Lessons from Dreamkeepers, Angel Fund, and Beyond

Emergency Aid Network

Advocating for Emergency Aid in Texas

Austin, Texas

October 20, 2017

mdrc
BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TO IMPROVE SOCIAL POLICY

MDRC

- Over 40 years of rigorous research in education and social policy.

- Fifteen years of partnerships and research with higher education institutions and agencies across Texas and the nation.

- Our goal is to help colleges improve student success rates.

- Reports and briefs always available at no cost:

www.mdrc.org

Overview

- Dreamkeepers & Angel Fund

- Review of the Emergency Aid Landscape

- Framing thinking about Emergency Aid

- How Can You Make this Happen?

- How Do You Measure Success?

- Discussion and Idea Sharing

Dreamkeepers & Angel Fund

- Programs provided emergency aid to community college and university students at risk of dropping out because of financial emergencies.

- Multiyear pilot projects administered by Scholarship America and the American Indian College Fund.

- These organizations also provided technical and fundraising assistance to the 36 colleges.

Dreamkeepers & Angel Fund

Program Goals

- To develop infrastructures at participating colleges for delivering emergency financial aid;

- To learn whether the students who receive such aid stay enrolled in college;

- To promote long-term sustainability of the emergency aid programs.

Dreamkeepers & Angel Fund

- MDRC implementation findings (2008)

  - Defining an emergency and creating administrative structure was more difficult than expected.

  - Wide variation in eligibility and implementation.

  - Wide range in grant amounts, averaging several hundred dollars.

  - Housing, transportation, and childcare were common needs.

  - Recipients on average were older and more likely to be FT than others at the colleges.

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Dreamkeepers & Angel Fund

- MDRC outcome findings (2008)

  – Aid recipients and administrators said that the emergency aid helped students remain in college.

  – Data showed that aid recipients reenroll at rates roughly comparable to the average on their campuses.

 – Aid recipients may also benefit by becoming better connected to on- and off-campus supportive service.

  https://www.mdrc.org/publication/helping-community-college-students-cope-financial-emergencies

Dreamkeepers & Scholarship America

Since 2008:

- Scholarship America standardized Dreamkeepers model across campuses:

    - Created new online management and data system

    - Focused on grants (discontinued emergency loans)

    - With standardization, Dreamkeepers reports an increase in current term completions

- Scholarship America expanded beyond Dreamkeepers program to spread program and its success to many more places.

NASPA Review of the Landscape
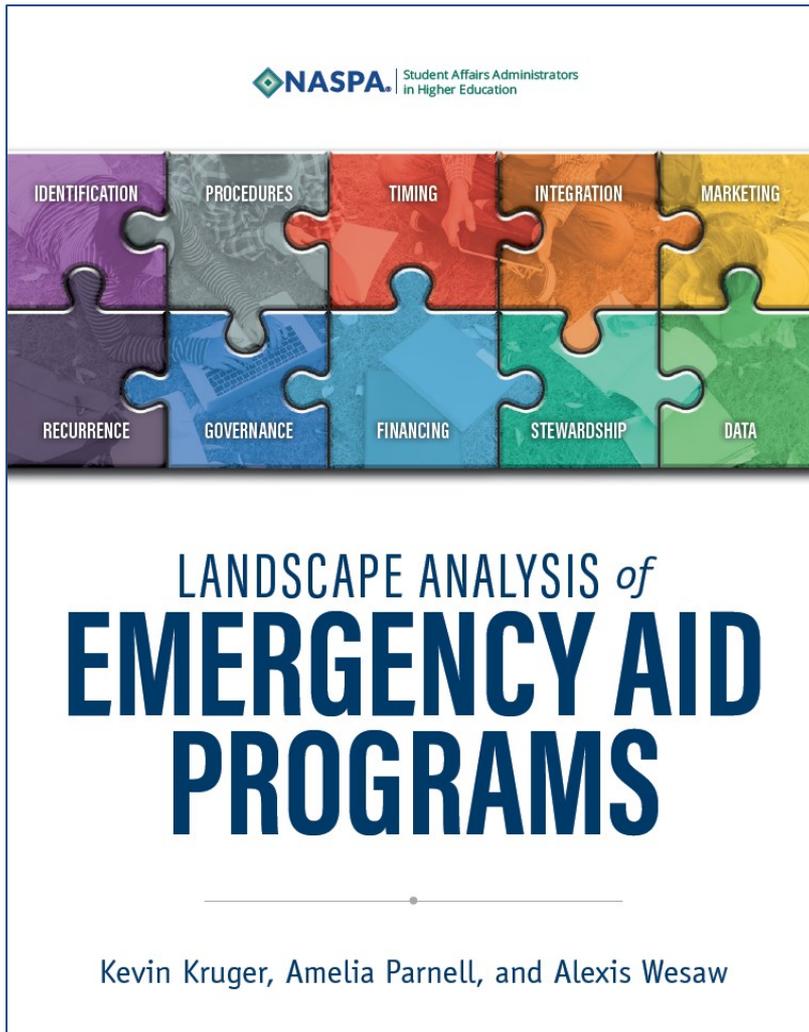
- Defined as "*vouchers, completion scholarship emergency loans, unrestricted grants, restricted grants, food pantry – usually for a value of less than $1,500*"

- Lack of standardization in documenting/applying for aid

- Many campuses that offer Emergency Aid, usually offer more than one type of Emergency Aid

NASPA Review of Barriers to Additional Services

- More than 60% of administrators say they frequently refer students who received emergency aid to additional support services, but…

Table 9 | Barriers to Coordinating Additional Support Services for Students Who Received Emergency Aid

Response = Yes	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate capacity (financial, staff, or otherwise)	225	59%
Student has maximized all funding options	156	41%
Unclear process for providing additional support	94	25%
Low student participation	47	12%
Students are unreceptive to additional support	34	9%
No barriers exist at institution	43	11%
Total	379	100%

Note. Multiple responses allowed; percentages do not add to 100%.

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Planning for Emergency Aid

- What do you want Emergency Aid to look like at your school?
  - Will you offer more than one type of EA?
- Who will you serve?
    - What is your eligibility criteria?
    - Will the population you serve mirror that of the general student population? Why or why not?
- How do you operationalize/ implementation Emergency Aid at on your campus?

  - Funding

  - Administration

  - Communication

  - Sustainability

Making EA more than "One and Done"

- For Students:

  - Should additional supports or wraparound services be provided to students to further engage them?

  - Should Emergency Aid be a part of a larger program? Or vice versa?

- For Funding:

  - How do you ensure sustainable funding?

  - If you provide additional supports to your students:

    - How can you coordinate and raise additional funds?

Wraparound and Longer-Term Services

- What resources can you use to provide wraparound services? Who could you connect and work with across campus?

  - Financial Aid

  - Student Services

  - TRIO

  - Puente

  - Counseling

  - Guided Pathways

- Does is cost more to add these service, or can they complement your EA program – and students – in efficient ways?

# Where this has Worked: CUNY's ASAP

- Theory of Action:

  - Remove financial barriers to full-time study

  - Provide structured degree pathways and comprehensive, well-coordinated support services

  - Establish clear expectations for all students

  - Build community through early engagement and cohort model

**The Goal: Better engaged students
who graduate in a timely manner**

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ASAP: How Has this Worked?

- Financial Resources

- Structured Pathways

- Comprehensive Supports
  - High-touch advisement (individual and group)
  - Embedded career development
  - Academic support services
  - Early engagement

Impacts of ASAP on Persistence
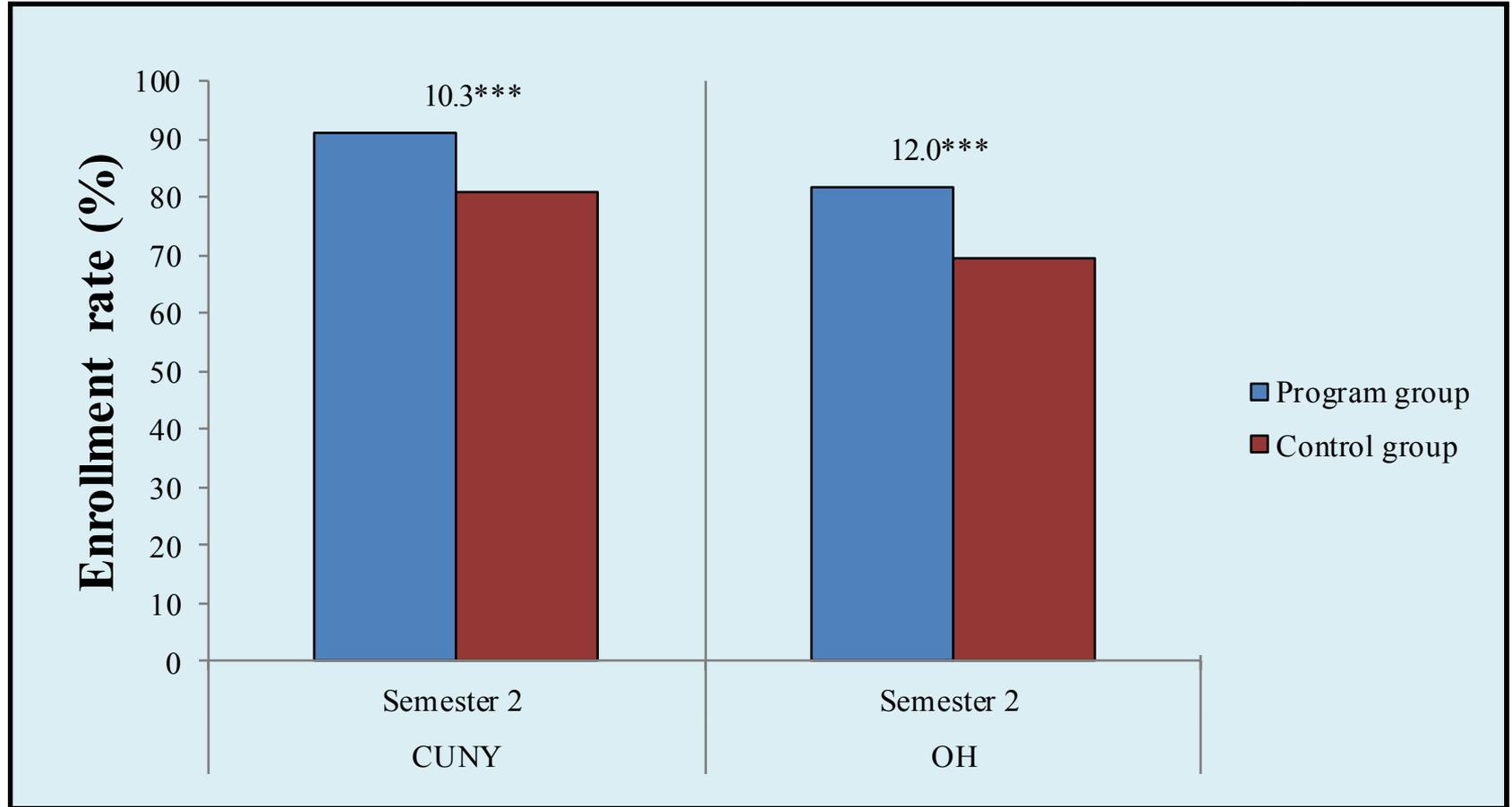
Impacts of ASAP on Persistence

Program Group	Control Group	Difference
40%	22%	18pp

Graduation rates nearly doubled

*www.mdrc.org/publication/doubling-graduation-rates*

Questions?

Discussion and Thoughts

How Do You Measure Success?

- What does success look like?

  - Impact on student behavior?

  - Persistence?

  - Other outcomes?

- With various forms of Emergency Aid...

  - How do you standardize tools used to accurately measure process and outcomes?

  - How do you keep a human element and human touch to your program while standardizing your tools and measures?

Measuring Outcomes
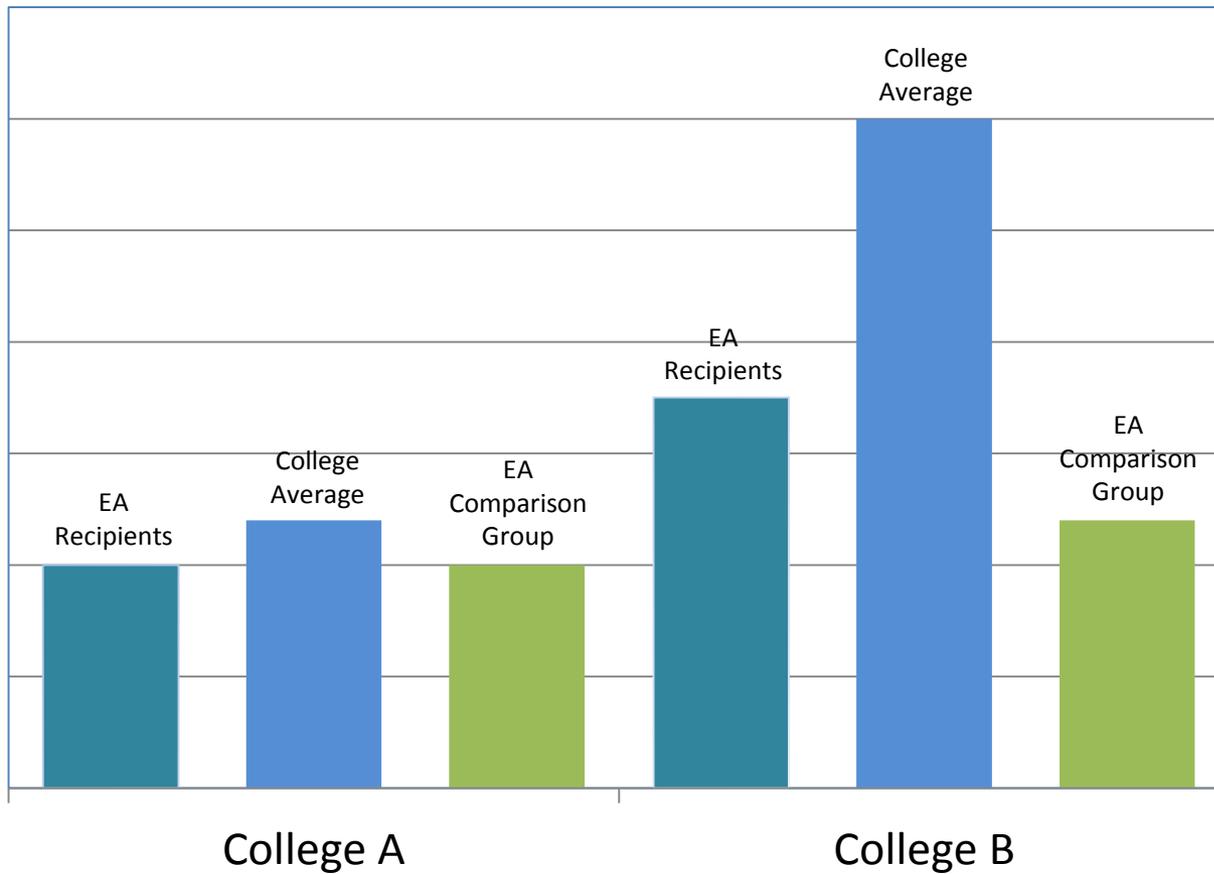
Questions?

Discussion and Thoughts

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