.**
- **Career Academies demonstrate feasibility of accomplishing goals of school-to-career and career technical education without compromising on academic goals.**
- **Career Academies serve as viable pathway to post-secondary education, but not necessarily better than other opportunities.**

Testing Programs to Help Community College Students Succeed: The Opening Doors Demonstration

Tom Brock

November 2005



Overview

- Background: Why a Community College Demonstration?
- Description of Programs
- Evaluation Design
- Early Results

The Promise of Community Colleges

- **Are accessible and affordable, serving 11.6 million students nationwide.**
- **Offer a path to better jobs and higher income.**
- **Prepare for transfer to 4-year colleges and universities.**
- **May offer other benefits associated with higher education:**
 - **Strengthened social networks**
 - **Better health**
 - **Increased civic participation**

Despite Benefits, Many Students Do Not Persist

- Nearly half of students who begin at community college do not earn a degree and are not enrolled in any institution 6 years later. Why?
 - Not everyone wants a degree (but most do)
 - Poor academic preparation
 - Competing demands of work, family, school
 - Students feel unsupported on campus
 - Difficulty paying for school

Opening Doors Focuses on Programs to Increase Persistence and Achievement

- **Program strategies:**
 - Strengthened developmental instruction
 - Improved guidance and support services
 - Increased financial aid
- **Desired outcomes:**
 - Increased course completion and persistence
 - Higher rates of graduation or transfer
 - Increased employment and better jobs
 - Other benefits associated with higher education

Kingsborough Community College (Brooklyn, New York)

Learning Communities:

- **Groups of 25 students take first semester courses together**
- **3 linked courses:**
 - **English (usually developmental)**
 - **Student development (taught by counselor)**
 - **One standard college course, such as history**
- **Faculty coordinate assignments, discuss student progress**

Delgado Community College and the Louisiana Technical College (New Orleans)

Scholarship tied to academic performance:

- \$1,000 on top of regular financial aid for two semesters, paid in increments:**
 - \$250 on enrollment**
 - \$250 on passing midterms**
 - \$500 on passing courses**
- Dedicated counseling staff with caseloads under 125 students.**

Owens Community College (Toledo, Ohio)

Enhanced Student Services:

- **Students assigned to academic counselor with caseload of 150 (versus 1000)**
- **Academic counselors work with other student support services staff as a team**
- **\$300 scholarship over two semesters, tied to meetings with the academic counselor**

Evaluation Will Answer Three Major Sets of Questions

■ Implementation

- What services does Opening Doors offer, and how do they differ from regular college services?
- Which services do college staff and students find most valuable?

■ Impact

- How does Opening Doors affect student retention, achievement, graduation, employment, and other outcomes?

■ Cost

- How much money does it take to run Opening Doors?
- Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

Study Eligibility Criteria

- **Students between ages of 18-34.**
- **Enrolled at least half-time.**
- **Household income below 250 percent of poverty.**
- **Other criteria as determined by colleges.**

Student Characteristics

Kingsborough

- **All incoming freshmen. Mostly young and living with parents.**
- **Ethnically diverse.**
 - **38 percent African American**
 - **24 percent white**
 - **21 percent Hispanic**
 - **8 percent Asian**
- **Evenly split between students pursuing academic degrees and career majors.**

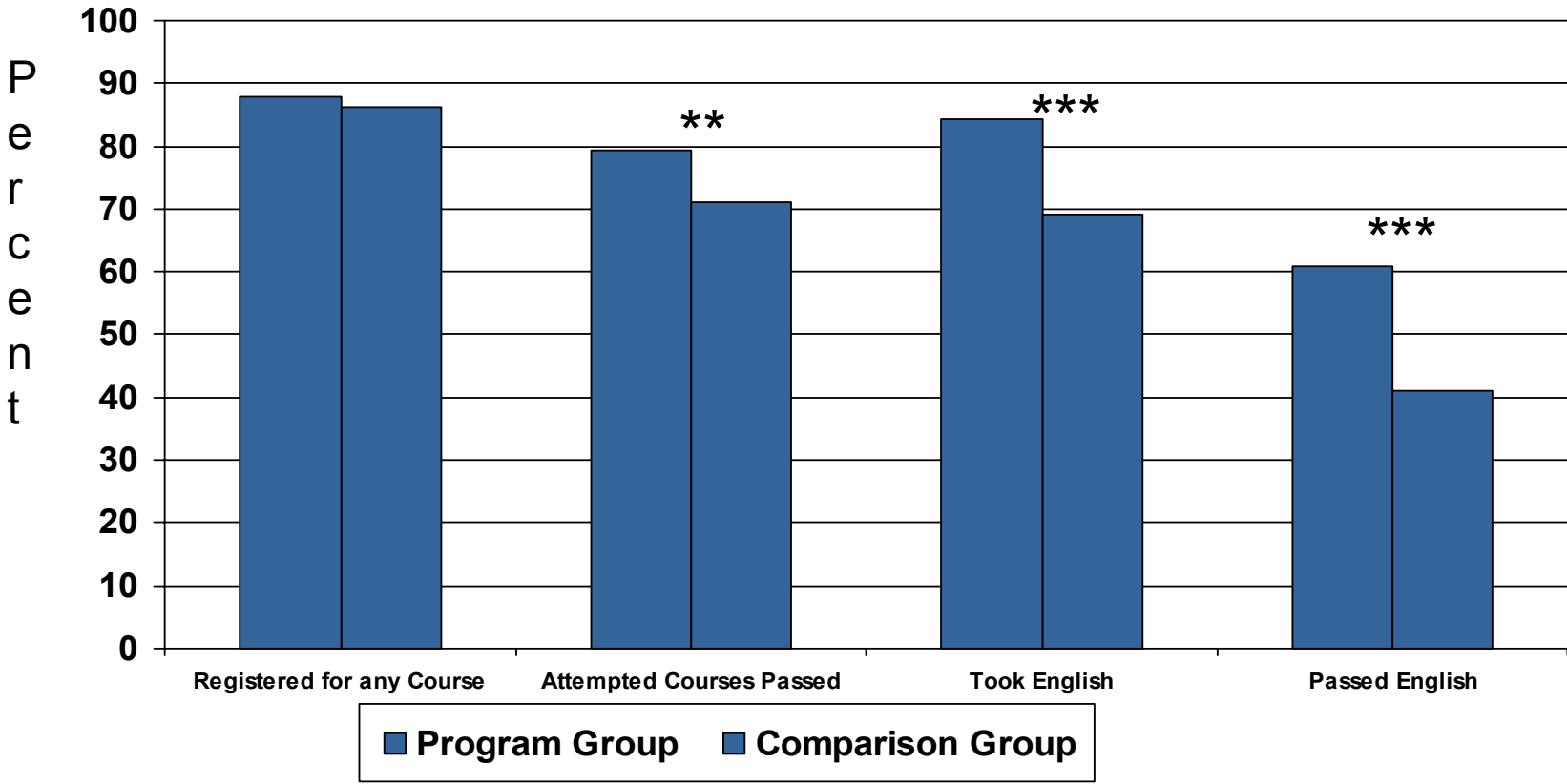
Student Characteristics Louisiana

- All are parents; most are unmarried.**
- New and continuing students.**
- 94 percent female.**
- Predominantly African American.**
- Most are pursuing occupational degrees or certificates.**

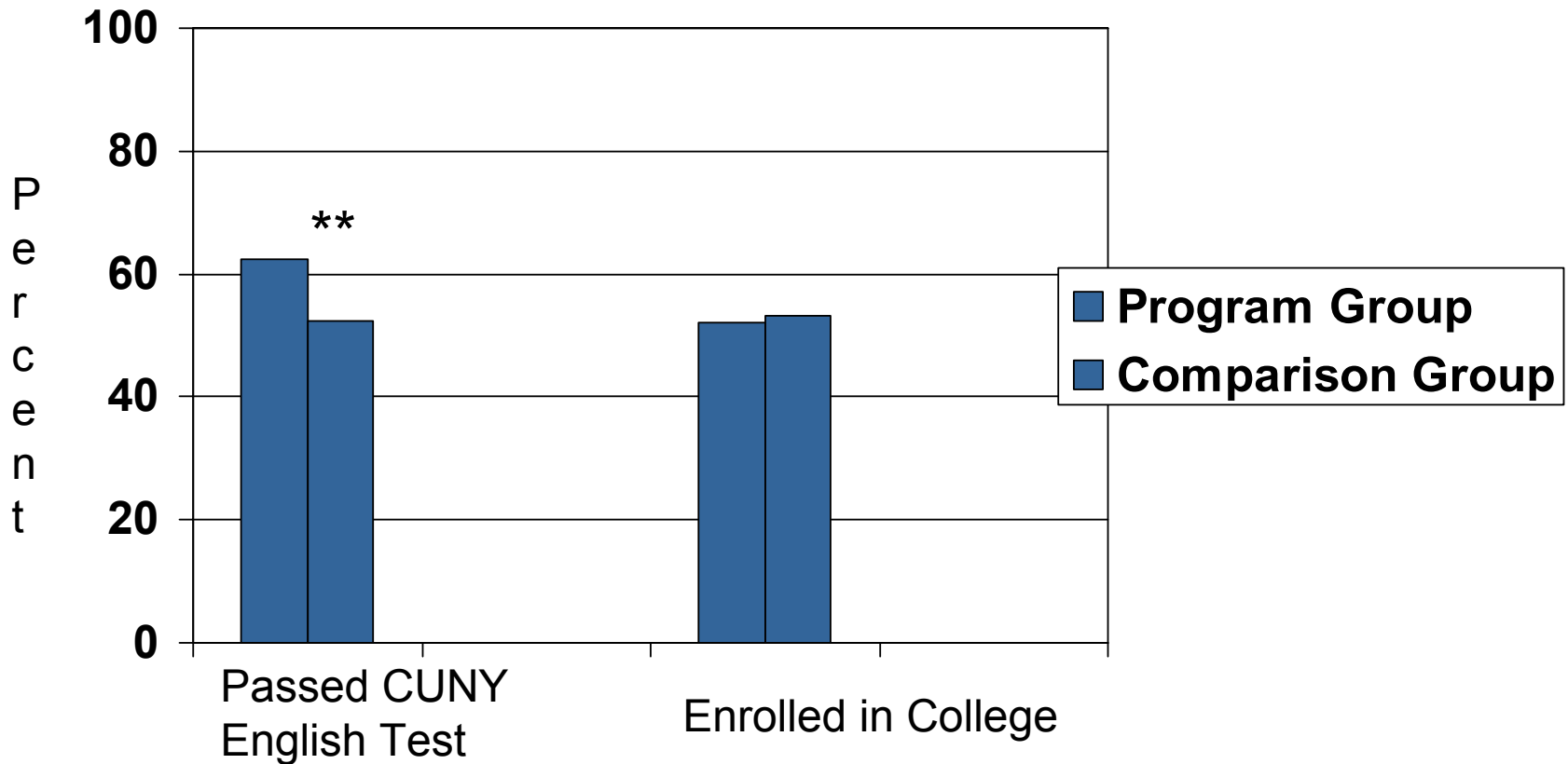
Preliminary Findings

- **Changes in institutional practices can lead to better student outcomes.**
- **Kingsborough's Learning Communities:**
 - **Increased course credits completed**
 - **Helped students pass English requirements**
- **Louisiana's scholarship:**
 - **Increased course credits completed**
 - **Boosted grades**
 - **Led to higher rates of retention**

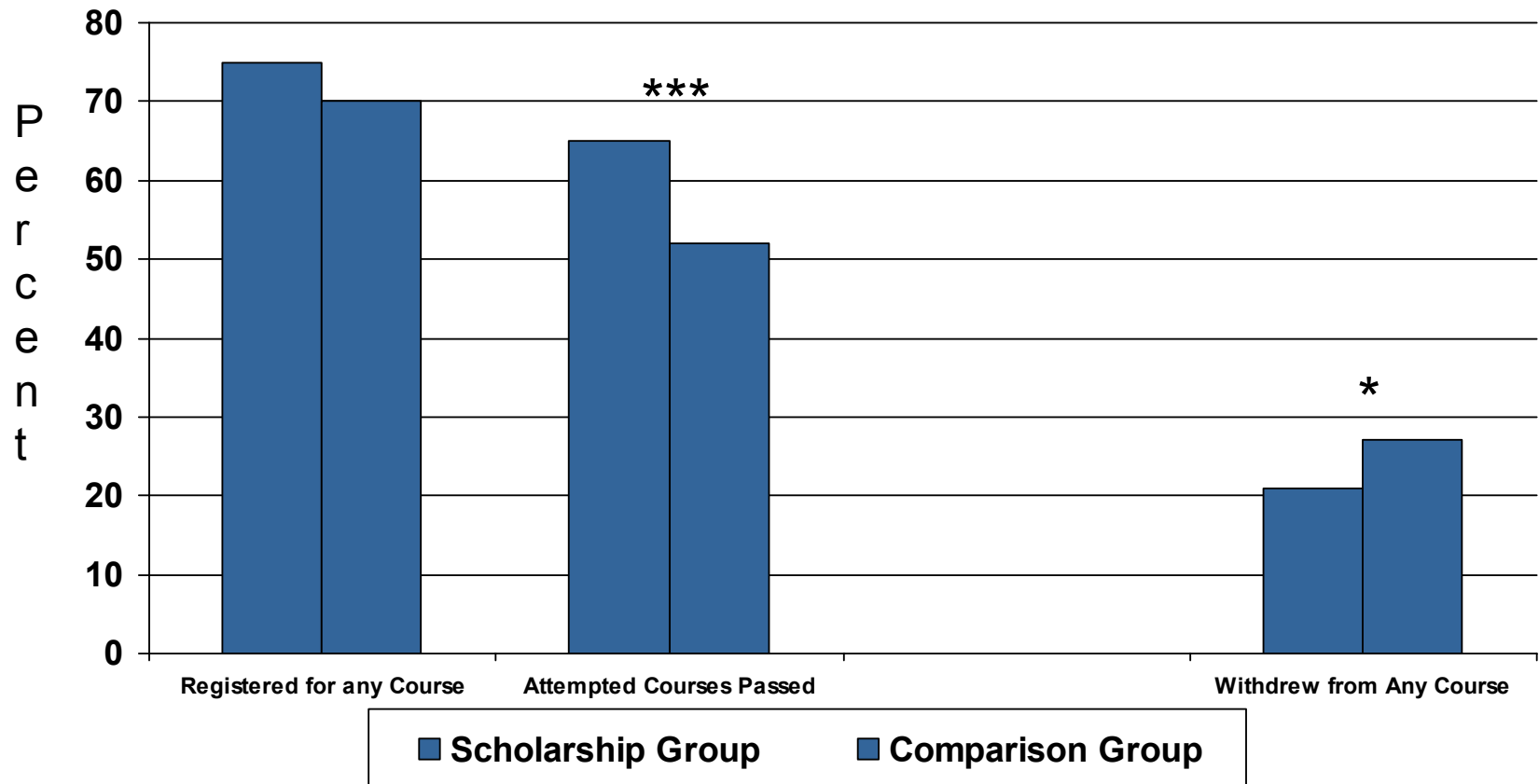
Early Results for Kingsborough's Learning Communities at End of First Semester



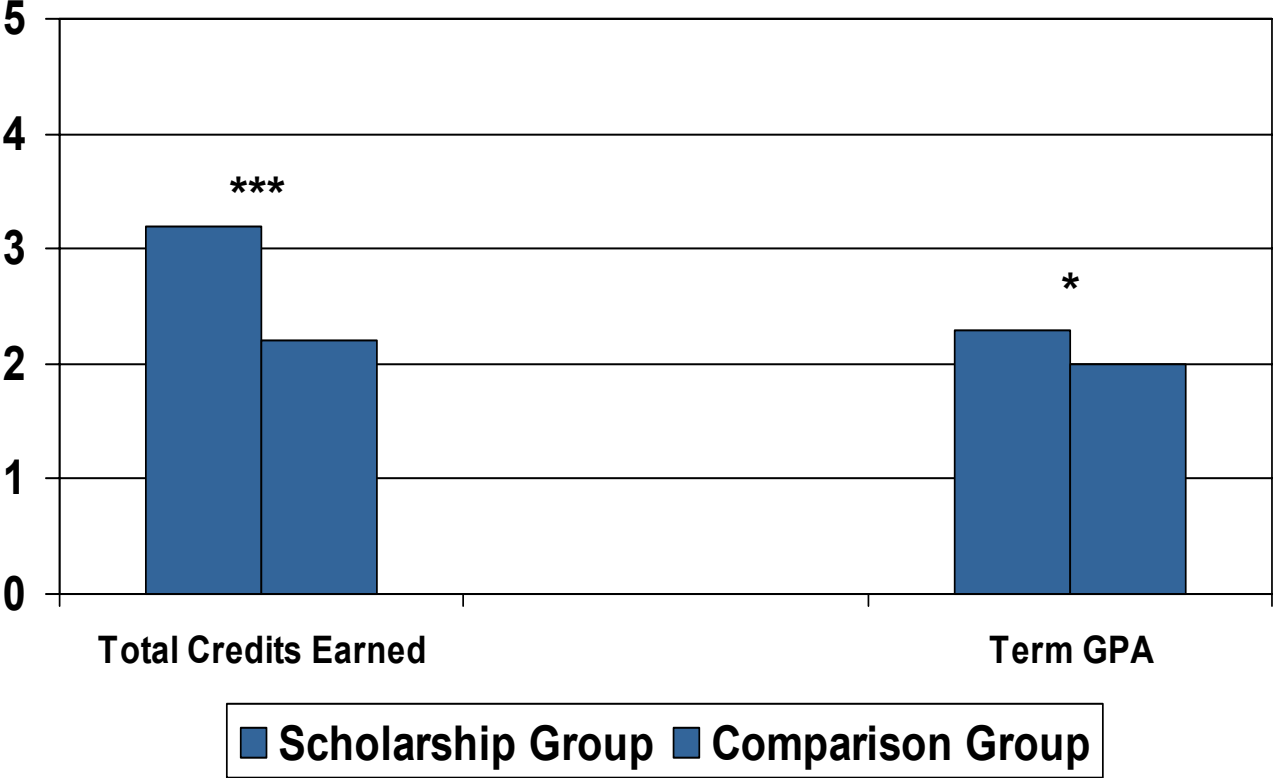
Early Results for Kingsborough's Learning Communities 1 Year Later



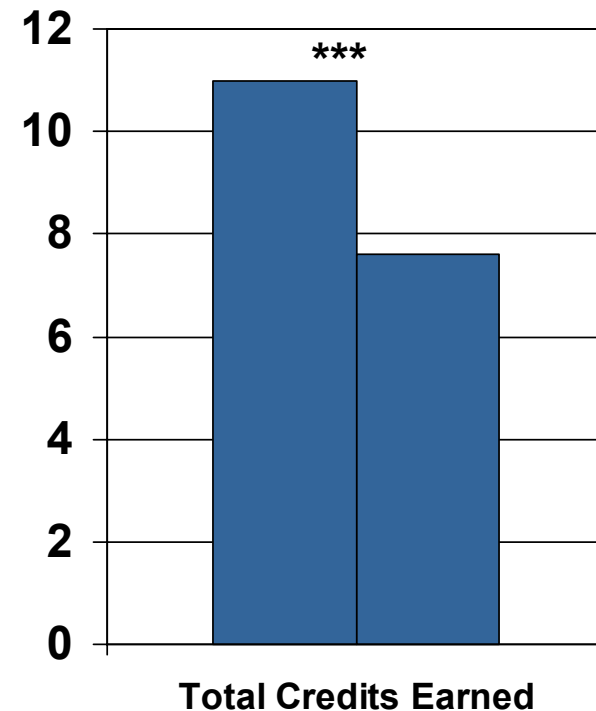
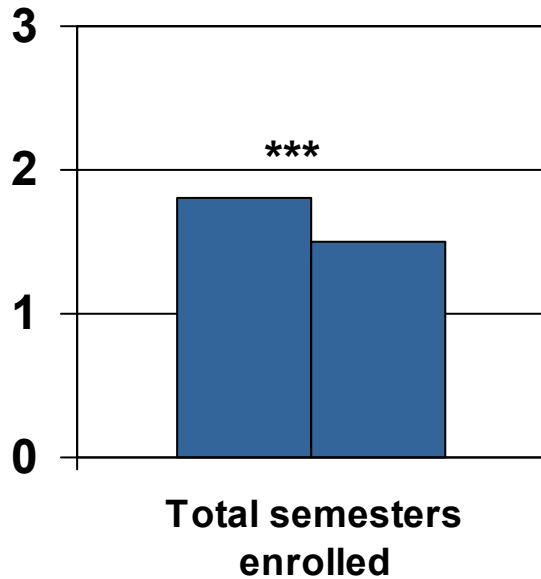
Early Results for Louisiana's Scholarship Program After One Semester



Early Results for Louisiana's Scholarship Program After One Semester



Early Results for Louisiana's Scholarship 1 Year Later



Future Attractions

- **Effects of Enhanced Student Services at Owens (2006)**
- **Findings from Student Surveys at all colleges (2007)**
 - **Academics**
 - **Employment**
 - **Social supports**
 - **Involvement in the community**
 - **Health attitudes and behaviors**

Opening Doors Funders

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Ford Foundation
William T. Grant Foundation
George Gund Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation
James Irvine Foundation
Joyce Foundation
Knowledgeworks Foundation
Lumina Foundation for
Education
John D. and Catherine T.
MacArthur Foundation
MacArthur Foundation Research
Network on Socioeconomic
Status and Health

MacArthur Foundation Research
Network on the Transitions to
Adulthood
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
National Institutes of Health
Princeton University
Industrial Relations Section
Robin Hood Foundation
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Department of Labor

Other Community College Research and Evaluation Activities

- **Achieving the Dream**

- Lumina Foundation initiative targeting 27 colleges in 5 States
- Colleges receive funding and technical assistance to analyze their own student data and implement reforms
- Goal: to raise student achievement, with special focus on low-income and minority students
- MDRC's role: formative evaluation; summative evaluation under discussion

- **Community College Transitions**

- U.S. Department of Education study contracted to Berkeley Policy Associates and MDRC
- Examining community colleges in 4 states that have better-than-average success in moving students from developmental education to college-level work
- Goal: to identify program factors that may explain student success

Evaluation of Youth ChalleNGe

- Program operated by National Guard in 25 states and 1 territory
- Targets school dropouts ages 16-18
- 6 month residential phase focused on education and positive youth development, followed by 1 year of mentoring
- Graduates pursue further education, employment, or military careers
- Evaluation sponsored by Department of Defense and several foundations
 - Implementation and process
 - Impact
 - Cost-benefit