

# Evaluation of the SOURCE Program: An Intervention to Promote College Application and Enrollment among Urban Youth

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### *The SOURCE Program: The Educational Context*

#### **Gaps in College-going among Qualified High School Graduates**

Family income has long played a pivotal role in determining access to higher education for even the most qualified students. Among the high school graduating class of 1992, for example, youth from the highest family income quartile were 30 percentage points more likely to report postsecondary training (90 percent versus 60 percent) and 38 percentage points more likely to report enrollment in a four-year college by 1994 (66 percent versus 28 percent) than youth from the lowest income quartile (Ellwood and Kane 2000). Only about one-half of this difference was attributable to differences in high school grades and test scores (Ellwood and Kane 2000). Moreover, some evidence suggests that gaps in college access by family income have continued to grow (Ellwood and Kane 2000).<sup>1</sup> Considering the importance of a college education for long-term earnings, the college enrollment gap constitutes a major lost opportunity for qualified, lower-income students, the higher education system, and the country as a whole.

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) data, upon which this study focuses, confirm the national finding that low-income students are failing to enroll in four-year colleges for reasons *other than* a lack of academic qualifications. An analysis of publicly available LAUSD data on college-going revealed that, throughout the 1990s, fewer than 20 percent of graduating LAUSD seniors enrolled in a four-year public college in California, even though between 40 and 50 percent were academically eligible for admission to the either the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) systems (Saunders-Newton and Rasmussen 2000). Fewer than half of LAUSD seniors eligible for admission actually enrolled in California public universities. This proportion falls to less than one-third for African-American and Latino students in the district. Given that the majority of students in the district come from low-income families, these data indicate that a lack of resources and guidance, rather than a lack of motivation or ability, inhibited student understanding and successful completion of the college application process.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Effects of Actual and Perceived College Costs on College-going**

Existing research has had limited success in identifying the *precise* factors that explain differences in college entry between high-income and low-income youth with similar academic records. The most extensively tested hypothesis is that college tuition costs have increasingly become a key enrollment barrier. Over the years, numerous studies have examined the impact of various types of tuition and financial aid policies on college-going. In their literature review of student responsiveness to changes in college cost, Leslie and Brinkman (1988) reported a consensus estimate that associated a \$1,000 change in college costs with an approximately five percentage point difference in college enrollment rates.

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<sup>1</sup> Kane (1995) and Manski (1993) report evidence of widening gaps by family income using data from the Current Population Survey.

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Education's publicly available *Ed-Data* shows that 75.4 percent of LAUSD students qualified for free or reduced lunches during the 2002-2003 school year. As is well-known, student eligibility for free or reduced lunch is a commonly accepted measure of income status, i.e. it is a means-tested program.

Additional studies examined inter-state differences in college tuition to determine the impact of tuition costs on enrollment: Cameron and Heckman (1999), Kane (1994), and Kane (1999) compared the college entry rates of otherwise similar youth in high- and low-tuition states. These studies assumed that the relevant price for the “marginal” student was the tuition at public institutions in their state. They evaluated the effect of public school tuition on college-going by comparing college enrollment rates in high- and low-tuition states. Using three different data sets—the October Current Population Survey, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, and the High School and Beyond Survey—they generated estimates consistent with the literature summarized by Leslie and Brinkman: A \$1,000 difference in tuition cost was associated with a six percentage point difference in college-going. Additionally Kane (1994) found a negative and statistically significant effect of tuition costs on African American youth after including state fixed effects, but the coefficient on tuition was no longer significant for whites with the inclusion of state fixed effects (cited in Kane 2007).

### **Effects of Financial Aid on College-going**

Given the sensitivity of college enrollment to tuition costs, the logical hypothesis becomes that availability of financial aid *should* expand college-going. However, several studies examining the impact of the expansion of federal means-tested financial aid programs have found no evidence of increased college enrollment by low-income youth. These studies analyzed college enrollment trends in the aftermath of the establishment of the Pell Grant program in the 1970s. Hansen (1983) first noted that there had been no disproportionate rise in college enrollment by low-income youth following Pell Grant implementation. Although that study was criticized for relying too heavily on only two years of data and for including males whose decisions may have been affected by the end of the Vietnam War, later work (Kane 1994) confirmed that neither the choice of annual end-points nor the inclusion of males had significantly affected the findings. Manski (1993) also reported little evidence of a disproportionate growth in BA completion (as opposed to enrollment) by low-income youth graduating from high school between 1972 and 1980.

One explanation offered for this paradox is that lower-income students and their parents may not be fully informed about the cost of college and their eligibility for financial aid. Ikenberry and Hartle (1998), for example, found that student/parent estimates of tuition costs were three times the actual costs. A second related explanation, discussed below, is that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have difficulty completing the sequential steps required to complete the college application process.

At the same time, several studies examining the impact of financial aid availability on low-income students have found a significant positive impact. Van der Klaauw (2002), for example, examined fellowship offers at a major Eastern university to identify their effect on students' decisions to attend that school. His analysis found that each \$1,000 in aid (in 2001 dollars) raised the likelihood of attending that school by three to four percentage points (cited in Kane 2007).

Leslie and Brinkman (1987) also considered whether aid played some role in college attendance for some students. They sought to understand what proportion would not have gone to college without aid. They found that without aid, low-income student enrollment would have been 20 to 40 percent lower. They also found that without aid, 7.4 to 19.5 percent fewer middle-income students would have enrolled (cited in Long 2007). Dynarski's 2002 review of the literature about quasi-experimental studies found firm evidence that financial aid increased college enrollment. Dynarski also looked at the results of an analysis of several merit-based state aid programs (2004) and found that they generally increased the probability of college attendance for college-age students by five to seven percentage points, and shifted students toward four-year and away from two-year institutions (cited in Long 2007).

Cornwell, Mustard, and Sridhar (2003) also analyzed one merit-based state aid program and found that it increased first year enrollment by 6.9 percentage points, raising enrollment rates for both African-American and white students and in four-year schools (cited in Long 2007). Kane (2003) also analyzed the impact of the Cal Grant program, a state-based merit and means-tested program, and found an impact of three to four percentage points on college enrollment among financial aid applicants, especially for private four-year California colleges (cited in Long 2007).

These two factors taken together—the lack of information about college costs and financial aid availability and the positive impact of aid availability on college enrollment among low-income students—suggest that a program that provides students and their families with accurate information about college costs, along with assistance in identifying and applying for financial aid, has the potential to make a significant difference on college application and enrollment for low-income students.

### **Comprehensive Approaches to Increasing College Enrollment**

A range of state and federal programs, including Upward Bound and Talent Search, currently provide comprehensive, multi-year programs that seek to increase high school completion and college enrollment rates among low-income youth. Evaluations of programs like these have demonstrated the high cost of generating even modest increases in college-going among low-income youth. The Quantum Opportunity Program (QOP), an intensive demonstration program evaluated in the late 1990s, produced modest college enrollment effects by providing disadvantaged youth with a broad set of academic and personal support services throughout their high school years. QOP focused on providing targeted services, rather than formal instruction, to assist students in overcoming personal barriers to college attendance. A random assignment evaluation of QOP showed that it did have a significant impact on college enrollment, with program participants about three percentage points more likely to enroll in a two- or four-year college (Maxfield 2003). But at \$4,000 to \$6,000 per enrollee per year for four years, QOP's operational costs made widespread replication unlikely.

The Upward Bound program generated similarly modest impacts on college enrollment. Established in 1965, Upward Bound enrolls students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade who have low scholastic achievement and demonstrate a high likelihood for school dropout (Myers and Schirm 1999). The program helps these students prepare for and achieve success in postsecondary education through counseling, college application assistance, and supplemental academic instruction. The program had significant impacts on college-going: total postsecondary attendance was three percentage points higher, while four-year college attendance was six percentage points higher for the treatment group than for the control group (Olsen 2003). Like QOP, however, program costs were relatively high at more than \$4,000 per student per year for up to five years.

Estimates of the Upward Bound program's impact on college-going provide a reference point for assessing the impacts of a demonstration program such as the SOURCE Program. Upward Bound seeks to close achievement deficits as well as to help students apply to college. Although the program increased college-going, Olsen (2003) suggested that the portion of the program that was focused on academic achievement had little discernable impact on this particular outcome. The SOURCE evaluation investigates whether a less intensive and less expensive intervention that begins late in students' high school careers can achieve similar impacts on college-going. By starting with high school juniors, SOURCE focused primarily on the high-school-to-college transition rather than on academic qualification. The goal of the SOURCE program is to discover whether or not a less intensive program can have similar effects on college-going among low-income youth, which would allow the resources currently being expended to be used to assist a much larger group of students.

## *The SOURCE Program*

Based on the COACH program, a successful high-school-to-college transition intervention implemented and evaluated in Boston, MA (Kane and Avery 2004), the EdBoost Education Corporation developed and implemented an intervention, entitled SOURCE (Student Outreach for College Enrollment). EdBoost, a nonprofit education service organization located in the Palms district in West Los Angeles, operated the SOURCE program. In addition to SOURCE, EdBoost provides private tutoring services to middle and high school students.

The SOURCE program provided advice, counseling, and oversight to 1000 high school students in LAUSD, with the intent of helping the students understand their college options, the actual cost of attending college, and the requirements of college admission and financial aid. The program also actively helped participants manage and complete specific activities and milestones associated with the college application process. The approximate cost of providing these services was \$1,000 per student.

More specifically, SOURCE staff trained college advisors, themselves undergraduate or graduate students, and matched each of them to 15 high school juniors whom they were to advise. Between May 2006 and May 2007, the advisors worked with these students, guiding them through a sequence of steps including:

- Completion of the SAT, with a sufficiently high score,
- Completion of required coursework (A-G requirements) with an adequate GPA,
- Draft and revision of a college essay,
- Selection of a three-tiered list of colleges to which to apply,
- Completion and online submission of college applications,
- Completion and submission of online and other applications for scholarships and financial aid (including the FAFSA and assistance with parents' tax preparation),<sup>3</sup> and
- Choice of an appropriate college among those to which the student was accepted.

The advisors did not provide significant material or academic assistance, but rather advice, reminders, and encouragement through regular meetings, phone calls, email, and other exchanges. Because each advisor had approximately 15 assigned students, their time with each one was necessarily limited. We provide further detail on each of these steps in the report's program implementation section below.

Prior to program implementation, Berkeley Policy Associates (BPA) designed an implementation and outcomes study of the SOURCE program, in order to document all program components and determine program impact, and worked with EdBoost to fund the study through the William T. Grant Foundation and two grants from the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. As discussed further below, BPA participated in student recruitment and data collection during all phases of implementation, as well as collected outcomes data at program conclusion and one-year post-program completion.

During the implementation year of this study, EdBoost employed 67 advisors and three coordinators, two of whom also served as advisors, for the SOURCE program. Advisors received a monthly salary for their work, as well as bonuses for student achievement of various milestones.

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<sup>3</sup> FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid, a form to help undergraduate and graduate students determine their eligibility for federal aid, including Stafford loans, Pell grants, PLUS loans and work-study programs, also used for state and school aid programs.

Although the SOURCE intervention depended to a great extent on the initiative and persistence of the college advisors, the advisors also received extensive training and supervision. EdBoost developed a detailed curriculum to train the advisors, and organized a series of half-day training sessions for them that included training in all aspects of the college application process, the financial aid application process, and specific techniques to increase student engagement, participation, and success. The program coordinators used an elaborate management information system (MIS) to monitor student activities and progress through advisors' weekly reporting on each of their students. Most of the participation data discussed further below is extracted from that system.

In addition to offering the assistance of a college advisor and support for timely completion of financial aid applications, SOURCE also provided participants and their parents with free tax preparation services for the 2006 tax year. For this purpose, BPA entered into an agreement with H&R Block and offered all participants vouchers for free tax preparation in February 2007. Only a handful of participants, however, utilized this service. It appeared that most participants whose parents were filing a 2006 tax return had already done so and those who had not either were not attracted by the H&R Block offer or failed to respond for other reasons.

## *Evaluation Study Design*

### **Research Questions**

The primary research question for this project is whether a streamlined, relatively inexpensive, counseling-based program that assists low-income high school students with the college application process can significantly increase college enrollment rates among this population. The intervention is designed to test the hypothesis emerging from extant research that lack of information is a primary barrier to successful college application and enrollment among low-income high school students. The specific research questions include the following:

- Are low-income students more likely to register for and take the SAT if counseled on how and when to register and prepare for the test?
- Are low-income students more likely to apply for college if they receive regular counseling and advice on how to navigate the application process? Are they more likely to apply to a larger number of colleges? To higher quality colleges?
- Are low-income students more likely to submit a completed FAFSA if instructed on how to complete and when to submit it?
- Are college-eligible low-income students more likely to enroll in a postsecondary program directly after high school if given regular advice and guidance on how to complete all of the aspects of the college application process?
- Are college-eligible low-income students more likely to receive financial aid if given regular advice and guidance on how to complete all of the aspects of the college and financial aid application process? Are they eligible to receive financial aid? How much financial aid do they receive?
- Are college-eligible low-income students more likely to complete college credits if given regular advice and guidance on how to complete all of the aspects of the college application process? How many credits do they complete?

The SOURCE demonstration employed a classic experimental design, relying on random assignment of individual research subjects to two research groups (treatment and control) as the only source of inference for the estimation of program impacts. As described in greater detail below, BPA assigned one set of applicants to a treatment group to receive the intervention, and the other to a control group that did not receive it. The use of random assignment enables the evaluation to determine whether the proposed intervention had the expected positive impacts on SAT taking, college application, college enrollment, and financial aid receipt.

## **Evaluation Study Implementation**

*The implementation of the evaluation of the SOURCE program is described in detail below.*

### Program Recruitment

In late 2005 and early 2006, in collaboration with LAUSD, BPA and EdBoost recruited 2500 high school juniors with a GPA of 2.5 or higher to participate in the study. Student GPAs and course-taking patterns indicated that these students would be able to meet enrollment criteria for the California State University system. In return for their participation in the study, each of the students was given a gift certificate for a movie ticket. Recruitment began in December 2005 and was completed in February 2006. All applicants completed a detailed enrollment form, which collected demographic background data and data on educational achievement, aspirations, and expectations, among other elements. LAUSD conducted a data match of program applicants to verify student eligibility (based on year in school, GPA, and enrollment in an LAUSD school).

### Random Assignment

After completing recruitment, BPA randomly assigned students to either the treatment or control group in a 2:3 ratio. We assigned approximately 1000 students to the program group and 1500 students to the control group. A small sub-sample of control group students was randomly selected to replace program group students whom advisors were unable to contact. After one month, 61 program slots were filled with these replacement students, who were then counted as part of the program group. (No original program group students were dropped from the study). Thus, the final sample consisted of 2,499 students, of which 1,051 were in the program group and 1,448 were in the control group. We conducted random assignment in a blocked fashion, with high school and gender as the two blocking variables.

### Implementation Data

Following baseline data collection (in the form of program application and informed consent documents), the study relied on a variety of data sources to document program implementation, assess student participation, and estimate program impacts. As discussed above, program participation data were available from an EdBoost management information system, developed and hosted by America Learns. Data from this system were collected and processed by BPA and converted into a normalized set of monthly variables for analysis and reporting. Program implementation was documented through a series of site visits, which included three focus groups with approximately 30 of the 67 college advisors; multiple semi-structured, in-depth interviews with all SOURCE program staff; and email and phone correspondence with program staff to discuss implementation issues as they arose. BPA researchers also observed four of the six advisor training sessions. Preliminary analysis of implementation data is presented below. At the end of the program year (May 2007), BPA researchers also conducted an online survey of college advisors. Survey data analysis will be included in future reports.

BPA designed a survey of the control group, which was implemented by Survey Research Management (SRM) of Boulder, CO, in May – August 2007. This survey focused on college and financial aid-related, non-program services received by the control group and on their pre-college and financial aid application activities. Discussion of these data is included below.

### College Outcomes Data

LAUSD provided follow-up data on all study participants. In fall 2007, LAUSD reported data on course-taking, GPA, and high school graduation. In winter 2008, LAUSD staff conducted a data match with data from the National Student Clearinghouse, which captures college enrollment.

In June 2008, SRM began fielding a BPA-designed survey of all study participants. This follow-up survey seeks to capture participant outcomes after those enrolled have completed their first year in college. The objective is to describe how students who enroll in college perform once they are there. Two of the research questions that this survey is designed to address are 1) whether the services provided by SOURCE advisors (which ended with students' high school graduation) continue to benefit program participants, and 2) whether the difference in college enrollment between the treatment and control groups dissipates as college-enrolled students confront the realities of being college students. This survey will also confirm the results of the data match with the National Student Clearinghouse data, and will describe what students who did not go to college are doing instead.

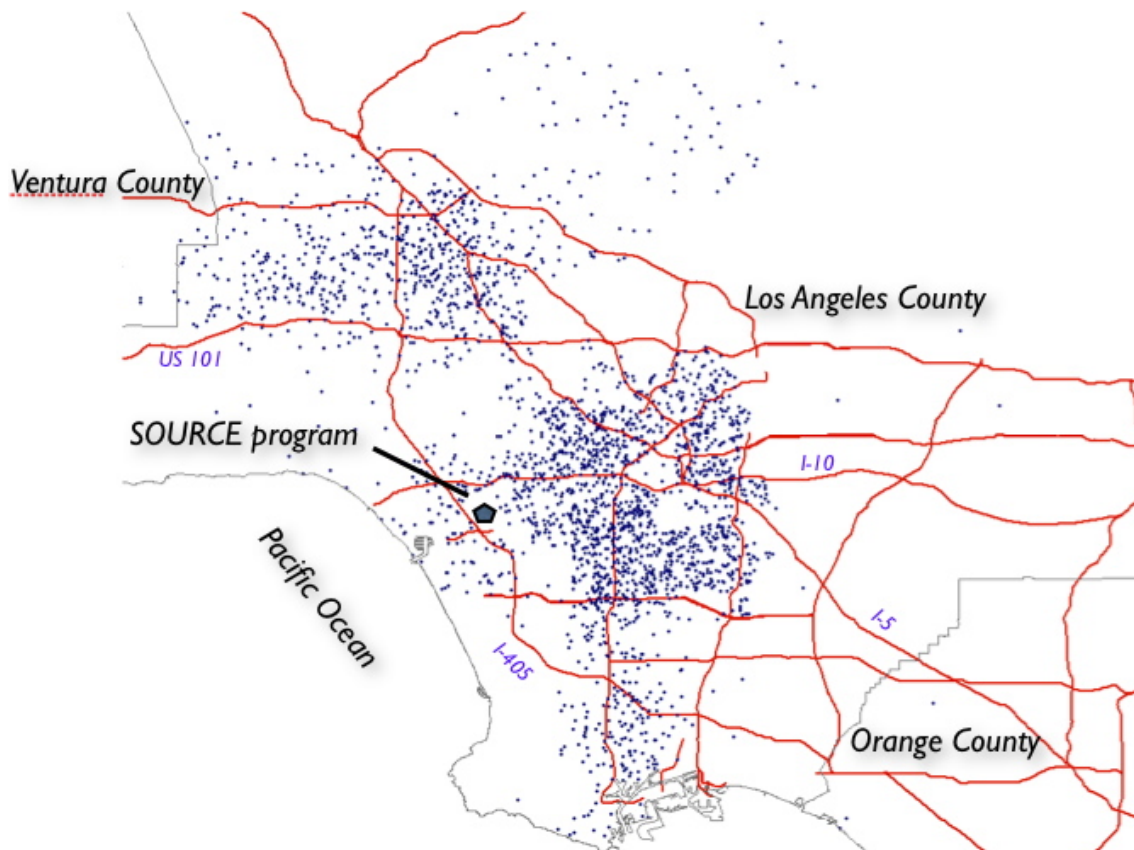
The experimental design of the study and the extensive baseline data collected when students applied to the program will allow us to estimate program effects (and describe program implementation) for a variety of different subgroups. We currently plan to estimate impacts by gender, ethnicity, native language, prior academic performance, educational expectations, extant knowledge of college expenses, and high school attended. We will also analyze whether implementation varied significantly by advisor, which is an important measure of the robustness and integrity of the overall program model.

## II. SOURCE Evaluation Study Sample Members

### Sample Characteristics

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the SOURCE sample across the Los Angeles area. The figure demonstrates how widely distributed the sample was across the city. This further suggests that results may be generalizable to the eligible high school population citywide.

**Figure 1**  
**Geographic Distribution of SOURCE Sample Members**



Source: BPA tabulation of SOURCE application data.

Note: Each blue dot represents one sample member. Geographic location is approximate based on zip code. Sample members in outlying areas are depicted as living in the center of their zip code, which is not always close to their actual physical address.

Because many of the advisors were recruited from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Southern California (USC), and participants were widely distributed throughout the city, most in-person meetings required significant advisor travel. As will become evident from the participation data presented below, this resulted in a relatively low number of in-person meetings and relatively little in-person contact between advisors and students.

In terms of demographics, Table 1 below shows a number of key characteristics of the sample.<sup>4</sup> It indicates that the majority of sample members (69.5 percent) were female, and that Latino was the dominant ethnicity (62.0 percent). English was most frequently cited as the student’s primary language (57.6 percent), followed by Spanish (45.3 percent).

**Table 1  
Demographic and Other Background Characteristics of the SOURCE Sample**

	Full Sample
Gender	
Female (%)	69.5
Male (%)	30.5
Ethnicity	
Asian or Pacific Islander (%)	14.1
Black (%)	12.8
Latino (%)	62.0
White (%)	10.0
Primary language	
English (%)	57.6
Spanish (%)	45.3
Other (%)	7.5
Expressed likelihood of 4 year college attendance	
Very unlikely (%)	1.0
Somewhat unlikely (%)	6.5
Somewhat likely (%)	29.6
Very likely (%)	63.5
Sample size	2,499

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE application data.

### **Course Taking and Other Educational Background Characteristics**

To ensure that the SOURCE program would be able to help LAUSD juniors achieve their college objectives, the program design specified that applicants should be on track to meet California State University admission requirements. The application form described this as follows: “If you are starting your junior year, expect to graduate in June 2007, and have completed two years of college prep English classes and Algebra I (with a grade of C or better), you are eligible to apply.” Self-reported data from the baseline forms (verified with LAUSD administrative data matches) confirmed that the vast majority of participants met these requirements. Not every participating student had completed the three primary requirements (Algebra I, 9<sup>th</sup> grade English, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade English), due to school transfers and other administrative issues, but as Table 2 shows, the majority of sample members had. Table 2 also shows which other classes the students reported completing before applying to SOURCE, and how they performed in these classes.

<sup>4</sup> More background data are available on each student, including self-reported course-taking patterns, GPA, and other demographic and educational variables. These data will be presented in an interim report that will be released later this summer.

**Table 2**  
**Sample Members' High School Course Taking Patterns**

Course	Percent completed	Grade average	Percent earning grade		
			A	A or B	A, B, or C
Courses required by the program					
Algebra 1	92.8	3.1	47.4	79.5	98.3
9th grade English	85.7	3.2	51.1	88.5	99.7
10th grade English	97.4	3.3	54.7	90.8	96.0
Other regular courses					
Algebra 2	60.0	2.9	38.2	71.8	93.3
Geometry	94.3	2.8	34.7	70.9	96.0
Trigonometry	18.4	2.9	37.7	69.2	93.9
Foreign Language 1	87.4	3.3	58.3	86.3	98.3
Foreign Language 2	66.0	3.3	56.1	86.9	98.2
Foreign Language 3	13.0	3.4	57.9	89.6	98.6
Biology	87.2	3.1	45.1	83.0	97.6
Chemistry	44.3	2.9	38.7	71.4	95.8
World History	82.4	3.2	51.6	85.5	98.3
Physical Science	31.7	3.3	55.3	85.6	93.9
Drama Dance Music Theatre Art	37.9	3.7	80.2	96.5	99.9
Advanced placement courses					
Biology	8.6	2.9	37.8	70.8	93.5
Chemistry	3.2	2.7	28.0	56.0	93.3
European History	6.7	3.1	45.5	80.0	98.8
World History	10.6	3.2	46.8	82.7	97.2

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE baseline data.

In addition to Algebra I, most students had completed Geometry, Biology, a foreign language, and World History. With the exception of Geometry, four out of five students earned at least a B in each of these classes. On a 0-4 scale, the average grade across all of the courses shown here was 3.1, or a solid B (weighted for the number of students reporting taking each course). With the exception of AP Chemistry (which relatively few students took), each course saw at least 70 percent of SOURCE participants earning a B or higher. This demonstrates how most participating students were likely to meet the entry requirements for the California State University system *prior to* applying to the SOURCE Program. Were they to continue with these kinds of curricula, many of them would likely have qualified for admission to the more selective University of California campuses as well.

Table 3 highlights several steps that SOURCE applicants had already taken toward college application prior to program application. More than half of the sample reported attending a college fair, two-thirds visited a college campus, and more than one in five had already requested college application materials. The large majority of SOURCE applicants (82.8 percent) also had already taken a college placement test, such as the SAT, ACT, or PSAT. These data represent additional indicators that SOURCE applicants were already on track to apply to college prior to program enrollment.

**Table 3**  
**Sample Members’ Prior College Activity**

	Percent
Attended college fair	52.3
Visited college	66.1
Requested information from college	61.7
Requested college application	22.8
Took a college placement test (SAT, ACT, etc.)	82.8

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE baseline data.

Finally, Table 4 captures some relevant educational background variables of sample members’ parents and siblings. The table shows that many of the sample members’ parents had not completed high school. Only 63.3 percent of the SOURCE applicants had a parent with a high school diploma. About half of those also had a parent who had graduated from college (30.5 percent of the sample overall). And lastly, about one in five sample members had an older sibling who had either completed college or was attending college at the time of program application. Hence, there is a great deal of variation in relevant family background variables among the sample members in the study.

**Table 4**  
**High School and College Attainment of Sample Members’ Parents and Siblings**

	Percent
Parent has a high school diploma	63.3
Parent has a college degree	30.5
Sibling graduated from or in college	21.4

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE baseline data.

Overall, 93.1 percent of students said that they were at least ‘somewhat likely’ to attend a four-year college, with close to two-thirds reporting that they were ‘very likely’ to attend such a college. None of the program/control group differences shown in this table were statistically significant, an indication that the random assignment procedure was executed successfully.

### III. SOURCE Program Implementation

#### The SOURCE Program Curriculum

The curriculum for the SOURCE program served as the primary resource for program advisors to use in working on the college and financial aid application process with their students. The program Executive Director (ED), in conjunction with the Senior Program Coordinator (who had worked as a private college admissions counselor), created the curriculum for the program. The ED utilized established college advising materials (from conferences), SAT preparation materials, and books aimed at parents as resources for her development of the SOURCE curriculum. She tried to conceptualize what kinds of supports students in more privileged positions might receive in seeking college admission, such as SAT preparation or a counselor to help ensure that they had taken the right classes and followed the necessary steps toward completing the admissions process.

She also sought to consolidate these numerous resources so that they would apply to all types of schools to which students might apply: UCs, CSUs, private, and out-of-state schools. She sought to organize the materials to align with advisors “walk[ing] the students through it [the application process].” In the end, she used only “bits and pieces” from any one existing source, and instead authored an entirely new curriculum for the program.

Pedagogically, she sought to give the curriculum “balance” so that it could give the students options and help them understand who they are and “how to maximize potential.” She wanted to give them both information and an advisor to help them translate this information into action so that participants could “deliver” the applications themselves. For example, advisors could explain grammar points to students but could not edit college admissions essays for them. The goal was for the curriculum to give advisors a tool to use as they sat down with students and walked them through the college and financial aid application process, without completing any of the individual steps for them. Delivery was to be personalized but respectful of boundaries, to help participants reserve the option of going to college, even if they had some ambivalence or questions about actually attending.

Advisors received a curriculum binder with a program overview at their initial training, and received additional labeled sections with each additional training. According to the ED, she developed much of the curriculum as they went along. However, she felt that this did not always work very well, since issues (for example, with financial aid applications), arose prior to the scheduled training and completion of curricular material. She felt strongly that advisors should receive the entire curriculum at their first training so that they could refer to it as questions arose. Having this additional time to review the curriculum might also encourage the advisors to read it, since she felt that many appeared not to have read it or used it as a key resource as much as they might have, once they had received it.

The ED designed the SOURCE curriculum to help advisors support students’ completion of program components, providing, for example, work sheets to help them calculate their GPA or A-G requirements. Advisors received both an Advisor Manual and a 150-page Student Workbook to guide them in advising their students. As indicated in Table 5 below, both of these resources contained information about the SOURCE Program, how to support students during and with the college and financial aid application processes, and how to track student progress toward key program milestones.

**Table 5**  
**Advisor and Student Manuals**

Advisor Manual	Advisor-Student Workbook
List of Advisor Duties	A five page Student Questionnaire to use at first advisor-student meeting
Student Contact Log	Program Milestone Checklist
SOURCE Milestone Checklist	GPA Worksheet
Getting to Know your Student: First Meeting Information and Intake Questionnaire	CSU/UC Course Requirement Checklist
Why Go to College? Information	SAT/ACT Resources (deadlines, registration, practice tests, etc)
College Application Calendar	College Search Resources
UC/CSU Application Process and Checklist	College Admission Essay Writing Resources
Admissions Exams Information	Sample College Applications
College Search Process Resources	Financial Aid Search Applications
Admissions Essay Writing Resources	FAFSA and Cal Grant Applications
Application Resources (advisor roles, online worksheets, letters of recommendation)	Information about AB540 Non-resident Tuition Exemptions
Financial Aid and Scholarship Search Deadlines and Resources	College Preparation Materials
FAFSA Worksheet	
Information on Completing the SOURCE Program	
Resources for College Choice and Transition	
SOURCE Reporting Guidelines and Resources	
American Learns database instructions (to enter weekly information about each student)	

Advisors were expected to use these binders of information in tandem to help guide and support their students as they sought to navigate and successfully complete college and financial aid application processes through their junior and senior years in high school.

### Advisor Recruitment

Recruitment for SOURCE program advisors began in fall 2005. The Executive Director (ED) sent job announcements to personal contacts as well as through a mass mailing to graduate and undergraduate advisors at UCLA and USC in a number of academic departments (science, humanities, social sciences, and interdisciplinary programs: Chicano Studies, Policy Studies, and African-American Studies). Many of these programs forwarded the announcements to other area schools (e.g. Cal Poly, Pomona). The ED also posted announcements on area college online employment boards, departmental listservs, Idealist.com, and Craigslist, with the listservs appearing to be the most effective form of advisor recruitment. The timeline for recruitment, interviewing, and hiring was approximately two and a half months, which was much too short, in the opinion of all program staff. They felt that a longer recruitment period and a larger number of applicants would have given them a larger candidate pool from which to choose those who appeared to understand the time commitment and level of effort the advisor positions involved.

The program received applications from students at UCLA and USC, as well as from some of the California State Universities (CSUs), even though they did not directly recruit there, suggesting that word of mouth played a role in advisor recruitment. The ED deemed the quality of many of the CSU applications “low” and decided not to pursue most of the candidates from the CSU group, although they did pursue some. In all, they received around 200 applications, of whom the ED and Senior Program Coordinator interviewed 90-100 candidates.

They hired 65 advisors, as well as two full-time program coordinators who also served as student advisors (for a total of 67 advisors). Criteria for hiring included prior experience working with students, writing experience, and—especially—personal motivation for seeking the position. Many of the applicants came from low-income families and had not known how to apply to college but had successfully matriculated because of a mentoring program. The ED felt that applicants who did not share this type of background with the target population might have a more difficult time navigating cultural differences, regardless of the applicants’ technical or academic skills. Thus, she sought in advisors the ability to articulate a clear motivation for seeking the position, motivation that she felt would keep them committed to the program and their students, as well as such technical skills as good SAT scores and strong academic records. Although EdBoost did not impose any particular ethnic, gender, or educational distribution among advisors, the program received more applications from women candidates and from LAUSD graduates.

In the end, most of the advisors chosen were from UCLA and were of the first generation in their families to attend college. The ED found that, in general, undergraduates were better advisors than graduate students, possibly because the latter may have been too busy with their own studies and did not appear to be as “morally obligated” to the job as did the undergraduate advisors. She also found that those advisors who had grown up in L.A. and attended LAUSD schools were the best advisors. Bilingual advisors proved particularly effective, especially for communicating with parents.

After choosing the advisors, the ED used the advisors’ geographical location and school preferences to assign each one a group of 15 students. Program staff showed the advisors a map of LAUSD and asked them to choose a set of schools with which to work. Most advisors were paired with students from no more than two different schools. They also sought to assign school alumni to their alma maters, bilingual (Spanish-speaking) advisors to schools with higher Spanish-speaking populations, and to match students and advisors by gender, although this was not always possible.

Initially, advisor attrition proved very high, around 20 percent, but after implementing stricter criteria for new hires, the ED was able to reduce attrition. During program implementation approximately 20 of the advisors were “outstanding,” offering their students additional workshops on essay writing, SAT preparation sessions, films, campus visits, and other activities neither required nor suggested by SOURCE staff. Two advisors worked together to create a free SAT workshop for all students enrolled in the SOURCE program, while others organized campus visits together. The majority of the advisors—well over half—regularly met with their students, and achieved all program milestones. (See below for further detail on advisor/student meeting frequency and format, as well as student achievement of program milestones.) According to EdBoost staff, they assessed advisors several weeks into the program, and found that about ten of them were less effective than desired at making and maintaining contact with their students. EdBoost staff “lean[ed] on them a lot” to ensure that they fulfilled their advising obligations. Staff felt that these advisors were improving, although they would continue to require more guidance and monitoring.

## Study Sample Recruitment

Program participant recruitment began in late fall 2005 and continued through February 2006. BPA and EdBoost collaborated with LAUSD to recruit participants. LAUSD initially identified some 15,000 eligible students in the district, but ultimately sent some 60,000 mailings about the program to potentially eligible students. According to the ED, this mass mailing garnered the most program applications. At the same time, when comparing the size and cost of the mailing to the number of applications it yielded, it may not have been the most cost effective recruitment method.

Other recruitment efforts included the ED and the Senior Program Coordinator (who had worked for LAUSD), visiting a number of district high schools to meet with college counselors and give presentations about the SOURCE program. They found the majority of counselors receptive to SOURCE. Additionally, staff posted applications and flyers at LAUSD schools; called additional high school guidance counselors to inform them about the program and to ask them to publicize it with their students; and, along with BPA staff, provided program information and applications to potential participants at area college fairs. Staff attended a number of these college fairs with varying degrees of recruitment success. One fair at a CSU campus proved very successful, giving staff an opportunity to talk about the program with a large number of students (approximately 150) who could then immediately complete applications, while their accompanying parents could complete the informed consent forms. At another fair, called “Cash for College,” parents were not involved and thus recruitment efforts were less effective, since students had to take applications home for parental signature, which decreased the likelihood that they would be returned to SOURCE.

Program applicants completed a detailed enrollment form, which collected demographic background data, data on current educational status (GPA and course distribution to determine alignment with CSU enrollment criteria), educational aspirations and expectations, as well as contact information. Each student who completed an application either in person or by mail received a gift certificate for a movie ticket in the mail. Many staff members felt that while the movie ticket was a major incentive, it might have been better not to offer it, since numerous applications were submitted by students who appeared *only* to want the movie ticket. SOURCE staff felt that there would be enough interest in a free program to support college and financial aid application among LAUSD students to mitigate the need for this kind of incentive.

Recruitment efforts yielded over 3000 students for the program. Through administrative data match, LAUSD staff verified applicant program eligibility, including (a) enrollment in LAUSD high schools; (b) current year in high school (junior year for eligibility); and (c) a GPA of 2.5 or higher. The verification process resulted in identifying 2500 students eligible for the study, all of whom were then randomly assigned to the treatment or control condition, in a 2:3 ratio of approximately 1000 treatment and 1500 control group members.<sup>5</sup>

The program required advisors to make initial contact with all 15 of their assigned students, at least by phone, by April 3, 2006 (within two weeks of assignment). The majority of advisors were able to contact all of their students within two weeks. When all attempts at contact during the initial two-week period failed, advisors worked with the ED to replace non-responsive students, although none of them were actually dropped from the study.

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<sup>5</sup> As indicated above, evaluation staff conducted random assignment in a blocked fashion, with high school attended and gender as the two blocking variables. Staff also randomly selected a small sub-sample of control group students to replace unresponsive treatment group students, none of whom were removed from the study. This resulted in 1051 in the treatment group and 1488 in the control group.

## Advisor Profiles

The advisors had varied and diverse backgrounds. As shown in Table 6, the majority were women (82 percent). As shown above in Table 1, the majority of study sample members were also women (69 percent), although this was a lower percentage than among the advisors. Like their students, advisors came from ethnically diverse backgrounds: approximately 41 percent were of Latino ethnicity; nearly 20 percent white; nearly 20 percent African American; 11 percent Asian; and 8 percent Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. As indicated above in Table 1, evaluation baseline data show that the study sample comprised 63 percent Latino, 13 percent African American, ten percent white, close to ten percent Asian and four percent Filipino participants. Thus, while not perfectly parallel, the ethnic diversity of the advisors and study sample members occurred in a similar ratio. This parallel ethnic ratio held for the advisors and program group members (as distinct from all participants) as well.

**Table 6**  
**Who are the Advisors? (%)**

<i>Gender</i>	
Female	82.3
Male	17.7
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
White	19.4
Black or African American	19.4
Latino/Hispanic	41.9
Asian	11.3
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	8.1
American Indian or Alaskan Native	-
Other	-
<i>Educational Status</i>	
Undergraduate	53.2
Graduate	29.0
Graduated	17.7
<i>Advisor Before?</i>	
Yes	66.1
No	33.9
<i># of Advisors</i>	62

Source: Advisor Survey Data Spring 2007

The majority of advisors (53 percent) were undergraduates during their tenure as advisors, while about one-third (29 percent) were graduate students and nearly one-fifth (18 percent) had graduated and were no longer in school. The majority (66 percent) had some type of experience as a student advisor but one-third (34 percent) had not previously worked in this capacity.

It is also interesting to note that approximately 97 percent of advisors reported English as their language of first competence, but 86 percent also had at least some, and often fluent, Spanish language proficiency. Among the study sample members, 58 percent cited English as their primary language and 45 percent cited Spanish. The questions with regard to language were asked very differently of advisors and study sample members, so it is not possible to determine specific ratios but it appeared that there were high levels of English and Spanish proficiency among advisors, which, as many advisors reported in focus groups, was helpful in working with their students and especially with parents, some of whom did not speak English.

Undergraduate advisor areas of study included social justice, psychology, education, psycho-biology, Chicano Studies, microbiology and, among graduate students, social work, early childhood education, political science, history, ethnic studies, anthropology and law. Among focus group participants, almost all reported having at least some tutoring background prior to working with SOURCE, including tutoring 'at risk' kids, teaching bible study, working in classrooms, elementary school age tutoring, tutoring English language learners (ELLs), teaching kindergarten, mentoring, and tutoring underprivileged high school kids in math.

When asked about why they decided to become a SOURCE Program advisor, close to one-third (29 percent) reported that they did so because they "enjoy working with youth," while a little over one-quarter (26 percent) reported an "interest in education." Close to 20 percent "wanted to give back to the community," and almost 18 percent did it for the "experience." Only about 5 percent reported that they become an advisor for the "money." In focus groups, several individuals explained that they had become SOURCE advisors because they themselves had not known how to apply for college or financial aid and wanted to help students navigate these processes as, or more, effectively than they themselves had.

### **Advisor Training**

The SOURCE implementation plan included a schedule of six advisor trainings: two in March 2006, one in June 2006, one during the fall of 2006, one in December 2006, and one during the spring of 2007. Included in this plan was the possibility of an additional training, should the ED see a need among the advisors for further guidance on the program curriculum. The program required that all advisors attend all scheduled trainings and, in practice, the majority of advisors did attend all trainings (see **Figure 2 below**). The ED did not feel that the advisors needed any additional trainings. Each training lasted from two to two-and-a-half hours, and took place either on a Saturday morning or in the late afternoon.

The purpose of the training sessions was to help advisors understand how to use the SOURCE program curriculum materials with their students. The training introduced them to the curricular work sheets created for each activity, and to the constituent parts of each milestone the students were expected to achieve: a relationship with the high school counselor; admissions test (SAT/ACT) taking; preparation for additional admissions tests; review of GPA and courses taken plus registration for any missing required classes; research and construction of a three-tiered list of colleges to which to apply (safety, good bet, reach); essay drafting and revision; retaking of admissions tests; college application submission; application for state and federal financial aid; application for scholarships; decision about college and financial aid package; and enrollment in the chosen college. Achievement of these milestones is discussed later in this report.

Some of the topics covered in a sample of the trainings were as follows:

The first training session (March 2006) served as an overview of the entire program. The two-and-a-half hour session included the following elements: how to complete the Intake Questionnaire with each student; an in-depth discussion of admissions tests plus handouts on how to help students register to take these tests (SAT/ACT); how to apply for test fee-waivers; the America Learns database and weekly reporting required for each student to monitor their progress; and the three program binders—the Curriculum Binder, College Information Binder, and Student Binder. The first and second of these binders were discussed in an earlier section of this report. The Student Binder provided advisors with 15 tabs, one for each of their students, which included an Intake Questionnaire, GPA work sheet, college eligibility work sheet, contact log for all student contact, post-meeting work sheet to be filled out after each meeting, and a meeting reminder sheet (where the next meeting will be and what the student is expected to do before that meeting). Other issues discussed included advisor salaries and how to write about and share, through the database, strategies for working effectively with students. The advisors were then broken into small groups and circulated through three stations: in the first they were able to test the reporting database; in the second, they reviewed schools in the study and registered their geographical location and high school preferences for student matching, and in the third they created an introductory script to use with their students and practiced it with another advisor.

The second training (June 2006) focused on college admissions essay writing and how to review and critique essays in a group. This training was designed to help advisors help students understand what is potentially interesting to include in an essay, how to brainstorm and choose topics, and how to write about life obstacles effectively. They also covered how to help students utilize meeting notes in which advisors recorded interesting student ideas for essays to generate new essay topics and how to help students revise their essays. Advisors reviewed good and bad sample essays and discussed how to create a plan with students to develop a final topic, submit a draft by the end of July, and complete a final essay by the end of August.

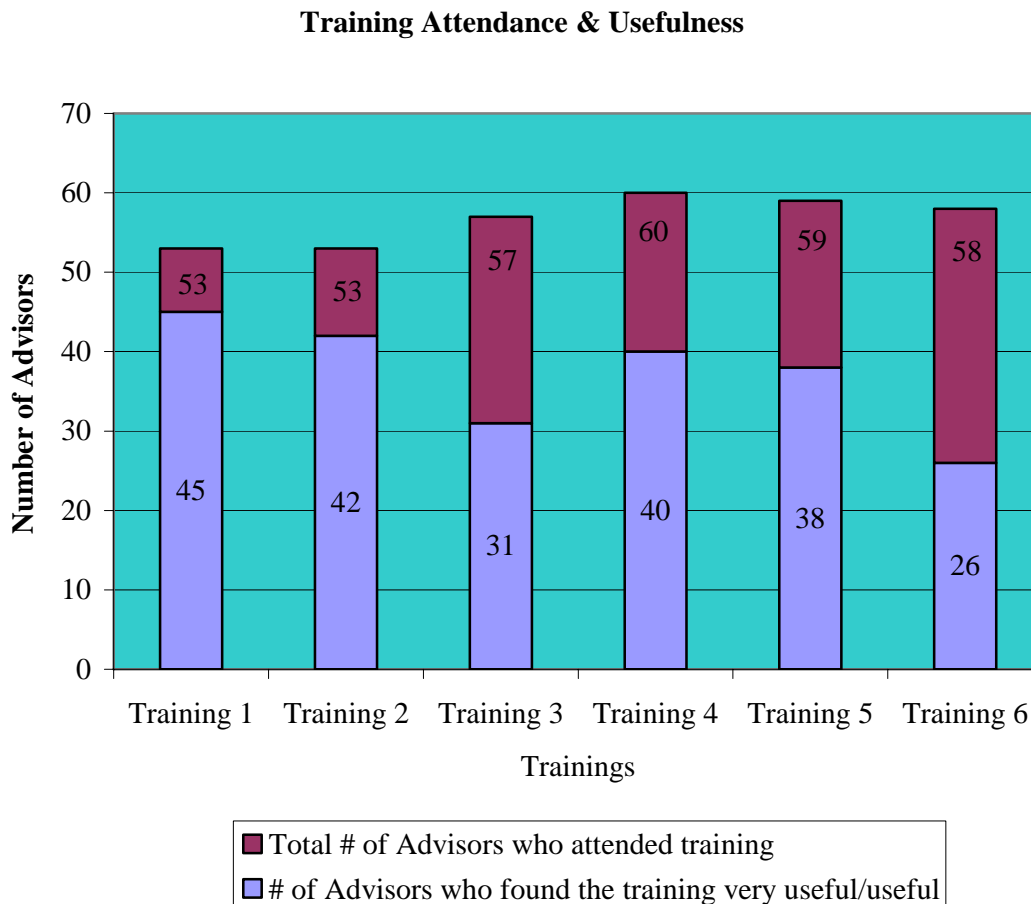
This training also covered how to help students perform a college search in the following steps: (a) students create a list of approximately 30 desired colleges, (b) students and advisors divide list into three categories (safety schools, schools that are a good bet, and schools that are a reach; each list was to include at least one out-of-state or private institution); (c) students and advisors narrow the list to six to ten schools, and (d) students obtain applications for those schools (or online application information) by the end of the summer. The program also wanted to make sure that the advisors knew that a large part of their role was to help the students understand that they might not be able to go to their first-choice school and might have to seriously consider alternates. They sought to teach the advisors to evaluate and strike a balance between what a student wanted and where the student had a competitive chance of being accepted.

The September 2006 training was logistical in nature. It ‘walked’ advisors through the process of filling out applications for the CSUs, UCs, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). It also reviewed how to help students elicit letters of recommendation from their teachers and other relevant people in their life, and to create a packet for requesting letters of recommendation. Where needed, they also discussed how to work with students to prepare for on-campus interviews.

Ed Flores, of the UCLA Financial Aid Department, provided the December 2006 training. The focus was the FAFSA: a line-by-line review of how to complete it and how it is processed. While the information provided at this training was extremely relevant, the PowerPoint presentation proved rather dry, and advisors’ interest seemed to wane toward the end of this two-and-a-half hour session. Focus group participants complained that this training was “too long and done line-by-line.” Despite this, they requested earlier and additional training on how to support student financial aid search and application processes, as well as how to work with parents on financial aid issues.

Figure 2 below indicates that nearly 88 percent of all advisors attended five or six of the six trainings offered (nearly 68 percent of advisors attended all six trainings, and 20 percent attended five of the six trainings). Thirteen percent attended three or four trainings and none of the advisors attended fewer than three. In other words, the vast majority of advisors received a significant amount of training from SOURCE Program staff on how to implement the program and support students’ efforts to apply to college and for financial aid.

**Figure 2**  
**SOURCE Advisor Training Attendance and**  
**Assessment of Training Efficacy**



Source: Advisor Survey Data Spring 2007

Figure 2 also suggests that program advisors generally found the trainings productive, with 66 percent reporting that they were “very helpful” or “helpful.” But about one-third (27 percent) found them only “somewhat helpful.” They were most positive about the first training, with 87 percent reporting it as “very useful” or “useful,” and least positive about the last training, with only 45 percent finding it “very useful” or “useful.” Given the generally high level of attendance and positive responses, however, the advisor trainings appear to have been viewed as a valuable component of the SOURCE Program.

In terms of future replication, staff felt that six sessions were sufficient. The ED thought that she might (a) schedule one or two one-on-one trainings with each advisor; (b) create a workbook on the curriculum for the advisors (in addition to the curriculum itself); and (c) introduce each training earlier in the program. Other program staff and advisor focus group participants validated the need for trainings to take place earlier in the process, especially to ensure that the advisors were equipped with information on how to provide some of the technical aspects of the program, e.g., online applications, FAFSA, etc. Others felt that trainings should be shorter and more focused, breaking down concepts and milestones rather than covering all of the milestones in a single, two-and-a-half hour evening.

As discussed further in the Conclusions and Recommendations section, advisor focus group participants almost universally reported the desire for more trainings, especially prior to program start. They felt that more frequent but shorter trainings would help mitigate the informational overload they experienced during these long sessions, and would help them retain and apply the curriculum more effectively. They also recommended short follow-up trainings to reiterate key program aspects. They noted in particular that the training on how to support student completion of CSU and UC applications and on the FAFSA were too long and too technical and should have been split into separate trainings. They requested supplemental training on private, community college, and out-of-state school application processes, and how to assist undocumented students in qualifying for in-state tuition status. These topics were not covered by the program.

Advisors also wanted more training on how to work with parents. They felt that well over half of the parents had not been involved in the program and had no idea about what their children were doing, especially immigrant parents with limited English skills. The advisors would like such a training to focus on getting parents involved, obtaining parental support for the program, and working with non-English-speaking parents. There was also significant advisor interest in learning about how to meet the needs of non-citizen students. Advisors were surprised by how many of their students were non-citizens, and did not always know whether these students could apply to CSUs or UCs or for financial aid. Other training topics requested by focus group participants included: how to motivate students, how to work with students from different cultural backgrounds, how to use the America Learns database, and how to help students navigate multiple offers from different schools and make the final choice of a school.

## IV. SOURCE Program Participation

The following analysis of SOURCE program participation relied upon three primary data sources: (1) the EdBoost management information system; (2) a survey completed by program advisors upon program conclusion; and (3) focus groups with program advisors conducted at three different points during program implementation (with over 30 of the 67 advisors participating).

The program participation data recorded in the EdBoost management information system (MIS), America Learns, included data recorded weekly by the advisors, describing their activities with their students. This included information on in-person meetings, telephone conversations, contacts via email, text messaging, and instant messaging (IM). The database also recorded how much time advisors spent on preparation for and travel to meetings with their students. In addition to these participation data, the advisors entered data on the attainment of key program milestones or benchmarks. In this section of the report, we present the MIS data for selected participation variables, as well as relevant analysis of survey and focus group data. We will discuss attainment of program milestones in a separate section below.

As discussed, the SOURCE Program planned to assign 15 students to each program advisor, and advisors reported that in practice they did, in fact, each advise close to 15 students. When asked how many of these students they considered “active participants,” advisors on average reported approximately nine as active. Each worked with students from an average of four schools, which may have had an effect on how frequently and in what format (e.g. in person, email) they had contact with their students.

In focus groups, advisors felt strongly that 15 students was far too many and that assigning them each ten students would have made them much more effective. They explained that the time each student required significantly exceeded both their expectations and the time they had available.

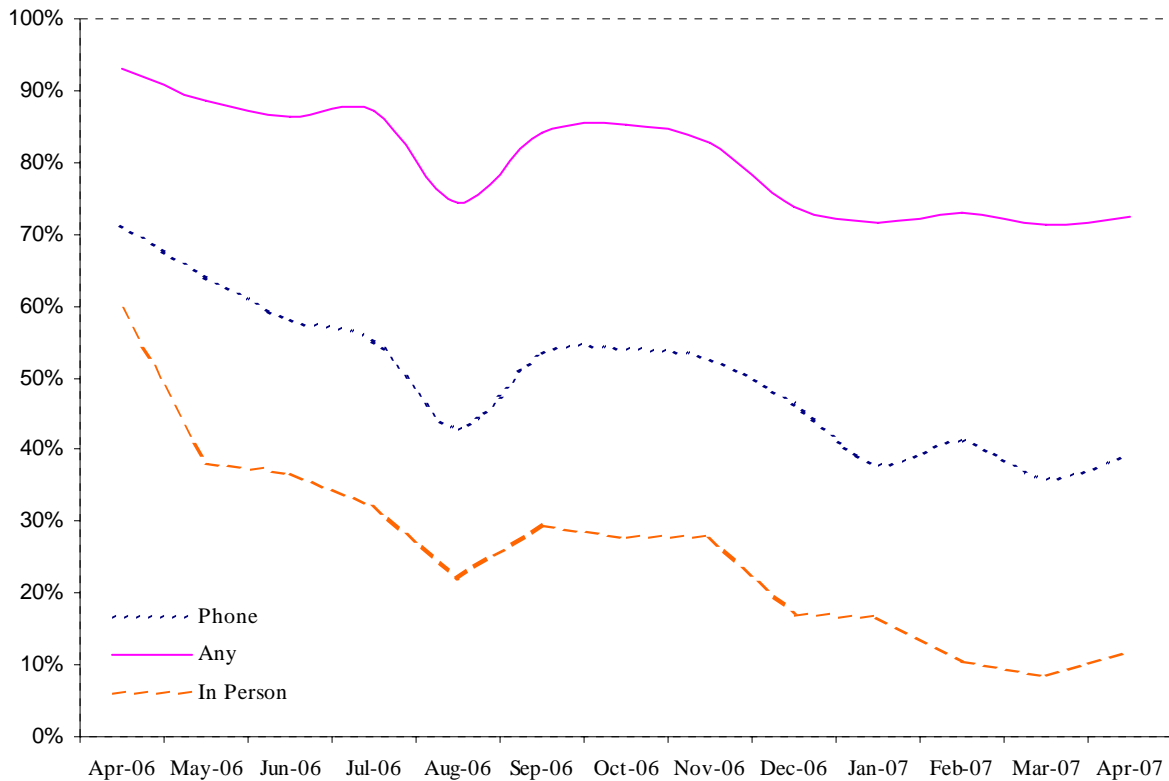
Figure 3 shows the monthly incidence of recorded contacts between advisors and their students.<sup>6</sup> The top line shows a high level of engagement overall, with at least 68 percent of students contacted in any single month and close to 80 percent in a typical month. There was some decay in participation over time, but overall the participation patterns remained relatively consistent during the program period.

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<sup>6</sup> The data shown in this figure were recorded using monthly surveys of all advisors. The wording of the questions on these surveys varied from month to month and some surveys had more questions than others. As a result, some of the apparent month-to-month variation in Figure 3 may be due to differences in data collection rather than real differences in program intensity.

**Figure 3**  
**Rate of Monthly Contacts between SOURCE Advisors and Their Students:**

*April 2006 – April 2007*



Source: BPA analysis of SOURCE program records.

Many contacts were in the form of email or text messages. On average, advisors had contact with each of their students at least once in 10.1 out of 13 months during the program. Phone contacts took place in 6.3 of the months, in-person meetings in 3.3, email contacts in 3.2 and text message contact in 0.8 months.

As Figure 3 shows, in-person meetings between advisors and their students were much more frequent during the early part of the program period. This reflects advisors' attempts to meet all their students in person during the initial months to establish a rapport and develop a clear timeline for the college application process. Depending on the preferences of the students and the success of these initial meetings, subsequent check-in appointments were then frequently conducted by phone or email.

Although contact between advisors and students was fairly regular, in surveys and focus groups advisors expressed surprise at instances of what seemed to them to be student resistance to a program for which the students had volunteered. They found that some students did not seem to want their advisor's help or would resist their advisor's efforts to meet with them. The advisors described some students as either "pulling-back" from their advisors and not showing up for scheduled meetings, or disappearing for two or three weeks only to re-emerge wanting the advisor's help. Some students disappeared altogether. Advisors felt they had to spend a lot of time chasing students and working with students who appeared to be highly unmotivated. They found that communication with some students could be difficult, and that some students even avoided them because they (the students) had not completed some program milestone. Students also appeared to lose their motivation during the summer between their junior and senior year of high school.

Another advisor challenge was finding a place to meet with students, since the students' schools and homes were not always appropriate. Advisors sometimes felt uncomfortable on the students' campuses, either because the on-campus college counselors were unwelcoming or because the advisors felt that the schools themselves were dangerous. Some reported feeling unwelcome in the students' homes. Advisors often met with their students at public libraries or cafes as an alternative. Traffic and long distances also hindered easy or regular in-person contact.

In general, advisors reported spending a lot of time trying to contact students, arrange meetings and keep in touch, and driving around Los Angeles to schools, libraries, cafes and other meeting places. These activities were very time consuming, given the size of the Greater Los Angeles area and the persistent traffic congestion. Advisors also had to spend a lot of their own money on gas, on refreshments (if meeting a student in a café or other eating establishment), and on cell phone minutes and text messaging charges.

Table 7 summarizes a number of key participation measures for the full sample of program participants. The top section of the table shows that 81.1 percent of students participated in at least one in-person meeting with their advisor. This was a key participation threshold. It could be argued that students who did not have this meeting did not really experience the SOURCE program. Program staff and advisors agreed with this assessment and speculated that students who did not participate in any in-person meeting were those with better academic records, stronger existing supports, and fewer barriers to college, who may not have really needed the program. Future subgroup analyses will test these assumptions.

Other key participation measures shown in Table 7 include the percentage of students whose advisors visited the students' schools (47.2) and the percentage whose advisors met their parents (37.0). Advisors identified the latter issue—working with parents—as a major challenge. Only 56 percent had a "very good" or "good" experience working with students' parents. On the one hand, they realized the importance of meeting with a student's parents to help the student meet his or her goals, but on the other hand, they found it very difficult to set up such meetings, either because the student did not want the advisor to meet with his or her parents or because the parents refused to participate in such a meeting. Advisors had to spend a lot of time and energy defending themselves to parents, explaining what they were doing, and allaying parental suspicions about them. Advisors also found that many parents did not seem to understand what a mentoring program entails, and that they often wanted to attend every advisor-student meeting. Advisors found parents to be very overprotective and unwilling to allow mentors speak with their children over the phone, especially with their daughters.

**Table 7**  
**Selected Participation Measures for SOURCE Program Group Members**

	Participation Measure	Participation Measure for Those Who Participated
Advisor ever: (% of students)		
Met with student in person	81.1	n/a
Met with student by phone	90.5	n/a
Email exchange with student	71.2	n/a
Met with student's parent	37.0	n/a
Visited student's school	47.2	n/a
Number of contacts per student		
In-person meetings	4.2	5.2
Telephone conversations	11.5	12.7
Email exchanges	5.3	7.4
Meetings with parents	1.0	2.1
Contact time per student (hrs)		
In-person meetings	4.7	5.8
Telephone conversations (10 min/call)	1.9	2.1
Email exchanges (10 min/exchange)	0.9	1.2
Total estimated contact time	7.5	9.2
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>varies</b>

Source: BPA analysis of SOURCE program records.

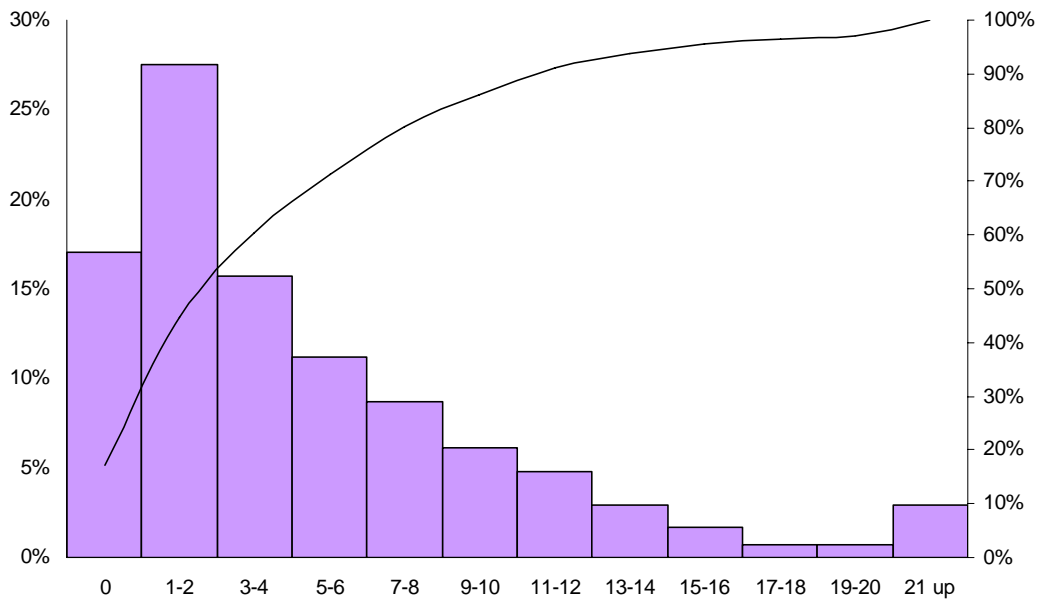
Note: The table's second column shows the same measures, but only for students who participated in each of these types of contacts. Thus, for example, students whose parents did meet their advisor, did so on average 2.1 times during the program.

The next section of the table shows the number of contacts in the various categories for the full 13-month program period. On average, students received 11.5 phone calls from their advisors, had 5.2 email exchanges with them, and participated in 4.2 in-person meetings. Advisors met with students' parents only once, on average.

The final section of the table displays advisors' estimates of the number of hours of direct program services they provided to students (excluding time advisors spent on training, preparation, driving, and data reporting, as well as less intensive contacts via text messaging or IM). On average, students participated in 4.7 hours of in-person meetings. Assuming an average of 10 minutes per phone contact, students may have received an additional 1.9 hours of advice over the telephone. While difficult to quantify, allotting another 10 minutes per email message may have resulted in another 0.9 hours of direct program service. Summing all of these results, on average, students received 7.5 hours of direct program service during the 13-month program period. For students who met with their advisor in person, they did so approximately 5.8 times.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of total hours of in-person meeting time across participants. On the left axis, the figure shows the percentage of program group members who fall into each of the purple bars, which represent ranges of hours spent. The line corresponding to the right axis shows a cumulative share of the sample as one moves to the right.

**Figure 4**  
**Distribution of Hours of In-Person Meetings**



Source: BPA analysis of SOURCE program records.

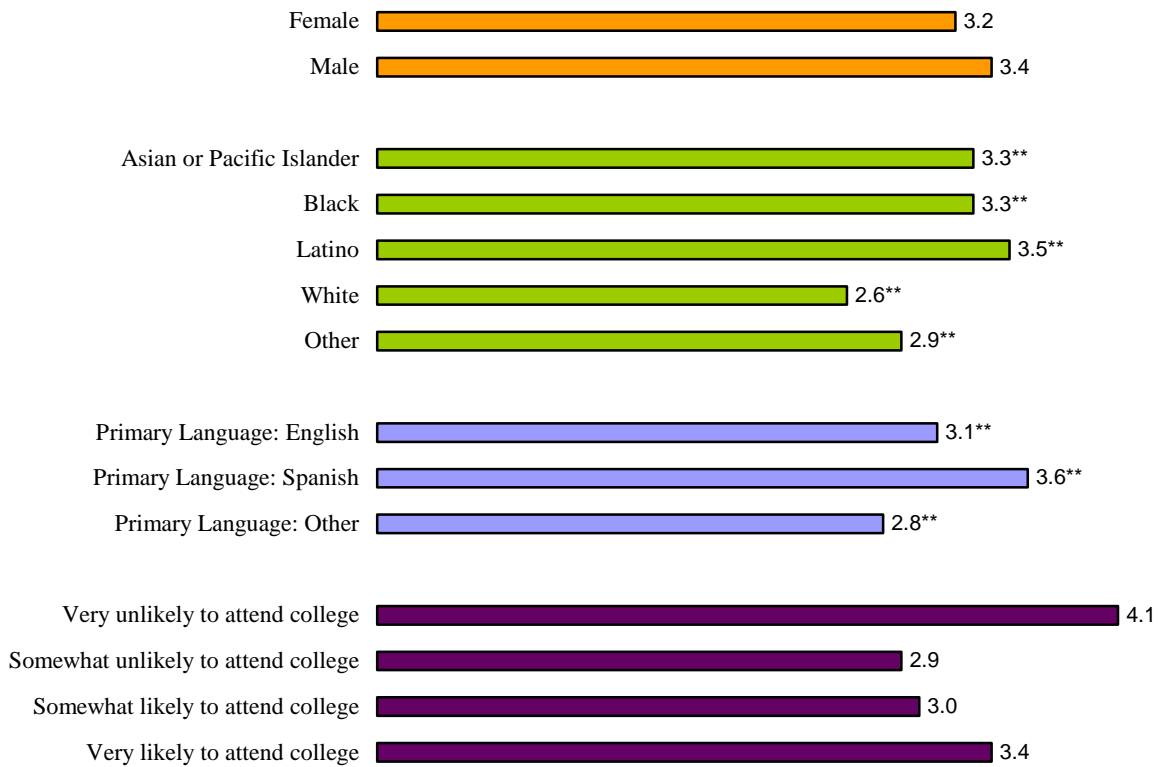
Figure 4 suggests that more than one in four students participated in 1 – 2 hours of in-person meetings, and more than 60 percent met with their advisor for four hours or less during the program period.

### Participation by Subgroup

Figure 5 shows how a key participation measure varied across the four subgroup dimensions introduced in Table 1. The participation measure shown here indicates the average number of months in which the advisor and student met during the 13-month program period.<sup>7</sup> We found no statistically significant difference in this measure by gender or by the student’s initial expectations about their likelihood of going to college. However, we did find that Spanish-speaking students, and Latino students in general, had significantly more meetings with their advisors, especially compared to white students. These patterns were similar for many of the other participation measures and were also evident in the program milestones discussed below.

<sup>7</sup> We chose this variable because it shows significant variation from student to student but is not as subject to outliers as some of the other variables are.

**Figure 5**  
**Average Number of Months with an In-Person Meeting by Demographic Subgroup**



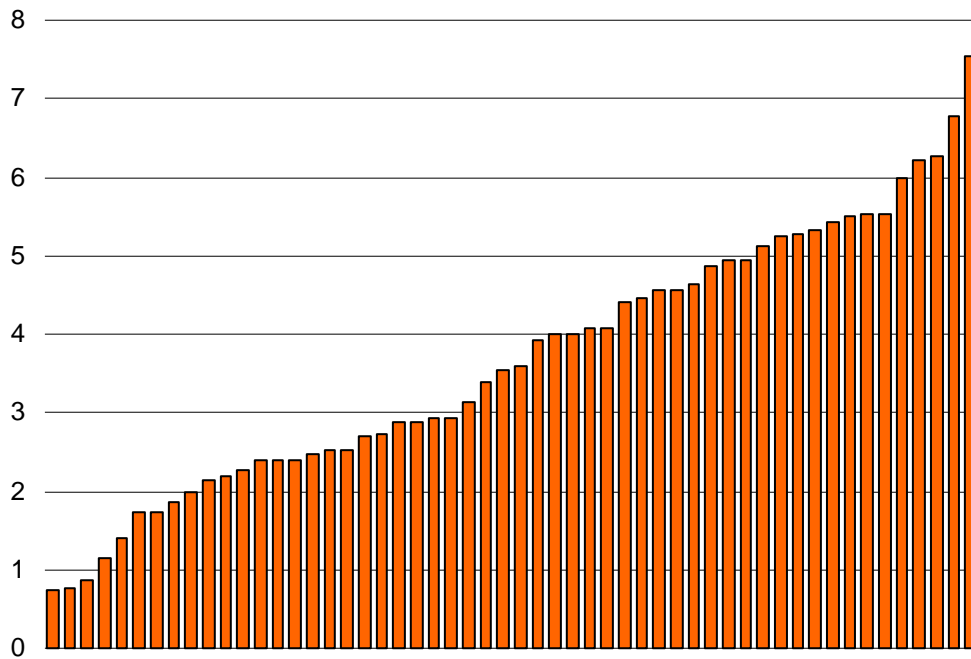
Source: BPA analysis of SOURCE program records and application data.

It is interesting to note that male students were as likely to use the services of their advisors as female students were. Although female students were much more likely to apply for the program overall, once male students became part of SOURCE, their patterns of participation were similar to those of female students.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Future reports will feature more subgroup breakdowns, both of the participation data and of milestones and impact data.

Figure 6 looks at variation in the intensity of students' program experiences in a different way. It breaks out the average number of months in which participants had an in-person meeting by advisor.<sup>9</sup> The figure shows a great deal of variation, with averages ranging from less than one meeting per student to more than seven. This variation is only partially attributable to the advisors, if at all. Because students were not assigned randomly to advisors, there were significant differences in the composition of the caseloads served by the different advisors.

**Figure 6**  
**Average Number of Months with an In-Person Meeting by Advisor**



Source: BPA analysis of SOURCE program records.

<sup>9</sup> Some advisors with a short tenure were excluded from this chart.

## *Program Milestones*

As described above, a key component of the SOURCE program was its use of specific milestones to guide the work of the advisors. The program curriculum provided advisors with specific milestones to pursue with their students, many of which had financial incentives for the advisors attached to them, e.g. \$50 bonuses for their students' successful submission of an application.

Program milestones ranged from a meeting with the student's high school counselor, to completing and revising a competitive college essay, to filling out and submitting the FAFSA. Advisors entered information on each of these milestones for each of their students into the database maintained by the SOURCE program. The evaluation team received this database and processed it to capture SOURCE program participation outcomes, including attainment of the various program milestones. Altogether, we analyzed 100 different program milestone variables, combining them into broader categories for the purpose of this report. Table 8 summarizes milestone achievement in these broader categories for the full sample of SOURCE program participants.

**Table 8**  
**Key Program Milestones Reported by SOURCE Mentors (%)**

Milestone	
<i>High school</i>	
Advice about course taking	82.3
Took a make up course	19.9
Met with high school counselor	83.7
<i>SAT and ACT tests</i>	
Advice about SAT	83.2
Signed up for SAT	87.8
Took SAT	56.6
Retook SAT for better score	17.3
<i>College selection, application, and acceptance</i>	
Worked on college choice	83.6
Worked on essay	81.0
Obtained transcript	83.1
Worked on applications	57.5
Discussed acceptance letters	50.6
<i>Financial Aid</i>	
Worked on FAFSA	64.0
Worked on CalGrant application	44.6
Applied for other scholar ships	71.5
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>1,009</i>

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE participation data.

The table divides the milestones into four categories: high school milestones; SAT and ACT test taking; college selection, application, and acceptance; and financial aid. Within these categories we show the percent of SOURCE program group members whom advisors reported had reached each of these milestones.

### High School-related Milestones

Much of the initial advice and support from SOURCE advisors focused on participants' course-taking patterns and grades in high school. Advisors were asked to complete a "GPA and A-G Work Sheet" with each of their assigned students to determine whether the student was on track to graduate with a sufficiently high GPA and the right distribution of advanced course work necessary to qualify for California State University admission. Pursuant to completing this work sheet, the advisor and student would create a list of make-up classes to be taken either during the summer of 2006 or during the student's senior year.

Table 8 shows that 82.3 percent of all participating students received advice about course-taking, usually by way of the work sheet described above. Detailed analyses not shown in the table indicate that 61.9 percent completed this work sheet during the first two months of the program, in time for potential enrollment in summer courses, if necessary. The table also indicates that, between the start of the program and the end of the students' senior year in high school, 19.9 percent successfully completed a make-up course.

The third major high school-related milestone concerned meeting with the high school counselor. Such three-way meetings took place with 83.7 percent of all program group members and were intended to increase students' access to and awareness of the on-site resources provided by school counseling offices.

### SAT and ACT Milestones

The next set of program milestones concerned the SAT and ACT tests. Advisors encouraged students to sign up for these tests early (in the spring of their junior year), to give the students time to take preparatory courses and retake the test if necessary. They also helped students apply for fee waivers, for which most participants were eligible.

As with the high school course-taking advice, the program began by asking the advisors and their students to complete a work sheet, the "SAT and ACT Decision Sheet," which was designed to help students make informed decisions about when to take the test, what test to choose, how to prepare, and how to evaluate their scores. Altogether, 83.2 percent of students received advice about SAT/ACT test-taking, and 87.8 percent were confirmed by their advisor as having signed up for the test. (BPA researchers have received data about actual SAT test-taking from LAUSD; we will present these data in a later report).

Almost 70 percent of students received fee waivers (not shown in the table). It appears that the advisors succeeded in encouraging their students to take the SAT or ACT quickly: the data record a majority of students as having taken the test within their first two months in the program (i.e., during the spring of their junior year [not shown in the table]). After the students took the SAT or ACT test, advisors were expected to meet with them to discuss the results and advise on possibly retaking the test, which would then constitute another program milestone. Among all participants, 17.3 percent were reported as having retaken the SAT or ACT to improve their scores.

## College Selection and Application

During the first several months of the program, advisors worked with the students to help them identify college opportunities, including broadening the types of schools to which they planned to apply. To this end, advisors and students completed college selection work sheets, which helped students identify promising schools and then narrow the selection of schools to a final list of 6 – 10 schools. This list was to include ‘safety,’ ‘good bet,’ and ‘reach’ schools. Overall, 83.6 percent of participants achieved one or more college choice milestones, including adding CSU and UC schools to their list (27.7 percent), and adding private and out-of-state schools to their list (17.1 percent).

In parallel with the college choice milestones, advisors worked with students to help them prepare strong college application essays. This included brainstorming about essay topics and then relating the resulting ideas to the questions in the college application; reviewing drafts of essay topics; helping to outline the essays; and reviewing several essay drafts. Altogether, advisors reported that 81.0 percent of participants received assistance with their essays.

The milestone data are less extensive for the other aspects of the application process. In addition to the essays, advisors reminded students to obtain up-to-date transcripts (83.1 percent met this minor milestone), and advisors reported helping most of their students prepare applications (57.5 percent). In many cases, this included helping students navigate the online application process for CSU and UC admissions or directing students and their families to online tutorials made available by these institutions.

When students were accepted to more than one college, advisors helped many of them with the process of selecting which college to attend. For many students this included a meeting with the student’s parents. Overall, advisors reported discussing acceptance letters with 50.6 percent of SOURCE participants.

## Financial Aid

The last set of milestones concerned applications for financial aid. Specific goals included completing the FAFSA and CalGrant applications, as well as identifying and applying for other forms of financial aid. Much of the work to reach these milestones involved pulling together financial information and other paperwork from the student and his or her parents. Advisors reported providing assistance with the FAFSA to 64.0 percent of all students; with the CalGrant application to 44.6 percent; and with all other types of scholarships to 71.5 percent of all program participants.

## Variation in Milestones by Subgroup

To examine whether certain groups of students reached more milestones or received a different mix of services than others, we analyzed a subset of the milestones presented in Table 8 for a range of different subgroups. The results are presented in Table 9. In general, our analysis found relatively few differences between key subgroups in the selected program milestones presented. Some important differences included: (a) Latino (and Spanish-speaking) students were significantly more likely than others to retake the SAT in order to improve their scores; (b) students whose parents graduated from college were somewhat more likely to use assistance with the completion of the FAFSA; and (c) students who at baseline considered themselves “very likely” to go to a four-year college were more likely to take make-up courses in high school and to receive help with their application essay, other application materials, and the FAFSA.

**Table 9**  
**Selected Program Milestones Reported by SOURCE Mentors (%)**

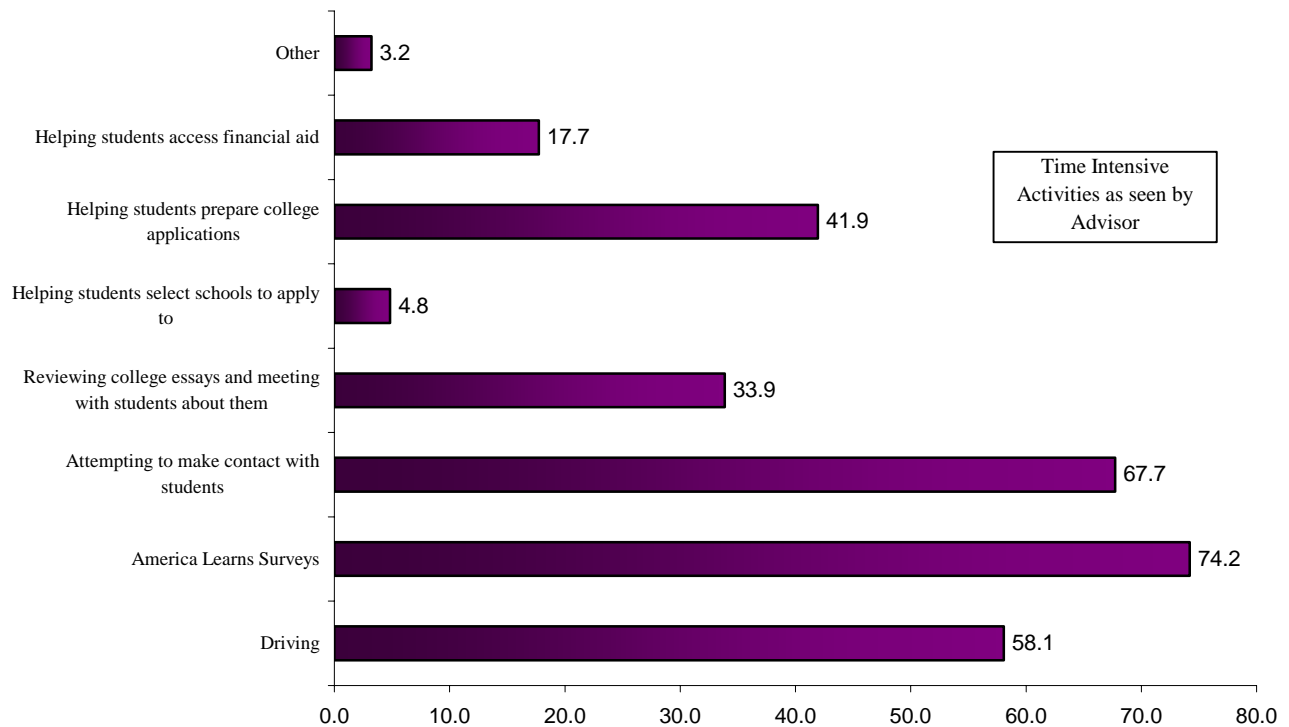
Participant subgroup	Sample size	Took Make Up Course	Retook SAT	Worked on Application Essay	Worked on Applications	Helped Complete FAFSA
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	681	19.8%	18.4%	81.1%	57.7%	65.1%
Male	288	20.8	15.6	83	58	63.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
African American	131	25.2	16	81.7	58.8	64.9
Asian	122	18.9	12.3	85.2	63.1	68
Latino	606	19.6	20.5***	81.5	56.8	65.2
White	99	19.2	11.1**	80.8	58.6	56.6
<b>Primary language</b>						
Spanish	445	18.4	21.3***	82.7	58.4	64.9
English	526	21.1	14.4	80.8	57	64.1
<b>Parent graduated college</b>						
Yes	187	21.4	13.9	82.9	59.4	70*
No	787	19.7	18.4	81.3	57.3	63.2
<b>Sibling in college</b>						
Yes	220	22.7	16.8	83.2	59.5	64.1
No	754	19.2	17.8	81.2	57.2	64.6
<b>Student considered him or herself "very likely" to attend 4-yr college</b>						
Yes	633	22.1**	17.1	84.2***	61.6***	67.9***
No	337	16	18.4	76.9	50.1	57.9

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE participation and baseline data.

### SOURCE Program Challenges

As discussed above, SOURCE advisors identified certain challenges connected with their work. These included the challenge of (a) finding a place to meet with their students; (b) having to spend a lot of their own money to facilitate students meetings (gas, coffee, cell phone minute overruns); (c) addressing parental concerns; and (d) spending an enormous amount of time tracking their students down to arrange meetings and make sure that they were meeting program milestones. Figure 7 below shows many of the aspects of the SOURCE program that advisors found particularly time consuming.

**Figure 7**  
**Advisor's Time-Intensive Activities (%)**



Source: Advisor Survey Data Spring 2007

In addition to these challenges, in focus groups advisors noted the challenge of finding internet connectivity to use when working with their students to research colleges of interest, file online college and financial aid applications, and search for grants and scholarship programs. Many students did not own computers or have internet connections at home. Advisors found themselves waiting in long lines at public libraries, using internet cafes, or “piggy-backing” onto non-secure wireless connections to ensure that applications were filed on time.

Another challenge involved the completion of the weekly surveys on each student. Advisors were required to complete them for each student each week, even for weeks in which an advisor had not had any contact with a student. The surveys were long and cumbersome and took a significant amount of time to complete each week. The advisors found completing them each week redundant, and felt that their time would have been better spent with their students rather than reporting on them.

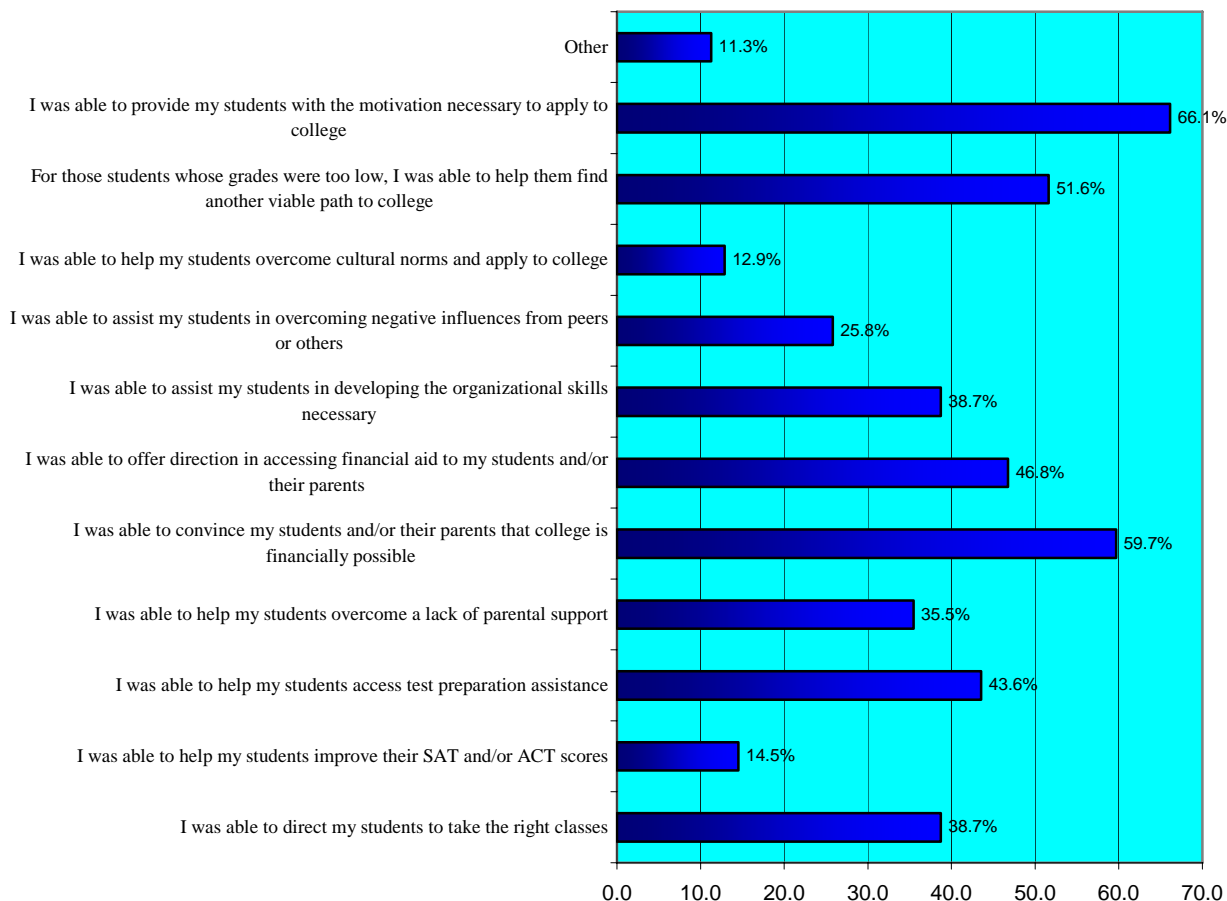
### **SOURCE Program Successes**

Despite these challenges, advisors pointed to some key program successes. They felt that they had built strong relationships with their students. Many noted that their students would call them to talk over key decisions related to the college process. Many also noted that because they had similar backgrounds to their students, they felt that they had communicated effectively with them and motivated them to strive to get into college and access financial aid. They found the experience of serving as an advisor to be very rewarding, and felt that if even one of their students were to get into college, they would feel “happy and satisfied.” They felt that the information and guidance they were providing was having a positive impact on their students, and that they had even “inspired” their students to strive and achieve.

Advisors also reported feeling fulfilled because they had developed “real relationships” with their students. In some cases students told them that they “couldn’t have done this [get into college] without you.” Advisors commented that all of the college admissions letters and positive outcomes made up for the time they had to spend chasing students, driving long distances, paying for gas, and completing surveys. Many noted that among their biggest successes was helping students enter schools in the UC system. They felt that without the SOURCE program, these students never would have applied to these schools, since students thought they were too difficult to gain admission to and/or too expensive to attend, when in fact many of these students were academically qualified to be admitted and could access various forms of financial aid.

Some 92 percent of advisors reported feeling as if they had made a difference in the future of their students, and 89 percent reported that they felt they had made a real difference in getting their students into college. As suggested in Figure 8 below, when asked about specific areas where they felt they had made the most significant difference for their students, 66 percent reported that they were able to provide their students the necessary motivation to apply to college. Close to 60 percent were able to convince students (and their parents) that college was financially possible for them, thus overcoming the dominant perception that college was too expensive. Fifty-two percent were able to help students whose grades were too low find another path to college.

**Figure 8**  
**Areas Where Advisor Made the Greatest Difference for Student**



Source: Advisor Survey Data Spring 2007

Also shown in Figure 8, close to 44 percent felt they had helped their students access college entrance exam preparation assistance; 39 percent felt they were able to direct students to the required classes; and 39 percent felt they were able to help their students develop the organizational skills necessary to apply for college and financial aid. For 36 percent of the advisors, helping students overcome a lack of parental support, and for 26 percent helping them overcome negative influences from peers and others were among the areas where advisors felt they made the greatest difference for their students. Overall, advisors felt they were able to positively affect and support students' orientation toward, and actions necessary to complete, college and financial aid processes.

When asked about their overall experiences as a SOURCE advisor, survey respondents were overwhelmingly positive: The majority (88.5 percent) felt supported by the program in their work as advisors, and 89 percent had "very good" or "good" experiences with program staff. They were positive about their experiences with their students: 77 percent had a "very good" or "good" experience with them. A significant majority (85 percent) of advisors surveyed would both recommend becoming a SOURCE advisor to a friend and be willing to serve as a SOURCE advisor again. Almost all focus group participants corroborated feeling both "definite" in their desire to serve and "would be glad" to serve as an advisor again.

## V. SOURCE Evaluation Study Control Group Members: Services Received

During the summer of 2007, the evaluation team worked with SRM to survey the 1448 study control group members in order to assess the extent to which they had received services similar to those provided by the SOURCE program. A total of 1262, or 87 percent, of control group members were surveyed. The results of this survey are *not* directly comparable to the administrative program data presented in this report's program implementation section. The latter counted only services received through the SOURCE program and only recorded data as reported by SOURCE advisors. In all likelihood, many program group members also received advice and support from individuals and programs other than SOURCE. In fact, advisors were expected to refer program group members to other useful resources and programs, as well as to facilitate and encourage meetings with school counselors, visits to college campuses, and the use of tutorials and other online support.

However, even with this likely undercounting of service receipt in the program group, the extent of services control group members reported receiving was remarkable. As Table 12 shows, the vast majority of control group members applied to college (93.7 percent), and the majority of those applied to a four-year institution. In pursuing this goal, control group members reported receiving support and assistance from a variety of individuals and programs: almost one in four (24.1 percent) participated in a federally funded Upward Bound or Talent Search program; 20.7 percent received tutoring in high school; 77.2 percent met with their high school counselors; and 66.6 percent reported meeting with other college advisors as well. If these college advisors provided services similar to those available through the SOURCE program, the treatment contrast created by our evaluation would be limited to the third of control group students who did not report receiving help from other advisors.

The control group survey asked students to recall the various steps leading up to college application and enrollment along with the amount of advice and support they received at various points along the way. As mentioned, 20.7 percent reported receiving tutoring in high school. The median number of hours reported by those receiving tutoring was 40.0. No equivalent data for the program group were available from the administrative records. As shown in Table 10, 42.6 percent of control group members reported participating in SAT prep classes. The median number of hours of these classes was 24.0. The equivalent share of program group members who advisors indicated had participated in SAT preparation was only 17.8 percent, but advisors were asked about this activity in only four of the 13 months of program data collection. Therefore it may be the case that program group members participated in additional SAT preparation in these other months, and thus their SAT prep activities may have been underreported.

A large majority of control group members took the SAT (85.6 percent) and 61.2 percent of them also took the SAT II (the subject tests); 41.5 percent took the ACT. The equivalent advisor-reported rates for program group members were significantly lower: 56.5 percent for the SAT and 3.2 percent for the ACT. However, advisors reported that 84.2 percent of their students *signed up* for the SAT, 43.4 percent *signed up* for the SAT II, and 31.7 percent *signed up* for the ACT. These registration rates are more in line with those reported by the control group, albeit still significantly lower. These findings suggest that (a) control group members were very likely to take college placement tests and prepare for them, even without SOURCE and (b) that SOURCE advisors either did not fully capture their students' SAT test taking and preparation or that rates of test taking were lower for program group members.

**Table 10**  
**Services and Assistance Received by Control Students (%)**

<b>Services and Assistance Received</b>	
<i>High school activities</i>	
Met with high school counselor	77.2 %
Met with other college advisors	66.6
Took make-up classes to meet college requirements	36.5
Took make-up classes to increase GPA	39.9
Participated in program such as Upward Bound or Talent Search	24.1
Received tutoring	20.7
Median number of hours of tutoring for those receiving any	40.0
<i>Test preparation in junior or senior year</i>	
Participated in SAT preparation program	42.6 %
Median number of hours of SAT preparation	24.0
Participated in other test preparation	10.6 %
Median number of hours of other test preparation	25.5
Took PSAT	79.7 %
Took SAT Reasoning Test (SAT I)	85.6
Took SAT Subject Tests (SAT II)	61.2
Took ACT	41.5

College selection is one area in which control group members did seem to receive significantly fewer services than SOURCE participants. As shown in Table 11, approximately half of all control group members (50.4 percent) reported receiving help deciding whether to go to college and 40.7 percent received help deciding where to go to college. The equivalent rate for the program group (as reported by the advisors) exceeded 80 percent. Most students in the control group attended college fairs (70.8 percent) and visited candidate college campuses (80.7 percent).

**Table 11**  
**College Selection, Application, and Acceptance**

<i>College selection, application, and acceptance</i>	
Received help deciding whether to go to college	50.4 %
From school guidance counselor	67.6
From mentors/advisors	34.9
Received help deciding where to go to college	40.7
From school guidance counselor	41.3
From mentors/advisors	20.4
Attended college fairs	70.8
Visited colleges	80.7
Received help with college application writing	54.3
Median number of hours of help with application	12.0
Mean number of essay drafts	2.7
Helpfulness of school counselor for college application*	
Very helpful	55.1 %
Somewhat helpful	30.9
Not Helpful	14.0
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>1,262</i>

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE participation data.

More than half of the control group (54.3 percent) reported receiving assistance with college applications (essays, forms, etc.). The median number of hours of application assistance reported by control group members was 12. More specifically, control group members wrote, on average, between two and three drafts of their college application essay. Encouraging students to write multiple drafts was a major focal area for the SOURCE program as well, with advisors reporting that 28.8 percent of SOURCE participants rewrote their essays.

Lastly, almost one third of control group members reported receiving help with the mechanics of the college application process, including completing the FAFSA and applying for other types of financial aid. This rate of assistance was significantly lower than that reported by advisors for their students: 64.0 percent received help with the FAFSA and 71.5 percent received help with other scholarship applications. However, despite receiving less assistance, 82.2 percent of control group members reported applying for financial aid or tuition assistance.

One objective of the SOURCE program was to supplement the available LAUSD high school counseling resources. Due to the large caseloads they serve, high school counselors have relatively little time to spend with each of their students. Nevertheless, control group members generally had positive experiences with their high school counselors. During their senior year, 77.2 percent of students reported meeting with their counselor and, of those who did, 55.1 percent reported that their counselor was “very helpful” with the college application process; 30.9 percent found their counselor “somewhat helpful,” and only 14.1 percent found their counselor to be unhelpful.

### College Expectations of Control Group Members

The vast majority of control group members expected to be enrolled in college for the 2007-08 academic year. Of those surveyed, 99.4 percent were planning to attend college, with 62.2 percent planning to attend a four-year institution and 31.0 percent a community college. However, as indicated above, the actual rate of college application at the time of the survey (at the end of sample members' senior year in high school) was somewhat lower, at 93.7 percent. Table 12 shows how this aligns with the two major categories of state universities: 65.2 percent of control group members applied for admission at a CSU campus and 45.2 percent applied at a UC campus. Respondents reported a 60.2 percent acceptance rate at CSUs and a 38.0 percent rate at UCs. Across the two types of campuses, 76.3 percent applied to either a UC or a CSU campus and 71.1 percent reported being accepted at either a UC or a CSU campus. The control group survey was fielded too early to tell us at what rate control group members actually enrolled at these campuses.

**Table 12**  
**College Plans of Control Students (%)**

Planning to attend college	99.4 %
What kind of college?	
Four-year college	62.0
Community college	31.0
Vocational school or program	1.5
Job Training	0.4
Other	1.1
Applied to college	93.7
Applied to CSU	65.2
Applied to UC	45.2
Applied to UC or CSU	76.3
Accepted into CSU	60.2
Accepted into UC	38.0
Accepted into UC or CSU	71.1
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>1,262</i>

Source: BPA calculations from SOURCE participation data.

## VI. Recommendations and Conclusions

### Program Recommendations

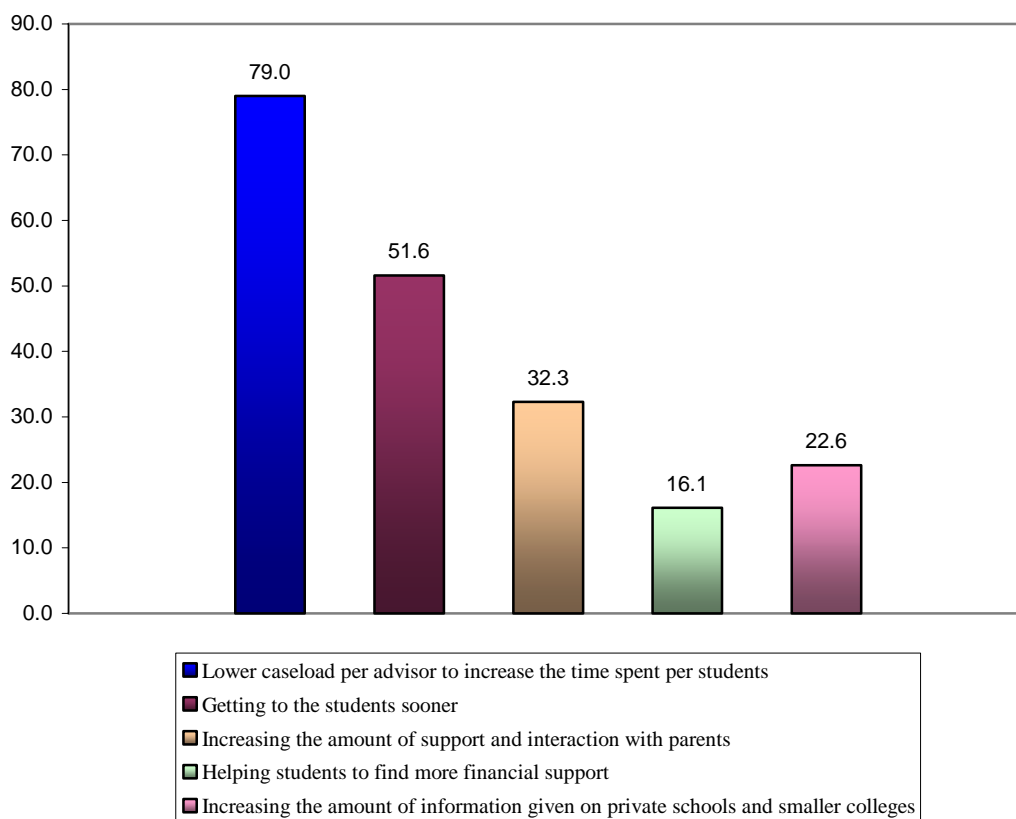
As discussed above, SOURCE program advisors had a very positive experience, with 85 percent indicating they would want to serve as an advisor again and 85 percent recommending the job to a friend. Advisors' positive experiences thus give additional weight to their targeted recommendations for program improvement. These recommendations varied in focus and content but represent important considerations for program replication.

One of the most prominent recommendations, made by close to 80 percent of advisors, was to lower advisor caseloads in order to increase the amount of time they had to spend with each student. More specifically, focus group participants believed that ten (rather than 15) was a more appropriate number of students for each advisor, a number that would allow them to increase the amount of time they could devote to each student, both individually and as a group, on a weekly basis.

As shown in Figure 9 below, a majority of advisors (52 percent) also recommended starting work with students on college admissions and financial aid earlier in their high school careers. In focus groups, advisors specified that they felt that starting in the tenth grade, rather than in the second half of the eleventh, would be more beneficial. Advisors also felt, especially in focus groups, that SOURCE should provide some type of SAT preparation course, since most of the available courses were either too expensive or too far from students' homes to allow students to take advantage of them.

It is important to note that while these recommendations came from program advisors and thus have important resonance, they could significantly impact the cost of the program. The SOURCE program was designed to provide college and financial aid application support to students at a relatively low cost, thus increasing the likelihood of both replication and access to a larger number of students. These three recommendations could increase the cost of the program and thus decrease its availability to students. We will give this issue further consideration as part of our analysis of program impact (expected in June 2009).

**Figure 9**  
**Advisor Recommendations for SOURCE Program Improvements**



Source: Advisor Survey Data Spring 2007

Other important recommendations made by advisors appear less likely to have significant implications for program cost. These included the suggestions that the program (a) increase parental involvement and interaction with parents (32 percent); (b) increase the amount of information available to students about private and smaller colleges (beyond the focus on the UCs and CSUs) (23 percent); and (c) increase the amount of time advisors spend with students identifying additional sources of financial aid (16 percent).

In focus groups, advisors also offered a number of additional suggestions for program improvement, also not necessarily involving significant changes to the program’s cost structure. These recommendations included:

- Matching mentors with students with whom they share a common language spoken at home, especially to facilitate communication with parents who may not speak English;
- Assigning advisors to students who all attend the same school (rather than having advisors work with students at from two to five different schools);
- Supplying SOURCE program materials in English and Spanish and any other relevant languages;
- Recruiting more male advisors and matching male students with male advisors (advisors found that male students seemed to respond better to male advisors);

- Providing meeting space and internet access through the program, to facilitate more in-person contact and access to online information and applications;
- Reducing the length and number of surveys advisors must complete for each student from once per week to twice per month;
- Limiting the role of program staff who are also advisors to serving only as program staff, so that they can focus on getting information for the advisors about key issues, such as how to pursue private school applications, the implications of AB540, and other important topics;
- Facilitating more advisor-to-advisor contact through emails or listservs to support more collaboration and idea and resource sharing among them.

Advisors also had a number of recommendations specific to the SOURCE advisor training sessions. They wanted shorter, more targeted trainings, covering fewer topics in any one session. They also suggested several additional topics on which they wanted training: (a) how to work with parents, including those with limited English language skills, to get them more involved in the process and the program; (b) what types of financial aid are available and how to apply for them (advisors also recommended providing this information earlier in the program so they can share it with parents); (c) how to apply to schools other than the UCs and CSUs, i.e., private schools and out of state public universities and colleges; (d) how to work with students with physical and mental disabilities; (e) how to work with students from different cultural backgrounds; and (f) how to meet the needs of students who are not U.S. citizens or are undocumented, especially in relation to specific state legislation (AB540) that allows undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition fees.

Advisors also wanted more direct communication between the SOURCE program and parents, for example: mailing information about the program directly to parents; a program orientation for parents and an information day at EdBoost for parents; and SOURCE program staff availability to parents by phone. They would like SOURCE staff to introduce the program to parents formally and work with the parents to get their support and participation before advisors start meeting with students. They would also like to have some kind of progress report, demonstrating what students have been doing, sent to parents regularly in order to give them more information and to promote ‘buy-in’ to the program. This information should be provided in English, Spanish, and perhaps other languages.

### **Preliminary Conclusions**

The analysis of SOURCE implementation data presented in this report demonstrates both the potential and the challenges of offering college transition mentoring support to economically disadvantaged high school students in a large urban school district. With an investment of \$1,000 per participating student, the SOURCE program was able to recruit, train, and employ a pool of highly motivated university students to provide a year’s worth of continuous mentoring and college advisement services to a diverse group of Los Angeles high school students. The advisors established lasting mentoring relationships with most of the high school students assigned to them, monitoring their efforts to prepare for college, assisting with financial aid applications, and seeking to broaden the range of colleges, universities, and aid to or for which they applied.

The logistics of providing these services posed a significant challenge. Advisors spent much of their time establishing and maintaining regular contact with their students, keeping track of their students' progress, and reporting on that progress to the SOURCE program. They spent comparatively little time in actual face-to-face meetings with their students or the students' parents. As a result, the intensity of the SOURCE program, as experienced by participants, was relatively modest, consisting of frequent contacts, mostly by phone or text message, which were relatively short in duration. A key question for this evaluation is whether the modest amount of actual counseling received by the average participant was sufficient to make a meaningful difference in their college outcomes. If it was effective, the low-cost approach adopted and implemented by the SOURCE program is promising. If, however, the program was not effective, an important limitation to its approach may be the challenge of finding a way to engage high school students sufficiently when faced with limited advisor time and program resources.

This report also shows that services like those provided by the SOURCE program were already widely available to high school students in Los Angeles when the SOURCE program was implemented. A large majority of control group members reported receiving services similar to those in the SOURCE program and having access to advice about and support in completing their college and financial aid applications. A large majority of control group members also reported applying to California State University and University of California campuses, a major SOURCE program goal.

The relatively modest intensity of the SOURCE program and the use of similar services by the control group suggest that it may be difficult to identify and document SOURCE program impact. BPA researchers have just completed outcome data collection from the Los Angeles Unified School District, the National Student Clearinghouse, and a first year post-expected high school graduation follow-up survey of all 2500 program and control group members. Together with our partners at the Harvard University School of Education we will analyze these data for an impact report to be completed in the spring of 2009.

## Future Reports

BPA plans to issue a report on program impact in June 2009. For this report, we will analyze a survey conducted with all study sample members one year after their expected high school graduation (84 percent response rate or 2098 of 2496 study sample members). We will combine these data with data on high school completion and college enrollment provided by LAUSD and the National Student Clearinghouse.

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