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Assessing the Efficacy of the Talent Search Program

Martha Jane Sales
Western Kentucky University, martha.sales@wku.edu

ASSESSING THE EFFICACY OF THE TALENT SEARCH PROGRAM

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Department of Counseling and Student Affairs Western Kentucky University

A college education provides benefits to both the individual and society. However, access to higher education for low-income students continues to be a difficulty. The primary motivation for the establishment of the federally funded TRIO programs was to increase the access to higher education for first-generation and low-income students. TRIO programs have been in existence for approximately forty years, yet little research has been conducted on their effectiveness. The current study assessed the efficacy of one TRIO program, Talent Search. This study compared the postsecondary enrollment of Talent Search participants and non participants. The comparison was conducted on a sample of 284 low-income college ready seniors from three south central Kentucky high schools. Results indicated that low-income students participating in the Talent Search program did enroll at a significantly higher rate than non-participants. This study also examined if the length of time students participated in the Talent Search program was significantly related to postsecondary enrollment. Results indicated no significant correlations. Additionally, this study examined if a relationship in postsecondary enrollment among Talent Search participants as related to their classification by Talent Search eligibility criteria of (a) low income only, (b) first generation only, and (c) both low-income and first generation exist. Results indicated no significant correlations. The findings in this study will help provide support of the effectiveness of TRIO, particularly Talent Search.

Assessing the Efficacy of the Talent Search Program

The primary motivation for the establishment of the federally funded TRIO programs was to increase access to higher education for disadvantaged students (Filkins & Doyle, 2002). The *Federal TRIO Programs*, which originally began as three programs, thus TRIO, administer six outreach and support programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students, and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to post baccalaureate programs. TRIO also includes a training program for directors and staff of TRIO projects and a dissemination partnership program to encourage the replication or adaptation of successful practices of TRIO projects at institutions and agencies that do not have TRIO grants. TRIO's six outreach programs include Educational Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Post baccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math/Science, and Veterans Upward Bound (Kezar, 2000). Two of the programs, Upward Bound and Talent Search, have been the subject of national evaluations. These evaluations arose in response to congressional direction to evaluate the TRIO programs and were commissioned by the United States Department of Education (2004). The Upward Bound program was evaluated in 1997; the Talent Search program was evaluated in 2004.

In addition to the Talent Search national evaluation, a handful of descriptive surveys and case study research have been conducted to provide updated information on the Talent Search program's contexts, participants, staff, operations, services, and accomplishments. These descriptive surveys and case studies contribute to the knowledge

base that informs thinking on how the federal government and other entities can improve high school graduation rates and increase postsecondary enrollments for disadvantaged students. Yet overall, there is a paucity of comparative data regarding the effectiveness of Talent Search programs.

In this study, the researcher selected a regional comprehensive institution in the state of Kentucky serving rural populations for observation. This institution houses five TRIO programs; the Talent Search program was selected for examination. Postsecondary enrollments for the 2002-2006 grant cycles were considered. Due to the availability of data to the researcher, three high schools previously served by the investigator were observed. All low-income college ready Talent Search participants from the selected three schools were used in the data analysis. An equal number of non-Talent Search low-income college ready participants attending the selected three schools were used in the data analysis. The postsecondary enrollments of both groups were examined. Only low-income data are available for both Talent Search and non-Talent Search participants, therefore only low-income students were included in the sample. Additional factors such as income status, first generation status, and length of time in the Talent Search Program were also analyzed for Talent Search participants.

Terms

Terms that may need clarification within the study are listed below and are defined as outlined in the Federal TRIO Programs guidelines (United States Department of Education, n.d.).

1. TRIO-The title of federally funded programs under Title IV, Higher Education Act of 1965, created to promote a means for assisting economically and disadvantaged individuals.
2. Low-Income-An individual whose family's taxable income from the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty amount.
3. First-generation-An individual whose parents do not possess a bachelor's degree.
4. Talent Search Participant-Any individual who has completed five years of elementary education or is at least 11 years of age but not more than 27 years of age and has the potential for a program of postsecondary education, but is not presently enrolled in a program of postsecondary education.
5. College ready-A person who is a high school senior, a person enrolled in an alternative education program whose academic level is equivalent to a high school senior, a high school graduate, or a person who has obtained a high school equivalency certificate.
6. Target Area-The geographic area designed in the funding proposal.
7. Non-Talent Search Participant-A student who attends a target area high school that is served by the program and is eligible for services but does not participate in a Talent Search Program.
8. Postsecondary Enrolled-A participant who has completed the registration requirements, except for payment of tuition and fees, at the institution attending. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.)

The importance of this study resided in the researcher's ability to address a gap in knowledge regarding one of the oldest federal TRIO programs (Talent Search). Largely, there is a lack of comparative data regarding the effectiveness of local Talent Search programs. In order to add to the contextual knowledge regarding Talent Search programs, the researcher examined outcomes to characterize the effectiveness of a local Talent Search program and the overall impact of program participation as reflected in postsecondary enrollment. According to Kezar (2000), the dearth of comprehensive data related to program outcomes and the variation in program characteristics make the generalization of research results of early intervention programs difficult. Additional relative data are needed to demonstrate that participation in early intervention programs such as Talent Search can substantially enhance the ability of disadvantaged students to attend college by influencing many of the factors that promote college enrollment (Kezar). In examining the impact of Talent Search participation on postsecondary enrollments, this study served as a valuable tool for outreach programs serving disadvantaged youth. The research question was, "Does participation in the Talent Search program enable Talent Search participants to enroll in postsecondary institutions at a significant greater rate than non-Talent Search participants?"

Literature Review

The road to a "good life" in U.S. society includes a college education (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002) and on many indicators of social mobility, the data speak for themselves (Loza, 2003). According to Venez & Krop (1999), college graduates with at least a bachelor's degree earn twice as much as high school graduates earn and tend to have better health and live longer. According to a report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (1998), these benefits accrue to both the individual and society. When the educational level increases, individuals realize a higher salary, higher savings, improved working conditions, professional mobility, better health, increased life expectancy, better consumer decision making, and increased personal status, among other benefits. Furthermore, society benefits from a highly educated citizenry through increased tax revenues, greater productivity, increased consumption, decreased reliance on government support, decreased crime rate, increased quality of civic life, and improved ability to adapt to and use technology.

Additional reports, such as the College Board's *Education Pays Report* (2004) and the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's *Measuring Up* Report (2004), have articulated the benefits that result from the investment in higher education, which include quantifiable national impacts, from higher salaries, to improved health, to increased volunteerism, to reduced reliance on welfare and other social support programs. One report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (2005) builds on the work of existing efforts by expressing the benefits of higher education on a 50-state basis. While other reports offered a detailed historical perspective and contemporary catalog of benefits, this evaluation sought to demonstrate that the same benefits that are found at a

national level are also evident at the individual state level. When taken into account in state policy discussions this report concluded that almost every state benefited from higher education on the following indicators: personal income, labor and unemployment, reduced reliance on public assistance, health, volunteerism, and voting. Some states tend to benefit more than others do.

In a study conducted by Perna (2003), gender, race and socioeconomic status were examined and the research was focused on understanding the differences in college-enrollment rates across different groups and what benefits of higher education meant to each group. Findings indicated that the earnings premium increases with the level of educational attainment, and the return on attaining a bachelor's degree is the same regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Another study (Troumpoucis, 2004) provided further details about the Perna (2003) study and data. In addition to confirming the economic and non-economic benefits of higher education, Troumpoucis found that women seem to reap greater economic benefits and perceive a larger payoff to pursuing postsecondary education than men. Comparatively, Asians and Whites with a higher socioeconomic status were more likely to earn degrees than African Americans and Hispanics. High school graduates who attained a higher level of education receive several financial benefits that include averaged higher incomes, greater likelihood of health insurance coverage, more job satisfaction and a greater possibility of working for an employer who offers a retirement plan (Troumpoucis).

As noted, a number of efforts have been made to characterize the public, private, social, and economic benefits derived from educational attainment (Institute for Higher Education, [IHEP] 2005). Conversely, Swail (2000) cited that the educational system, no

matter how well intentioned, will not adequately provide the resources that low-income, underrepresented, high-need students require. According to Gandara and Bail (2001), in order to improve the educational system and increase the college-going rates for these populations, several impediments should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Some of these include inequalities of familial cultural and social capital, lack of peer support for academic achievement, inequalities in K-12 schools, segregation of underrepresented students, poor high school counseling, low expectation and aspiration, high dropout rates, and limited financial resources. Youth with these background characteristics require the most attention and resources, yet they receive the least (Swail).

Over the last three decades, the amount of support along with the type of support provided by students, families, taxpayers, colleges, and universities, and the private sector has decreased considerably, resulting in diminished access to higher education for low-income students (IHEP, 2005). Low-income students' level of preparation for college and college-going rates remain substantially below those of their counterparts from middle-and upper-income families (Mortenson, 2001). Students from low-income families are much less likely to go to college than students from wealthier families (Burd, 2002).

In response to this diminished access, a number of private organizations and state- and federal-level agencies, colleges and universities have implemented a variety of strategies for expanding the college access, attendance, and graduation rates (Oesterreich, 2000). For example, as cited by Gandara and Bail (2001), the California Legislature appropriated $38.5 million to augment university outreach efforts in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 state budgets with promises to continue the support into succeeding years if

such efforts were successful. These strategies, like a variety of others, are all intended to increase the likelihood that the youth of low-income parents will be prepared for college at rates comparable to those of their more affluent peers (Cabrera et al., 2003). Preliminary research suggests that participation in early intervention programs can substantially enhance the ability of disadvantaged students to attend college by influencing many of the factors that promote college enrollment (Kezar, 2000).

These early outreach interventions, pre-collegiate programs, or college preparation programs are usually housed on a university or community college campus (Fashola & Slavin, 1997). These programs focus on providing additional or supplementary support services to disadvantaged students and help fill gaps where the system fails (Swail, 2000). The most effective college preparation programs are of substantial duration and focus on readiness rather than remediation (Oesterreich, 2000).

Despite the efforts made to focus on student preparation and readiness for postsecondary work among all students (Swail, 2000), college preparation programs serving underrepresented students have been under attack. There are literally thousands of intervention programs to help underrepresented students get into college. Many are redundant in their program services with limited model types and features (Swail). Data are generally sparse; therefore, it is usually difficult to know if these programs work at all, with whom they work, and under what circumstances (Gandara & Bail, 2001). Due to the commonalities it is possible to set parameters for comparisons (e.g., college awareness, study-skills training, career counseling, academic advising, pre-college test preparation, postsecondary planning). However, the process of identifying the range of models and their features, and most especially searching out programs with rigorous

evaluation data that allow conclusions about whether and how they are working, is viewed as labor intensive (Gandara & Bail, 2001). According to Gandara and Bail, the most effective programs are, at the least, capable of doubling the college-going rate of participants. The common elements among these effective early intervention programs include key mentors, quality instruction and challenging courses, long term investments in students, attention to cultural background, peer groups that support students' academic aspirations, and financial assistance and incentive.

Additionally, Kezar (2000) found that research on early intervention programs has been hindered by several factors including a lack of funding, the small size of most programs and program diversity with respect to goals, services, eligibility criteria, and types of sponsors. Little comprehensive and reliable data related to program outcomes exist and variations in program characteristics make it difficult to generalize research results (Kezar). Gandara and Bail (2001) further noted that the lack of evaluation sharply limits assessment of these outreach programs' effectiveness. After reviewing 33 pre-college programs, they concluded that attrition, lack of evidence on academic achievement, and the absences of longitudinal data on the students served severely limit understanding of what works and what does not work.

Perhaps the most notable of all outreach efforts are the federal TRIO programs. Borne of the War on Poverty campaign of the 1960s, Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Service were established to help provide supplementary academic support to low-income, historically underrepresented students. Later reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 broadened the program to include the McNair and other specialized Upward Bound programs. Currently, the TRIO menu offers services

from middle school to graduate level and serves over seventy-five thousand students annually (Swail, 2000).

The current study focused its review on one intervention outreach program among the federal TRIO programs, namely Talent Search. The Talent Search program was established by Congress and began operating in 1967. It is funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Talent Search programs are housed at two- and four-year colleges and universities and public or private agencies or organizations (U.S. Department of Education, n. d.). Participants are recruited from high-poverty targeted middle and high schools that are designated by Talent Search programs to receive particular services. The specific goals of the Talent Search program as set forth by the U.S. Department of Education are to identify and assist 6^{th} to 12^{th} grade students from disadvantaged backgrounds who have the potential to succeed in higher education. Talent Search programs encourage identified students to complete secondary school and to enroll in postsecondary education programs. Additionally, Talent Search staff informs identified students regarding the availability of student financial aid. A final goal of Talent Search is to encourage secondary and postsecondary school dropouts to reenter an educational program (U.S. DOE, n. d.).

While other intervention programs share Talent Search goals and programmatic components, oftentimes such interventions have a much smaller participant base or serve entire grade-cohorts. Talent Search is unique and cost effective. Program staff serves groups and large numbers of students regionally and at the same time manages to meet the individual student's needs both academically and financially (U.S. DOE, n. d). The program's strategy is complete, in addressing the needs of at-risk students both

academically and financially. Integrating efforts are used to promote individual awareness of college as an option, individual college aspirations, and individual level of preparedness for college (U.S. DOE, n. d.). Thus, Talent Search incorporates most of the elements of other intervention programs in a cost effective, collaborative, and individual centered strategy.

Although a case study of Talent Search conducted in 1990 found that 73% of Talent Search students went on to college, Kezar (2000) stated more up-to-date data and the examination of successful program practices and outcomes are needed to establish what is working and what is not. As mentioned previously, one purpose of the Talent Search program is to enroll participants in a postsecondary institution. One way to examine successful program practices is to compare outcomes of participants and non-participants.

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate if participation in the Talent Search program increases postsecondary enrollment. For the purpose of extending the study for evaluation, additional questions were examined regarding factors affecting postsecondary enrollment of Talent Search participants. The research questions were: (a) Will low income students participating in the Talent Search program enroll in college at a higher rate than do non-participating low income students, (b) Does the length of time in the Talent Search program correlate with postsecondary enrollment, and (c) Is there a relationship in Postsecondary enrollment and the Talent Search participants' classification by Talent Search eligibility criteria of (a) low income status, (b) first generation status, and (c) low-income and first generation status?

As characterized by the literature, the benefits of higher education are numerous for both the individual and society. Intervention programs designed to help underrepresented students get into college are also numerous; however, data regarding the success of these programs are generally sparse. Therefore, it is appropriate to address this need, and offer additional information regarding these programs. In order to provide this needed information, one intervention program, a federally funded TRIO Talent Search program was assessed. The next section elucidates the methods used in this study.

Methodology

Federally funded TRIO programs have been in existence for approximately forty years yet little research has been conducted on their effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of one TRIO program, Talent Search. A Talent Search Program housed at a regional comprehensive institution in the state of Kentucky was selected for observation. This study compared the postsecondary enrollment rates of Talent Search participants to those of non-Talent Search participants attending three rural schools within fifty miles of the host institution for the Talent Search program.

To complete the assessment, a two group non-equivalent design was employed. Since the researcher did not control the assignment to groups through the mechanism of random assignments, the two group non-equivalent design was appropriate for this study. With this two-group design, both internal validity and external validity threats existed. The internal validity threat to this study was the history selection threat. The Talent Search participants differed from non-Talent Search participants with respect to which schools they attended, the rigor and delivery of the curriculum, and the school personnel encountered. Regarding external threats to validity, the participants were not randomly assigned; as a result, a low to moderate threat to external validity existed within this study.

Participants

Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) approval was received for this study. School permission to access data regarding non-Talent Search participants (i.e., permission from all three high school principals) was obtained. Postsecondary enrollment data accessible to the public through the National Student Clearing House database was

also utilized. Talent Search participant information was obtained from an existing Talent Search program database. See Appendices A and B for letters of approval. Other data were gathered from the United States Department of Education's TRIO Annual Performance Reports, the National Student Clearinghouse database, the Kentucky Department of Education non-academic transition reports, target high school personnel, and the designated institution's Talent Search database.

Of the fourteen high schools targeted and served by the Talent Search Program at the designated host institution, three were selected for data collection purposes. The selection procedure involved grouping the 14 target high schools into three categories according to their 2002 postsecondary enrollment rate. The investigator defined the categories as follows (a) high equals a postsecondary enrollment rate of 64% or above, (b) medium equals a postsecondary enrollment rate of 59% to 63%, and (c) low equals a postsecondary enrollment rate of 46% to 58%. To preserve confidentiality and due to the availability of data three target schools previously served by the investigator were selected from these categories.

Data regarding a total of 284 low-income students from three Talent Search target schools were considered in this assessment. Only low-income data were available for both Talent Search participants and non-participants. Low-income status was determined by the federal child nutrition program's free and reduced lunch guidelines. An equal number of Talent Search participants and non-Talent Search students were observed. Participants were a subset of all graduating seniors during the 2003 - 2006 school years (N=1,924). All low-income college ready Talent Search participants were observed (n=142). The total number of low-income non-Talent Search participants (n=142) were a

randomly selected subset of the total number minus the Talent Search participants (N=808) of college ready low-income students from the three target schools.

Of the 284 participants, 58.5%, (n=166) were female, 41.5%, (n=118) male. In terms of ethnicity the sample consisted of 67.3 % (n= 191) White or Caucasian, 24.5% (n=69) African American. Other ethnic categories were combined due to the small proportion, 8.5% (n=24). Of the Talent Search participants 37% (n=105) were identified as both low income and first-generation, 2.1% (n=6) were low income only, and 8.5% (n=25) were first generation only.

Procedures

After receiving permission from Western Kentucky University's HSRB and the school administrators, the investigator determined the number of low-income college ready Talent Search participants from the 2002-2006 grant cycle. Low-income status was as previously defined and determined by the federal child nutrition program's free and reduced lunch guidelines. College ready was defined as a high school senior or individual enrolled in an alternative education program whose academic level is equivalent to a high school senior, a high school graduate, or a person who has obtained a high school equivalency certificate. Data on the length of time in the program, measured by years, for Talent Search participants were collected from the institution's Talent Search database. Data on the income status and first generation status of Talent Search participants were also obtained from the institution's Talent Search database and the TRIO program annual performance reports.

Then the rosters of all college ready non-participating low-income seniors attending the three selected high schools were collected from the high school's guidance

personnel. The names of all non-participants were placed in an envelope. Names were drawn until a number equal to the number of Talent Search participants was obtained. The postsecondary enrollment status for both participants and non-participants was obtained from the Kentucky academic transition reports, and the National Student Clearinghouse, existing databases.

Measurement

The investigator compared the postsecondary enrollment rates of Talent Search participants to non-Talent Search participants provided from the fall semester, immediately following graduation for the 2002-2006 grant cycle year. This comparison was to determine if participation in the Talent Search program increased postsecondary enrollment for participants at a greater rate than that of non-Talent Search participants. This examination was done by first recording the enrollment status of each Talent Search participant, and then a comparison was made to the enrollment data reported for non-Talent Search participants to determine if there were significant differences in postsecondary enrollment rates between the two groups. The researcher was also interested in factors for Talent Search participants that may impact postsecondary enrollment rates. The researcher therefore compared Talent Search participant enrollment rates based on the number of years the Talent Search participants was enrolled in the program. Calculations were performed to determine if there were any significant differences in postsecondary enrollment rates for Talent Search participants because of this factor. The researcher also examined if a relationship in postsecondary enrollment and Talent Search participants' classification of (a) low-income only, (b) first generation only, and (c) low-income and first generation status existed. The investigator ranked

ordered the Talent Search participant's eligibility criteria status as follows (a) first generation only equals a low obstacle to postsecondary enrollment, (b) low income equals a moderate obstacle to postsecondary enrollment, and (c) low-income and first generation equals a severe obstacle to postsecondary enrollment. This classification is consistent with Talent Search eligibility criteria.

Data for this study were collected from five sources including the United States Department of Education Annual Performance Reports, the National Student Clearinghouse database, the Kentucky Department of Education non-academic transition reports, target high school personnel, and the designated institution's Talent Search database. The low-income status was established according to criteria established for free or reduced lunch eligibility. Additionally, Talent Search participants' classification as low-income was confirmed by applying federal TRIO Talent Search guidelines. Furthermore, enrollments were counted for four different postsecondary institution types, two-four year public institutions or two-four year private institutions, vocational or technical schools or proprietary institutions. The length of time in the Talent Search program measured by the number of years enrolled was considered. Federal TRIO guidelines require that two-thirds of the participants served by the Talent Search program be both low-income and first generation, therefore, Talent Search participants were categorized as low income, first generation, or both low –income and first generation. The aforementioned criteria established by the federally funded TRIO program's Talent Search guidelines were reviewed, recorded, and obtained from the Talent Search database. For non-Talent Search participants' data were only available for low-income students, therefore only low-income students were observed. Due to the availability of

data on Talent Search participants both, low-income and first generation data were considered in the data analysis for Talent Search participants.

Data Analysis

A Chi squared analysis was used to evaluate differences in postsecondary enrollment among participants and non-participants. When significance differences were observed then effect size estimates were based on the Phi Correlation Coefficient correlation between nominal variables. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to estimate the relationship between length of time in the Talent Search program and postsecondary enrollment. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was also used to examine if there was a relationship in participant postsecondary enrollment and the following factors representing program participant eligibility criteria (a) low income only, (b) first generation only, and (c) both low-income and first generation.

Results

The primary purpose of this research was to assess the efficacy of a Talent Search program in terms of participant postsecondary enrollment. As an evaluation, the following questions were examined regarding factors affecting postsecondary enrollment of Talent Search participants. The research questions addressed were (a) Will low income students participating in the Talent Search program enroll in college at a higher rate than do non-participating low income students, (b) Does the length of time in the Talent Search program correlate with postsecondary enrollment and (c) Is there a relationship in Postsecondary enrollment among Talent Search participants as related to their classification by ETS eligibility criteria, which are (a) low income status, (b) first generation status, or (c) both low-income and first generation status?

Results revealed that the postsecondary enrollment of Talent Search participants was significantly higher than non-participants. Table 1 presents a comparison of the postsecondary enrollment of Talent Search participants and non-participants. A Chi-squared test was used to evaluate the differences in the postsecondary enrollment rates among participants and non-participants. Chi Square value relationship is significant at the .05 level, showing a relationship between participation in the Talent Search Program and postsecondary enrollment. These statistics show that 69.6% of the Talent Search participants enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Only 30.4% non-participants enrolled in a postsecondary institution.

Table 1.

Postsecondary Enrollment for Talent Search Participants and Non-Participants

	Participants (n= 284)	
Participants	Enrolled	Not Enrolled
Talent Search	(n=112) 69.9%	(n=30) 24.6%
Non-Talent Search	(n=49) 30.4%	(n=93) 75.4%

These statistics show that participation in the Talent Search program is associated with postsecondary enrollment. Where significance exists the effect size was estimated using the Phi-squared, Φ^2 (1, N=284) = .194, $p < .01$. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to estimate the relationship between the length of time in the Talent Search program and postsecondary enrollment. No significant relationship was observed. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to estimate the relationship between postsecondary enrollment and the following factors representing program participant eligibility criteria (a) low income only, (b) first generation only, and (c) both low-income and first generation. No significant relationship was observed.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine if participation in TRIO programs had an effect on postsecondary enrollment. One TRIO program Talent Search housed at a regional comprehensive institution in the state of Kentucky serving rural populations was selected for observation. The populations consisted of senior, college ready Talent Search participants and non-Talent Search participants attending three rural schools within fifty miles of the host institution for the Talent Search program during the 2002-2006 grant funding cycle. In this study, postsecondary enrollment was selected for examination because it was the primary motivation for the establishment of TRIO programs. Therefore, the postsecondary enrollment of Talent Search participants and non-participants were observed. It was assumed that this data would be useful to other TRIO programs as well as the program selected for observation.

The results of this study showed an effect size of 19% in postsecondary enrollment for Talent Search participants, Phi-squared, Φ^2 (1, N=284) = .194, $p < .01$. These findings were consistent with previous research, which suggested that participation in early intervention programs could substantially enhance the ability of disadvantaged students to attend college (Kezar, 2000). Additionally, the findings of this study were consistent with research, which suggested that the most effective programs were capable, at the least, of doubling the college-going rate of participants (Gandara & Bail, 2001). Talent Search participants' postsecondary enrollment in this study was 69.9 % compared to 30.4% for non- participants. The results of this study reinforced the notion and provided further evidence that participation in pre-college programs such as the TRIO program's Talent Search effects postsecondary enrollment of low-income students.

Additional results of this study concluded that the length of time in the program does not effect the postsecondary enrollment significantly; this finding was inconsistent with literature that suggested the most effective programs are those with long-term investments in students (Gandara and Bail). Further results of this study concluded that there were no significant relationships in postsecondary enrollment among Talent Search participants based on to their classification by ETS eligibility criteria of (a) low income status, (b) first generation status, or (c) both low-income and first generation status.

Limitations

Although this study provided both useful and practical information for Talent Search programs and administrators, it had limitations. A primary limitation included the fact that while the results concluded that participation in the TRIO Talent Search program positively effects postsecondary enrollment the study did not explain what caused the effect. Second, the findings concerned one Talent Search program. It was not within the scope of this study to reach conclusions relevant to any other Talent Search programs. Lack of specific cause of effectiveness and limited program observation meant that the results of this study might not be generalized across other Talent Search programs.

Recommendations for Future Research

It would be beneficial for this study to be replicated with observations specific to programming techniques and methods to identify possible causes for effectiveness as they relate to participation and postsecondary enrollment. In addition, it might also be beneficial to replicate this study with several Talent Search programs to determine if the results would be similar. Furthermore, it would also be meaningful to conduct a longitudinal study of Talent Search participants and non-Talent Search participants who

did enroll in postsecondary education. This type study would provide a better indication of whether or not program participation increases postsecondary graduation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that participation in early intervention programs specifically, Talent Search, significantly effects postsecondary enrollment. A comparison of postsecondary enrollment for Talent Search participants and non-Talent Search participants were analyzed. In addition, factors such as income status, first generation status, and length of time in the program were also observed for Talent Search participants. The findings in this study provided evidence of the effectiveness of Talent Search programs. In addition, the findings in this study will also assist program administrators with future program planning and operations. These findings will also serve as a valuable tool for other outreach programs serving disadvantaged youth. Finally, although this study added to the literature regarding Talent Search participation and postsecondary enrollment, the research design could be manipulated and replicated in a variety of ways to provide additional information.

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Appendix A

Appendix B