

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PATHWAY TO COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENT

**A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of the
Male Student Success Initiative for Men of Color**



mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

Lashawn Richburg-Hayes
Michelle Manno
Oscar Cerna
Erika B. Lewy
Edith Yang
Amanda Martin-Lawrence

September 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pathway to College Achievement

A Mixed-Methods Evaluation
of the Male Student Success
Initiative for Men of Color

Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Michelle Manno, Oscar Cerna,
Erika B. Lewy, Edith Yang, and Amanda Martin-Lawrence



SEPTEMBER 2023

FUNDERS

The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305N160025 to MDRC and the William T. Grant Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the views of IES or the U.S. Department of Education.

Dissemination of MDRC publications is supported by the following organizations and individuals that help finance MDRC's public policy outreach and expanding efforts to communicate the results and implications of our work to policymakers, practitioners, and others: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Arnold Ventures, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, Daniel and Corinne Goldman, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, Inc., The JPB Foundation, The Joyce Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and Sandler Foundation.

In addition, earnings from the MDRC Endowment help sustain our dissemination efforts. Contributors to the MDRC Endowment include Alcoa Foundation, The Ambrose Monell Foundation, Anheuser-Busch Foundation, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Grable Foundation, The Lizabeth and Frank Newman Charitable Foundation, The New York Times Company Foundation, Jan Nicholson, Paul H. O'Neill Charitable Foundation, John S. Reed, Sandler Foundation, and The Stupski Family Fund, as well as other individual contributors.

The findings and conclusions in this report do not necessarily represent the official positions or policies of the funders.

For information about MDRC and copies of our publications, see our website: www.mdrc.org.

Copyright © 2023 by MDRC®. All rights reserved.

OVERVIEW

Access to college has increased substantially over the last 50 years, but student success—defined as the combination of academic achievement and degree or certificate completion—has largely remained stagnant. The gap between access and success is particularly noteworthy for male Black and Hispanic students, whose college completion rates lag those of White students and female students of any race or ethnicity.

To address these patterns, the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) created the Male Student Success Initiative (MSSI) in 2014. The program was designed to support male students of color throughout their academic journeys. In partnership with CCBC, MDRC, through its Men of Color College Achievement (MoCCA) project, evaluated a redesigned MSSI program that provided a culturally relevant student success course as well as comprehensive support services such as mentoring and academic development workshops.

An earlier report presented findings on how MSSI was implemented in 2019, the first year of the MoCCA study. This report presents findings from a mixed-methods evaluation that covered the entire program period from 2019 to spring 2022. The evaluation consisted of: (1) a randomized controlled trial to estimate the effects of MSSI on student academic progress, using a sample of 514 students, (2) implementation research that focused on how the program was put into effect, (3) qualitative research to obtain a deeper understanding of the student perspective and context, and (4) cost analyses. This report provides the first causal estimates of the effects of a college program targeting male students of color on academic outcomes.

KEY FINDINGS

- The study found that MSSI program components were implemented inconsistently. Despite the implementation challenges, however, MSSI program features created a substantially different experience for students in the program group compared with students in the control group.
- MSSI had positive effects on enrollment in a student orientation course and on passing the orientation course in the first semester—two measures of academic success. The program also had positive effects on increasing students' ability to perform better in the courses they took after the MSSI program year. However, the program did not affect persistence or credits earned.
- Program impacts were concentrated among first-generation students.
- The average cost of the two-semester program was \$885 per student.

It is important to note that this evaluation of MSSI occurred during two national crises that deeply affected the program, its staff, and its students. The first—the COVID-19 pandemic—forced CCBC to change the modality of learning as most classes moved to a virtual format. Second, the killing of unarmed Black people in 2020, including Ahmaud Arbery in February, Breonna Taylor in March, and George Floyd in May, and the resulting public demonstrations, had special salience for MSSI students and staff and also led to some campuswide changes at CCBC. That MSSI had positive effects in this extraordinarily challenging context suggests that the program might generate larger impacts with stronger implementation, though the study design does not permit a conclusive answer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and William T. Grant Foundation for their generous support in funding this report. Special thanks are extended to James Benson, the IES program officer, for his thoughtful comments and intellectual support throughout the project. The authors thank our MDRC research team members Rashida Welbeck (project director), Dominique Dukes (project manager), Melissa Boynton, and Colin Hill. Special thanks are extended to Jalen Alexander for conducting student interviews and focus groups, and Kalito Luna for coordinating the production of this report. Thanks to MDRC colleagues Alice Tufel, John Martinez, Crystal Byndloss, Carolyn Hill, John Hutchins, Alexander Mayer, and Marjorie Dorimé-Williams for their careful reading of draft materials and helpful suggestions to improve the document; Jill Kirschenbaum for editing it; and Carolyn Thomas and Ann Kottner for preparing it for publication. Most important, thanks to the faculty, staff, and students of the Community College of Baltimore County, specifically those associated with the Male Student Success Initiative, for their dedication to the program and for the time they spent with the research team. Extra special thanks are extended to Susan Delker, Jeffery Wright, and Kenneth Westary for their hours dedicated to assisting with the study and providing support to their students, as well as President Sandra Kurnitis for supporting the evaluation of this important initiative.

The Authors

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Access to college has increased substantially over the last 50 years, but student success—defined as the combination of academic achievement and degree or certificate completion—has largely remained stagnant. The gap between access and success is particularly noteworthy for Black and Hispanic students, whose college completion rates lag those of White students. Male students of color also have lower rates of enrollment and completion than females.¹

The research literature is rich with theories about the challenges faced by male students of color who strive to achieve college success and completion. Three broad factors seem to have the most support for explaining the inequality in outcomes for these students: (1) insufficient college preparation,² (2) nonacademic barriers to persistence, including insufficient financial support,

-
1. Terrell L. Strayhorn, “When Race and Gender Collide: Social and Cultural Capital’s Influence on the Academic Achievement of African American and Latino Males,” *The Review of Higher Education* 33, 3 (2010): 307-332; National Center for Education Statistics, “Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, by Level of Enrollment, Sex, Attendance Status, and Race/Ethnicity or Nonresident Alien Status of Student: Selected Years, 1976 through 2020,” *Digest of Education Statistics*, Table 306.10 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2021a); National Center for Education Statistics, “Graduation Rate from First Institution Attended for First-Time, Full-Time Bachelor’s Degree-Seeking Students at 4-Year Postsecondary Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity, Time to Completion, Sex, Control of Institution, and Percentage of Applications Accepted: Selected Cohort Entry Years, 1996 Through 2014,” *Digest of Education Statistics*, Table 326.10 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2021b); National Center for Education Statistics, “Graduation Rate from First Institution Attended Within 150 Percent of Normal Time for First-Time, Full-Time Degree/Certificate-Seeking Students at 2-Year Postsecondary Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity, Sex, and Control of Institution: Selected Cohort Entry Years, 2000 through 2017,” *Digest of Education Statistics*, Table 326.20 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2021c); Anthony Jr. Marshall, Andrew Howard Nichols, and Wil Del Pilar, “Raising Undergraduate Degree Attainment Among Black Women and Men Takes on New Urgency Amid the Pandemic,” May (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2021).
 2. C. Adelman, *Principal Indicators of Student Academic Histories in Postsecondary Education, 1972–2000* (Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2004); Paul Attewell, Scott Heil, and Liza Reisel, “What Is Academic Momentum? And Does It Matter?” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 34, 1 (2012): 27–44; T. Bailey, D.W. Jeong, and S.W. Cho, “Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges,” *Economics of Education Review* 29, 2 (2010): 255–270; M. Perry, P.R. Bahr, M. Rosin, and K.M. Woodward, “Course-Taking Patterns, Policies, and Practices in Developmental Education in the California Community Colleges” (Mountain View, CA: EdSource, 2010).

psychological factors, and discriminatory practices,³ and (3) inadequate social, emotional, and campus support.⁴

Increased attention has been devoted to these challenges both inside and outside of academia. To address those gaps, many community colleges and four-year institutions have developed programming specifically aimed at supporting male students of color or have joined institutional networks to share best practices for improving outcomes for this group. The underlying philosophy of most such programs is that providing these students with additional social, personal, and academic support can improve retention and completion rates. Most programs seek to achieve this not only by working with students as individuals but by forming a supportive community designed to encourage students to build both internal resources and external connections that can help them persist, succeed, and ultimately graduate.

While there is extensive qualitative literature on the implementation and value of these programs, there are few quantitative studies of the effect of this type of programming on academic outcomes. To that end, this report presents findings from a mixed-methods evaluation by MDRC of the Male Student Success Initiative (MSSI) at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC). It provides the first causal estimates of the effects on academic outcomes of a college program targeting male students of color.

BACKGROUND OF THE MSSI PROGRAM

The MSSI program, which has operated at CCBC in Baltimore, Maryland, since 2014, is being evaluated by MDRC through its Men of Color College Achievement (MoCCA) project, in partnership with CCBC. MSSI was expanded in 2019 as part of the MoCCA study from a one-semester program to a two-semester program and extended to all students self-identifying as males of color, including Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and members of other ethnic groups. The program was envisioned to lead ultimately to graduation or transfer to a four-year institution by supporting noncognitive outcomes such as:

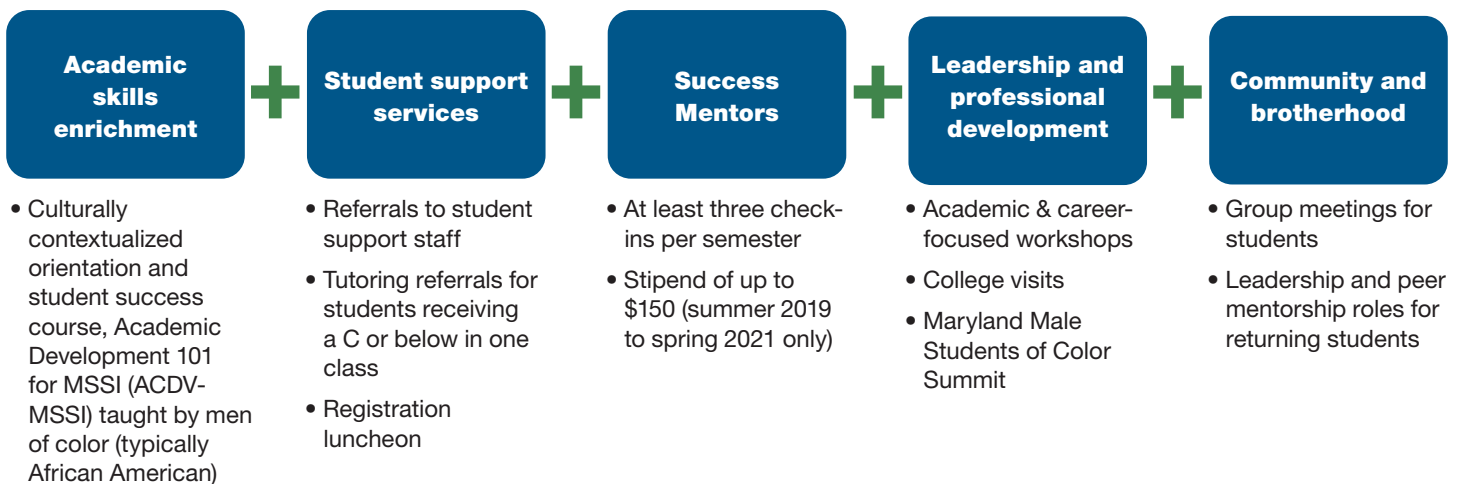
- Improved academic self-efficacy and the belief that one can achieve a specific academic goal.

-
3. R.T. Palmer, R.J. Davis, J.L. Moore, and A.A. Hilton, "A Nation at Risk: Increasing College Participation and Persistence Among African American Males to Stimulate U.S. Global Competitiveness," *Journal of African American Males in Education* 1, 2 (2010): 105-124; Gregory M. Walton and Geoffrey L. Cohen, "A Question of Belonging: Race, Social Fit, and Achievement," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 1 (2007): 82-96; G.M. Walton and G.L. Cohen, "A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students," *Science* 331 (2011): 1447-1451; Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson, "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, 5 (1995): 797-811.
 4. John Michael Lee, Jr., and Tafaya Ransom, *The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: A Review of Research, Pathways, and Progress* (New York: The College Board, 2011); Shaun R. Harper, "Bibliography on Black Undergraduate Men: Books, Reports, and Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles" (Philadelphia: Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, University of Pennsylvania, 2012).

- An increase in help-seeking behaviors, such as asking for help from others, to improve students' performance and understanding when they are struggling.
- More positive adult relationships through which students accept the supports offered by advisors, counselors, and coaches.
- A sense of belonging in the college community and a reduced sense of isolation through identification with the MSSSI program.
- Increased community and brotherhood through scheduled gatherings and other key events that help students foster relationships with each other and with MSSSI staff members.

To accomplish this, MSSSI was designed to have five program components: academic skills enrichment through a culturally contextualized section of Academic Development 101 (ACDV 101)—a required one-credit course; student support services, including referrals to tutors and other supports; assigned Success Mentors; leadership and professional development activities; and community and brotherhood activities. (See Figure ES.1 for more information about the program components.)

FIGURE ES.1 MSSSI Program Components as Designed



MDRC's mixed-methods evaluation consisted of: (1) a randomized controlled trial to estimate the effects of MSSSI on student academic progress, in which eligible students were randomly assigned to either a program group and offered MSSSI services as well as all other support services available on campus, or to a control group that only had access to the support services available to all students at CCBC, (2) implementation research that focused on how the program was put into effect, fidelity to the design, service contrast, and service use by students, (3) qualitative

research to obtain a deeper understanding of the student perspective and context, and (4) cost analyses.⁵

An earlier report presented findings on how the MSSSI program was implemented during the first year of the MoCCA study in 2019, using an early sample of students enrolled in the program.⁶ That report found that there was a limited set of resources to support the program and program leadership had little available time to oversee the program. The report also found that CCBC struggled to implement MSSSI consistently. This report covers the entire program period from 2019 to spring 2022 and includes the full sample of 514 students.

FINDINGS

- **MSSSI did not operate as intended. However, despite implementation challenges, the MSSSI program features represented a substantially different experience for students in the program group compared with students in the control group who were not enrolled in the program.**

Students did not participate in MSSSI services at expected levels before the pandemic, and difficulties in engaging students in program activities were particularly noticeable after the start of the pandemic. The program features were purposefully evolved over time and not all program components were implemented as originally planned. Yet, an analysis of qualitative data, including interviews with staff members, focus groups with program group students and control group students, classroom observations, and observations of other MSSSI activities, shows that the intervention's features represented a substantially different experience for students in the program group compared with students in the control group.

- **From the beginning of the study period, the MSSSI program experienced staffing changes at all levels, including day-to-day management, program leadership, and Success Mentors, among those who interacted with the students.**

These changes affected all MSSSI program components and may have influenced program implementation and implementation fidelity. In 2019, day-to-day program responsibilities and oversight of the Success Mentors were led by a faculty liaison—a full-time faculty member with six hours (the equivalent of two classes) allocated specifically for MSSSI. Throughout 2019, the day-to-day management position experienced significant turnover. Two individuals left the role within the year, leaving the position vacant in each instance for a period of time. To stabilize

-
5. The MoCCA study and analysis plan is pre-registered (ID# 1785.1v2) with the Registry of Efficacy and Effectiveness Studies (REES), developed by the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. The goal of REES is to increase transparency for studies seeking to draw causal conclusions within the education research and evaluation community. The study was initially registered on August 21, 2019, and revised on August 3, 2020, prior to any quantitative data analysis.
 6. Michelle S. Manno, Dominique Dukes, Oscar Cerna, and Colin Hill, *Pushing Toward Progress: Early Implementation Findings from a Study of the Male Student Success Initiative* (New York: MDRC, 2020).

MSSI's management and to address challenges arising from the limited capacity of the previous managers, a full-time staff member was hired in summer 2020. Furthermore, in late 2020-early 2021, MSSI program leadership transitioned from a dean to a vice president, which raised the program's profile among college leadership.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated difficulties in program operation and student engagement.**

In March 2020, CCBC announced a travel ban for staff and students, cancelled all in-person classes, cancelled and postponed all major events on campus, and began preparation for remote instruction and teleworking. Classes largely remained remote through the end of the spring 2020 semester, and nearly all staff were directed to work from home or “be at home” if unable to telework.

MSSI students experienced various challenges adapting to the pandemic-induced virtual learning environment. Those who participated in focus groups after the start of the pandemic frequently noted their difficulties and displeasure with virtual learning. These students cited numerous instances of struggling to stay focused on learning course content amid the distractions of being at home such as other family members who were also attending online classes or working within close quarters. Some students missed having the face-to-face, dynamic interactions with other students and teachers that they were usually afforded in class. Others cited a lack of consistent communication with their professors, whom they would normally try to approach either before or right after class to receive immediate help, compared with waiting for them to respond to emails during the pandemic.

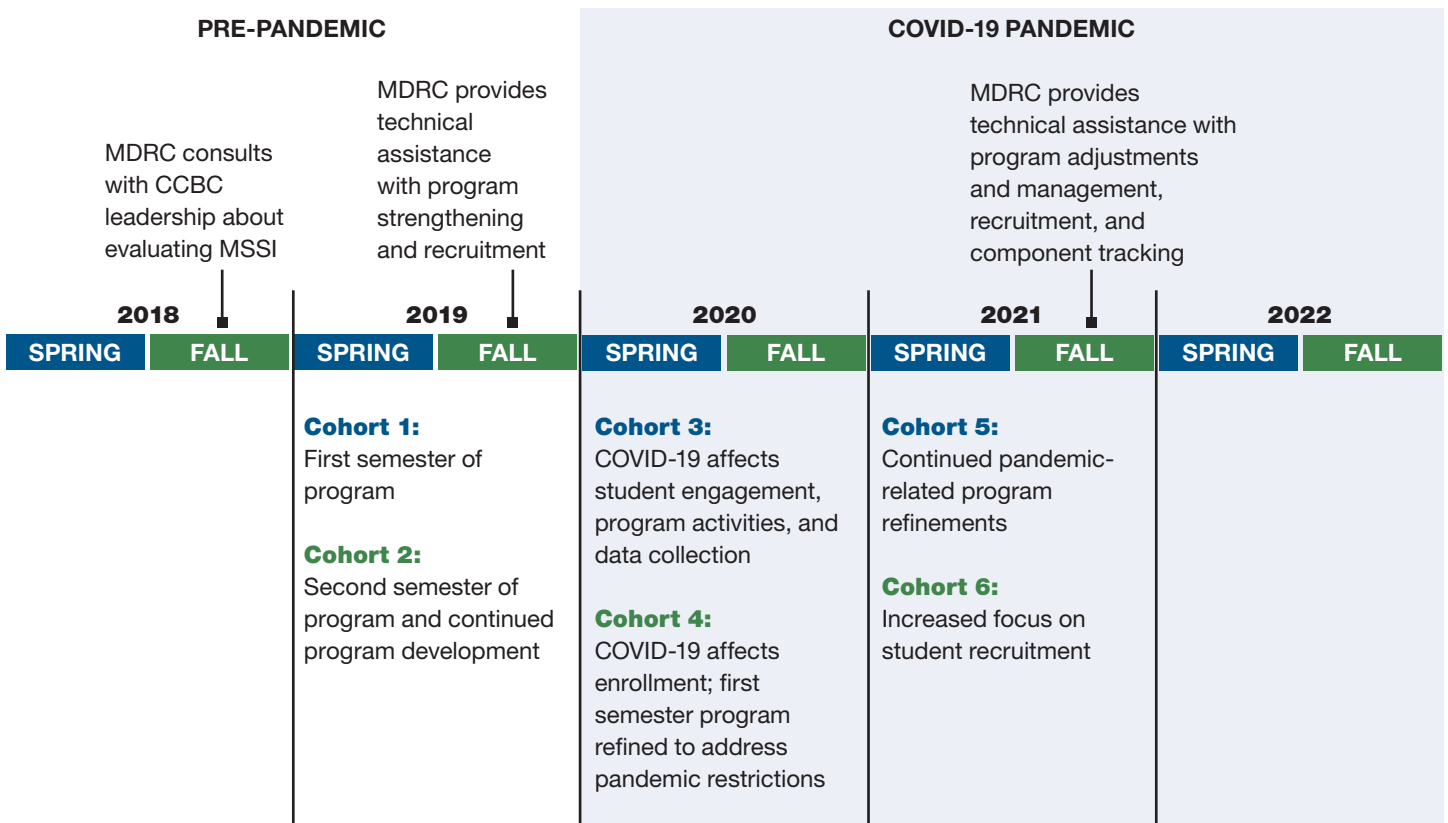
- **The pandemic also disrupted the experimental evaluation of the MSSI model, creating two subsamples with different experiences and contributing to a smaller evaluation sample.**

The evaluation period ran from 2019 through spring 2022, which resulted in some students in the study sample receiving services during the pre-pandemic period (2019) and others receiving services during the pandemic (2020 through spring 2022). Specifically, the study sample is divided between those who experienced the program in-person (204 students or about 40 percent of the sample) and those who experienced the program virtually during the pandemic (310 students or about 60 percent of the sample). See Figure ES.2 for the implementation timeline. As a result, while results for the full sample are reported, some analyses divide the sample into pre-pandemic and pandemic groupings.

- **The MSSI program had positive effects on enrollment in the student orientation course and passing the orientation course in the first semester—two measures of academic success. The program also had positive effects on increasing students' ability to perform better in the courses they took after the MSSI program year.**

The MSSI program increased enrollment in ACDV by 10.3 percentage points (above the control group mean of 56.1 percent) during the first semester of the intervention and increased passing the course in the first semester by 15.2 percentage points (above the control group mean of 28.1

FIGURE ES.2 MoCCA Implementation Timeline



percent). The program did not affect enrollment, credits attempted, or credits earned in the first two semesters. (See Table ES.1.)

After the MSSI program year, the program increased students' ability to perform better within courses they took.⁷ Program group members were 7.3 percentage points more likely (12.5 percent compared with 5.2 percent) to earn an A, B, or C in all courses relative to control group members in the fourth semester. When grades from the ACDV course—part of the intervention—are excluded from the grade calculations, program group members were 6.3 percentage points more likely than control group members to earn an A, B, or C in all other courses (12.3 percent compared with 6 percent) in the fourth semester. It is unclear why impacts were present in the fourth semester and not the third semester. There is no evidence that the MSSI program affected persistence or completion in any semester. (See Table ES.2.)

7. Note that the sample is limited to the first three cohorts, as these students experienced a full post-program year at the time of reporting.

TABLE ES.1 Academic Outcomes, Semesters 1 and 2, Full Sample

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	P-Value	Standard Error
Enrolled (%)					
1st semester	81.4	78.5	3.0	0.406	3.6
2nd semester	51.3	46.9	4.4	0.408	5.3
Enrolled in ACDV class (%)					
1st semester	66.4	56.1	10.3 **	0.012	4.1
2nd semester	7.2	10.7	-3.4	0.261	3.1
Passed ACDV class (%)					
1st semester	43.4	28.1	15.2 ***	0.000	4.2
2nd semester	2.3	4.8	-2.5	0.227	2.1
Credits attempted ^a					
1st semester	7.5	7.8	-0.3	0.490	0.5
2nd semester	5.1	5.0	0.2	0.788	0.6
Credits earned					
1st semester	4.3	3.9	0.3	0.446	0.4
2nd semester	2.9	2.6	0.3	0.496	0.5
Sample size (total = 514)	304	210			

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using transcript data from the Community College of Baltimore County.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Second semester estimates do not include cohort 6. The sample size for second semester outcomes is 206 for the program group and 169 for the control group (375 total). Estimates may reflect rounding.

^aIncludes class withdrawals, dropped classes, and incompletes.

■ Program impacts were concentrated among first-generation students.

The intervention induced higher ACDV enrollment among first-generation students in the first semester (68.2 percent of program group members enrolled in ACDV in the first semester compared with 39.8 percent of control group members, a 28.4 percentage point increase). Non-first-generation students in the program group and the control group, on the other hand, had similar rates of enrollment in ACDV students (65.5 percent of non-first-generation program group members enrolled in ACDV in the first semester compared with 62.4 percent of control group members). The difference in first-semester ACDV enrollment between first-generation students and non-first-generation students is 23.5 percentage points (not shown in table), which is statistically significant.

TABLE ES.2 Academic Outcomes After the MSSSI Program Year, Cohorts 1 to 3

Outcome	Program Group	Control Group	Impact	P-Value	Standard Error
Enrolled (%)					
3rd semester	40.4	32.9	7.5	0.234	6.3
4th semester	33.6	26.0	7.6	0.220	6.2
Credits attempted ^a					
3rd semester	3.8	3.6	0.2	0.721	0.7
4th semester	2.9	2.6	0.3	0.639	0.7
Credits earned					
3rd semester	2.4	1.9	0.5	0.318	0.5
4th semester	1.9	1.6	0.3	0.531	0.5
Received A, B, or C in all courses (%)					
3rd semester	10.5	8.6	1.9	0.639	4.0
4th semester	12.5	5.2	7.3 **	0.048	3.6
Excluding ACDV					
Received A, B, or C in all courses (%)					
3rd semester	10.5	8.6	1.9	0.639	4.0
4th semester	12.3	6.0	6.3 *	0.092	3.7
Sample size (total = 256)	122	134			

SOURCES: MDRC calculations using transcript data from the Community College of Baltimore County.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent. Estimates may reflect rounding.

^aIncludes class withdrawals, dropped classes, and incompletes.

- **The average cost of the program was \$885 per student. However, cost effectiveness cannot be determined at this point.**

The estimated cost of Success Mentors varied from \$29,101 in spring 2019 to \$5,414 in fall 2021. This variation reflects the change in the number of Success Mentors across terms (from seven in spring 2019 to one to three in fall 2021). The amount of time Success Mentors spent on MSSSI activities also varied by term. In contrast, administrator costs were relatively stable over time. The cost per student ranged from a high of \$1,474 per student in spring 2019 to a low of \$273 per student in fall 2021 because of the variation noted above as well as the change in the number of program group students in their first or second terms. The overall average cost was \$885 per student. This average cost per student was \$1,046 in the pre-pandemic period and \$815 in the pandemic period. Because there were no early impacts on persistence and completion, cost ef-

fectiveness calculations could not be performed. As a result, it is not possible to ascertain whether MSSSI was more cost effective than the status quo.

CONCLUSION

This report provides the first causal estimates of the effect of a program for men of color on academic outcomes. The findings suggest that a program that combines academic advising and coaching, academic and study skills training, leadership training and career development, mentoring, and special events and workshops can improve some academic success measures, such as earning course grades of A, B, or C. The findings also suggest that such programming can have a bigger impact on outcomes for first-generation male students of color compared with their non-first-generation counterparts.

It is important to remember that the evaluation of MSSSI was impacted by two significant changes in context. The first—the global COVID-19 pandemic—affected both students and administrators, and resulted in a change in learning modality as CCBC moved all classes online in the spring of 2020 to mitigate COVID-19 transmission rates. The second consisted of a rash of killings of unarmed Black people in 2020, including Ahmaud Arbery in February, Breonna Taylor in March, and George Floyd in May, as well as 17 more fatal police shootings of unarmed Black men across the country that year.⁸ These killings coincided with the pandemic and likely affected both students and MSSSI staff differentially, as research suggests that the death of George Floyd resulted in widespread anger and sadness, which was most pronounced among Black Americans.⁹

This challenging context, combined with the implementation challenges, suggest that the program has promise to generate larger impacts with stronger implementation, though the study design does not permit a conclusive answer.

-
8. The number of police shootings of unarmed Black men are author's calculations using the fatal shootings database compiled by The Washington Post ("[Fatal Force: 1,047 People Have Been Shot and Killed by Police in the Past Year.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/data-police-shootings/)" Accessed July 5, 2022, website: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/data-police-shootings/>). Other research places the figure of unarmed Black men shot by police at 22 per year (Robert VerBruggen, *Fatal Police Shootings and Race: A Review of the Evidence and Suggestions for Future Research* (New York: Manhattan Institute, 2022)).
 9. Johannes C. Eichstaedt, Garrick T. Sherman, Salvatore Giorgi, Steven O. Roberts, Megan E. Reynolds, Lyle H. Ungar, and Sharath Chandra Guntuku, "The Emotional and Mental Health Impact of the Murder of George Floyd on the U.S. Population," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, 39 (2021): 1-5.

ABOUT MDRC

MDRC, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social and education policy research organization, is committed to finding solutions to some of the most difficult problems facing the nation. We aim to reduce poverty and bolster economic mobility; improve early child development, public education, and pathways from high school to college completion and careers; and reduce inequities in the criminal justice system. Our partners include public agencies and school systems, nonprofit and community-based organizations, private philanthropies, and others who are creating opportunity for individuals, families, and communities.

Founded in 1974, MDRC builds and applies evidence about changes in policy and practice that can improve the well-being of people who are economically disadvantaged. In service of this goal, we work alongside our programmatic partners and the people they serve to identify and design more effective and equitable approaches. We work with them to strengthen the impact of those approaches. And we work with them to evaluate policies or practices using the highest research standards. Our staff members have an unusual combination of research and organizational experience, with expertise in the latest qualitative and quantitative research methods, data science, behavioral science, culturally responsive practices, and collaborative design and program improvement processes. To disseminate what we learn, we actively engage with policymakers, practitioners, public and private funders, and others to apply the best evidence available to the decisions they are making.

MDRC works in almost every state and all the nation's largest cities, with offices in New York City; Oakland, California; Washington, DC; and Los Angeles.