

AERRCT Registration

Promoting College Enrollment among Disadvantaged Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Two Low-Cost Interventions

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This research project is a random assignment evaluation of the effects of two variants of a virtual college counseling intervention designed to reduce informational and social support barriers to college application and enrollment among socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The 15-month intervention was implemented by EdBoost Education Corporation, a Los Angeles non-profit education services provider. The intervention began in the spring of students' junior year and involved students from low-income, predominantly poor, non-white high schools in Southern and Central California. Students were randomly assigned to one of two nested variants of the Virtual Student Outreach for College Enrollment (V-SOURCE) intervention. Students in the Milestones variant received access to a comprehensive website; emails and text messages sent several times a month with information tailored to the timing of particular college access activities and reminders about important deadlines, as well as links to relevant content on the website; and \$20 electronic gift card rewards for completing four key milestones in the college application process. Students assigned to the Complete variant received everything in the Milestones variant plus access to a personal advisor who communicated with the students through emails, texts, phone, and social media.

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Phillips discloses that she co-founded EdBoost, the non-profit organization that developed and implemented the V-SOURCE intervention evaluated in this paper, and served on its board until 2011.

We began this work in 2011 but are registering this plan after completing the analysis to comply with AEA journal requirement that RCTs be registered. While we did not register a pre-analysis plan, the outcomes and sub-groups we consider for our confirmatory analyses are the ones we "pre-specified" as of interest in our choice of blocking variables and largely what we identified in our grant application: "To examine whether the treatment is more effective for particular sub-groups, we will also interact the treatment variables with the moderating variables described above, including gender, parental education, parental language, and time preferences, although power considerations will limit our ability to divide the sample too finely." After writing the grant application but before conducting the analysis, we decided to focus on only demographic sub-groups in the confirmatory sub-group analysis and to use the baseline data we collected on academic achievement and a range of self-perception constructs to explore mechanisms in our exploratory sub-group analyses.