

Higher Education Brief

August 2018

Through the Minnesota Results First Initiative, Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) recently completed an analysis of programs and practices Minnesota's public colleges and universities and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education offer across the state with the goal of increasing student enrollment, persistence, and attainment of two and four-year degrees. This analysis is among the first of its kind in the country.

MMB conducts this work in partnership with state, local, and national organizations. We have previously published findings in adult criminal justice, juvenile justice, adult mental health, adult and youth substance use, and child welfare.

This brief highlights the findings of the higher education program inventory. A subsequent full report and benefit-cost analysis will be available in late 2018. To learn more about the Results First Initiative and access the full higher education inventory, please visit mn.gov/mmb/results-first or contact ResultsFirstMN@state.mn.us.

Our Approach

MMB worked with the Office of Higher Education, Minnesota State, and the University of Minnesota to identify existing, publicly-funded higher education programs. We identified programs offered in Minnesota and reviewed the evidence of effectiveness for each program. We then rate each program as Proven Effective, Promising, No Effect, or Theory Based.

For a program to receive a Proven Effective, Promising, or No Effect rating, the program must have been studied using a randomized control trial or quasi-experimental design, meaning there is a treatment and control group to test the causal impact of the service.

As compared to Results First analyses in other program areas like mental health, higher education lags in the amount of rigorous research available. Therefore, most of the research on our higher education programs is Theory Based. Theory Based programs are generally developed using a sound logic model for effectiveness, but adequate high-quality research does not yet exist to identify program effectiveness. This is consistent with the national higher education evidence base.

Inventory Findings

The resulting inventory contains 61 programs and practices, many of which are available across the state while others are unique services created as campuses explore new ways to support students.

- 5 programs are **Proven Effective** (multiple qualifying studies show favorable impact)
- 5 programs are **Promising** (one qualifying study shows favorable impact)
- 1 program is **No Effect** (multiple qualifying studies show no impact)
- 50 programs are **Theory Based** (qualifying evidence is not currently available)

Five services in the Results First inventory (8 percent) are rated Proven Effective, meaning they have a strong base of research supporting their positive impact on higher education enrollment, persistence, attainment, or other related outcomes. An additional 5 services are rated Promising and 1 program is

rated No Effect based on the current available research conducted into those programs. The remaining programs and practices identified in Minnesota are Theory Based.

The table below shows the programs in Minnesota where there is rigorous research to indicate their impact on outcomes.

Figure 1: Rigorously Evaluated Programs and Practices

Program	Scope	Rating
First Year Experience Courses (2 year institutions): Also called student success courses, courses to help student build skills for post-secondary success.	Campus specific – high prevalence	Proven Effective
First Year Experience Courses (4 year institutions): Also called student success courses, courses to help student build skills for post-secondary success.	Campus specific – high prevalence	Proven Effective
Need-Based Grants: Means-tested financial assistance with minimal participation requirements.	Statewide	Proven Effective
Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO): High school students to earn credits for post-secondary work at post-secondary institutions.	Campus specific – high prevalence	Proven Effective
Summer Bridge Programs: Students needing developmental education courses complete them before their first year to begin college courses upon first semester enrollment.	Campus specific – high prevalence	Proven Effective
College in the Schools: High school students receive college credit for college-level courses taught by high school teachers.	Campus specific – high prevalence	Promising
College Possible (high school program): Student support curriculum for high school students from “near-peer” coaches who are AmeriCorps members	Specific population	Promising
Intrusive Advising (2 year institutions): Comprehensive and personalized form of academic advising.	Campus specific – high prevalence	Promising
TRIO Talent Search: Academic, career, and financial counseling to historically underrepresented high school students with potential to succeed in higher education.	Specific population	Promising
TRIO Upward Bound: Academic instruction, cultural enrichment, work-study programs, financial and economic skills for low-income, first-generation high school students.	Specific population	Promising
Summer Nudging: Text message reminders for college-intending high school students to facilitate enrollment.	Statewide	No Effect

State Spending on Proven Practices

General fund appropriations for higher education were \$1.54 billion in fiscal year 2017. Approximately 85 percent of that is appropriated to the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities for general operations, some of which is used for Proven Effective and Promising practices.

The Office of Higher Education administers \$237 million to make higher education more accessible and affordable. In fiscal year 2018, nearly 80 percent of OHE's budget was appropriated for Proven Effective practices like need-based grants.

Rating Methodology

The inventory includes information on the extent to which there is evidence of effectiveness for each program or practice listed. We matched programs to those studied in existing academic research and consulted respected research clearinghouses like the Institute of Education Sciences: What Works Clearinghouse and the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to inform program ratings. Based on the research, we rated each program using the criteria below.

Impact on Outcomes – Rating Definitions	
Proven Effective	A Proven Effective program offers a high level of research on effectiveness for at least one outcome of interest through multiple qualifying evaluations. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
Promising	A Promising program has on qualifying evaluation demonstrating effectiveness for at least one outcome of interest. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.
Theory Based	A Theory Based service or practice has either no research on effectiveness or research designs that do not meet the above standards.
No Effect	A service or practice rated No Effect has no impact on the measured outcome or outcomes of interest based on multiple qualifying evaluations. Qualifying evaluations use rigorously implemented experimental or quasi-experimental designs.