Program & Study Overview

ScholarMatch was founded in 2010 as a crowdfunding platform for scholarships and has since evolved into a direct-services program with a mission to support low-income, first-generation students to and through college. In 2013, ScholarMatch shifted toward a comprehensive programmatic model that includes individualized college success and career advising, targeted financial support, and ongoing mentorship and emotional support for students.

In March 2020, ScholarMatch allocated resources for an external evaluation of the college success program, intended to further the organization's understanding of the program's performance and outcomes. This report's findings draw on data from the program's database, persistence, and graduation rates from the National Student Clearinghouse, as well as interviews with a sample of staff members across all levels of the organization. The evaluation was designed to compare student-level outcomes against the program's primary mission to support bachelor's degree attainment within the first five years of enrollment.

The report concludes with a proposed logic model drawn from key themes that emerged in interviews with ScholarMatch's staff. The outcomes presented in the logic model can serve as a potential guide for ScholarMatch as the organization continues its journey under new leadership.

Key Findings

- 80% of ScholarMatch students who received the full program model (both nonfinancial and financial support) graduated with a bachelor's degree within five years.
- ScholarMatch scholars’ graduation rate is 22% higher than their peers who graduated at a rate of 58%.
- ScholarMatch's success stems from hiring and promoting staff with qualities that are reflective of the communities served and maintaining meaningful and responsive relationships with scholars.
- ScholarMatch's adoption of a comprehensive support services model is associated with positive and notably high bachelor's degree attainment rates for first-generation, low-income college students.
- The findings presented in this report point to the ScholarMatch program model as a potential exemplar model for college success initiatives that combine both financial and nonfinancial support.
**Findings**

**Our Students Graduate from College**

Eighty percent of ScholarMatch students who received the full program model (both financial and nonfinancial support) graduated with a bachelor’s degree within five years.

**Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Rates**

for ScholarMatch Cohorts 2013–2015

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other Program Iterations</th>
<th>Full Program Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>58%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
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**Persistence Rates**

for ScholarMatch Cohorts 2013–2020

- **Other Program Iterations**
  - Year 4: 84%
  - Year 3: 86%
  - Year 2: 90%
  - Year 1: 96%

- **Full Program Model**
  - Year 4: 98%
  - Year 3: 96%
  - Year 2: 94%

**When We Engage Our Scholars, They Succeed**

The vast majority of ScholarMatch students persist into their second year of college, regardless of program assignment (96% for students enrolled in the full program model versus 93% of other ScholarMatch students). Persistence into the third year of college drops to 87% for students who received a single service versus 94% for students in the full program model.
Institutional Subgroup Analyses

The study also assessed whether degree attainment rates for ScholarMatch students varied across indicators of institutional success. The study conducted subgroup analyses across a proxy measure for institutional success, as measured by Pell student graduation rates reported in College Scorecard data. Institutions were divided into three categories of Pell graduation rates: 0-35%, 36-70%, and 71% and above.

ScholarMatch students in cohorts 2013-2015 who were enrolled in institutions with the lowest Pell degree attainment rates (i.e., 0-35%) graduated at a rate of 67% compared to their peers in a single-service program model who graduated at a rate of 50%. The percentage point difference widens in the second institutional category (i.e., 35-70%) across these two groups of students. Here, we observe a notable 18 percentage point difference. ScholarMatch students enrolled in the full program model graduated at a rate of 76.3% versus 47.6% for students who received a single service (see figure below).

### Bachelor’s Degree Attainment Rates
for ScholarMatch Students Across Institution Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pell Grad Rate</th>
<th>Other Program Iterations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>36 – 70%</td>
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<td>71% +</td>
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*Graduation Rate x Institutional Pell Grad Rate; x = average 150% graduation rate for institutions associated with ScholarMatch sample*

These findings are consistent with a growing evidence base showing that comprehensive support programs have substantially larger impacts on degree attainment rates for students enrolled in less selective, resource-strapped institutions compared to peers enrolled in more selective postsecondary institutions that are, on average, better equipped to offer more robust financial aid and advising services.
Data Sources & Analytic Sample Sizes

- Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for all ScholarMatch participants who enrolled in the program between 2006 and 2020 (n = 812). The NSC record matching rate (that is, the proportion of students who were found in the NSC database) was 82% (n = 667).
- The NSC database was expanded to include five-year graduation data for whom five-year graduation of students who were found in the NSC database) was 82% (n = 667). The NSC record matching rate for the students linked with an NSC record (the NSC match rate for the students in these cohorts was 87%), therefore yielding an analytic sample size of n = 486.
- Socio-demographic data on students in the analytic samples were provided by the ScholarMatch data team and pulled from the program’s database.
- The demographic composition of the degree attainment analytic sample was 54% Hispanic/Latino, 26% Asian/Asian Indian/Pacific Islander, and 12% Black. The remaining 9% of this sample were either combinations of the above-mentioned categories or did not self-identify into a race/ethnicity category.
- The analytic sample for persistence outcomes related to persistence was expanded to include students selected into cohorts 2013-2018 (n = 558) The NSC match rate for the students in these cohorts was 87%, therefore yielding an analytic sample size of n = 486.
- The demographic composition of the degree attainment analytic sample was 54% Hispanic/Latino, 26% Asian/Asian Indian/Pacific Islander, and 12% Black. The remaining 9% of this sample were either combinations of the above-mentioned categories or did not self-identify into a race/ethnicity category.
- A more comprehensive dataset was required to address financial, affective, and academic challenges.

Logic Model

The logic model below represents an attempt to document the organizational priorities and programmatic components that bolster the success of ScholarMatch students.

Inputs

- Grant Funding
  - Financial support for student cost of attendance, loan repayment, and emergency aid.
  - Full-time, professional programmatic, managerial, and operational staff.
  - Knowledge and data management systems

- Partnerships
  - Schools
  - Funders (individual, institutional, philanthropic)
  - College access and success organizations

- People
  - Culturally congruent front-line advisers, managers, and leadership
  - Active board of directors
  - Engaged alumni and donor base

Activities

- Scholar engagement and inclusion initiatives
- Scholar selection and seamless DC to SP program transition
- Comprehensive and individualized advising
- Open-door, proactive, and responsive advising procedures to address financial, affective, and academic challenges
- Robust knowledge management, early warning indicators, and data visualization systems
- Establish within and cross-team scholar case management review meetings
- Personalized scholar onboarding protocols
- Establish cross-team (i.e., data and program) knowledge management and data systems review routines
- Culturally competent programming, advising, and management
- Distributed expertise on policies & interventions related to college success
- Scholar check-in and data reporting routines
- Identify college success and early warning indicators
- Scholar check-in and data reporting procedures and expectations
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Outputs

- Short-term Outcomes
  - Scholars proficient in policies related to distribution of financial support
  - Scholar check-in and data reporting routines
  - Staff and scholars proficient in data reporting procedures and expectations
  - Identifiers success and early warning indicators
  - Establish cross-team (i.e., data and program) knowledge management and data systems review routines
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- Intermediate Outcomes
  - 100% active scholar compliance with check-in and data reporting
  - Increase in advisor contacts for early warning indicators (EWI) flagged scholars
  - Increase in advisor engagement with knowledge management and data dashboards
  - Improve in measures of social belonging across staff and students
  - Staff demographic composition reflects scholars background and postsecondary experiences
  - Establish within and cross-team scholar case management review meetings
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- Long-term Outcomes
  - Increase in persistence & degree attainment rates
  - Decrease in rates of academic probation and stopouts.
  - Increased participation of underrepresented groups in STEM majors
  - Decrease in private and federal loan debt
  - Increase in the labor market and graduate school enrollment rates
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