

Public Abstract

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Title:TRACKING PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT PATTERNS OF MISSOURI A+ PROGRAM-ELIGIBLE GRADUATES

The Missouri A+ Schools Program is primarily a high school improvement program that includes a post-secondary financial incentive to encourage student participation. The A+ Program incentive stipulates enrollment at a Missouri two-year public institution in addition to academic achievement requirements. This statewide cohort study tracked an A+ Program cohort's in-state public post-secondary experience. The study was grounded in post-secondary access literature and previous studies pertaining to the outcomes of statewide scholarship programs. Using descriptive, chi square, and discriminate function analysis, student demographic characteristics (Pell grant eligibility, racial/ethnic status, and parental college experience) were examined in relation to post-secondary enrollment patterns. Further, this study explored potential unanticipated effects of this program in Missouri's public post-secondary sector.

The findings indicate that the majority of A+ students were not Pell-eligible, minority, or first-generation. This cohort's enrollment flow was directed to two-year institutions with measures of academic preparation accounting for more variance between populations who enrolled at two-year or four-year institutions than did demographic characteristics.

Minority students were found to be the most at-risk demographic group in terms of academic achievement and degree attainment. However, similar proportions of minority and non-minority students transferred from two- to four-year institutions. Pell-eligible students were also found to be at-risk when compared to higher income students. There were no significant findings with regard to first-generation students' performance. Rather, first-generation students performed at or above rates of students who were not first-generation. Overall, measures of academic preparation were stronger indicators of student enrollment behaviors than were demographic characteristics.