

BRIGHT PROSPECT EVALUATION REPORT

A study of Bright Prospect high school graduating classes of 2003-2011
and non-participant graduating classes of 2000-2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Executive Summary consists of a distillation of each segment of a full and comprehensive evaluation report of the Bright Prospect Program. It includes background information; states the evaluation purpose and research questions; describes the research methods; sets forth the indicators of program success, which emerged from the research and upon which the evaluation study was based; and presents the findings and recommendations. As the data were triangulated and findings were interpreted to yield valid and cohesive results, a logic model emerged for the program, fully supported by the data. The findings section of this Summary begins with the logic model, and the remaining findings are structured accordingly to this logic. The key elements of evaluation methods and findings highlighted in this Executive Summary are described in greater detail in the body of the evaluation report and the accompanying appendices for the interested reader.

A. Bright Prospect Approaches CGU Institute for Evaluation of Its 9-year Program¹

The leadership of the Bright Prospect Program engaged the Institute at Indian Hill (IIH or Institute), of Claremont Graduate University, as an external evaluator to conduct research that would answer key questions about the functioning and outcomes of the college preparatory program and to provide recommendations for further improvements and potential program scale up. The evaluation began with the identification and refinement of program success indicators as a necessary first step to researching and documenting outcomes associated with those indicators. The two agencies developed a collaborative professional relationship that supported the data collection and decision-making needs of the evaluation and resulted in a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation report of the Bright Prospect Program.

“With Bright Prospect I have been opened to new worlds and new places...”
~ High School Participant

The Institute at Indian Hill

The Institute at Indian Hill, applied research center of the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University, in Southern California, was selected as the evaluator for the Bright Prospect Program and is pleased to present this report of the evaluation study. The evaluation team consisted of the Principal Investigator, Dr. Nazanin Zargarpour who serves as Executive Director of the Institute and Research Assistant Professor at Claremont Graduate University, and a team of experienced education professionals and specialized doctoral candidate

¹ In 2010-11, when this evaluation was conducted, Bright Prospect was in the 9th year of its now 10-year program.

researchers in Education and Evaluation fields from Claremont Graduate University. The team designed and carried out the evaluation plan independently, on behalf of the program leadership team and with funding support from The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation and other sources, during the 2011 – 2012 academic year. The intent of the study was to provide the Bright Prospect leadership with data about the effectiveness of their program in 1) promoting and supporting college attendance, persistence, and graduation, and 2) determining which attributes and aspects of the programs are most important to the success achieved by participating students. Additionally, the evaluation was intended to identify the strengths of the program and note areas for potential improvement. The findings will be used to determine the potential for program scale-up and to disseminate best practices through publications, presentations, and training.

Bright Prospect

Bright Prospect is a 501(c)(3) organization located in Pomona, California, on the eastern border of Los Angeles County. Its mission is to empower high potential, low-income students to gain admission to, persist in and graduate from four-year colleges and universities by providing a comprehensive counseling and support system throughout their high school and college years.

Bright Prospect launched its original Scholar Support Program in 2002, working with 12 students in the high school class of 2003 who were selected from among many applicants. The mission of the Scholar Support Program was to guide truly outstanding low-income students, beginning at the end of 11th grade, toward the option of attending and graduating from the nation's highly selective universities and private liberal arts colleges. The size of Scholar Support cohorts grew from the original 12 in 2003 to 51 participants among the class of 2012. This program recruited students primarily from nine schools, four in the Pomona Unified School District and five from other neighboring districts.

In 2006 Bright Prospect launched a second program, the Academy of Young Scholars, which recruited students at the end of their 9th grade year, two years earlier than the Scholar Support Program. The Academy is an open program, available to any student with an interest in going to college, with no minimum GPA or other academic requirements. Recruitment continues, and students may join the program at any time in their high school careers. This program was piloted at one school in 2006 with 29 participating students from the class of 2009, and expanded to a total of seven schools by 2010. In the 2011-12 school year, the Academy program served 500 students (high school and college).

In Spring 2012, Bright Prospect was serving a high school population of 65% female, 35% male students. Nearly eighty-five percent (84.7%) were Hispanic/Latino, 7.4% Asian, 4.8% African American and 1.1% White, with American Indian (0.1%), Filipino/Pacific Islander (0.3%), Multiple Race (1.3%) and Unspecified (0.3%) students completing the total number. The college/alumni group was distributed similarly, with 68% female and 32% male participants. Of those participants, 77.6% were identified as Hispanic/Latino, 13.4% as Asian, 3.1% as African American, 2.1% as White, 0.2% as American Indian, 0.8% as Filipino/Pacific Islander and 2.6% with Multiple races.

The concept of organizing high school students into peer-support teams called “crews” was embedded in an embryonic way at the inception of the Academy program; the high school “crews” curriculum has become much more thoroughly developed over the years. College “crews” were first implemented starting with the high school graduates of 2010, and implemented in a more structured and developed way with the classes of 2011 and beyond. Starting in 2011, Scholar Support high school graduates (half of whom were also served by the Academy program) were also organized into college crews.

In January 2012, the two programs were merged into one unified Bright Prospect program, an open program that does outreach to 9th grade students at the seven schools (five in Pomona) where the Academy program had been launched (eliminating some schools where only the Scholar Support Program had been in place) and continues to promote the selective private college option to students who are qualified.

There are three periods of interest in this study:

- High School Classes of 2000-2002: Pre-Bright Prospect
- High School Classes of 2003-2011: Bright Prospect Scholar Support Program
- High School Classes of 2009-2011: Bright Prospect Academy of Young Scholars

B. Four Evaluation Research Questions Drive the Study

The current evaluation study of Bright Prospect programs was designed to answer defined research questions and document the effect of the programming in the personal growth and achievement of the high school students, college students and alumni, as a result of their participation. The study was carried out during the 2011-2012 academic year, and incorporated student data from 2001 to 2011.

Based on evaluability investigations, four over-arching research questions were determined to form the basis of the evaluation work to be done:

Question 1: What is the effect of Bright Prospect program participation on students’ high school performance, college attendance, college persistence and college graduation?

Question 2: What aspects of Bright Prospect programming do students identify as most closely associated with their academic and personal growth and achievement?

Question 3: What are students’ perceptions of the effect of Bright Prospect program participation on their efficacy with regard to intended social, psychological, and academic program indicators?

Question 4: To what degree have the overall rates of honors/AP course enrollment, high school performance, college attendance, and college persistence among Pomona Unified School District (PUSD) students changed since the inception of Bright Prospect?

C. Methods Include Qualitative and Quantitative Data and Quasi-Experimental Design

The study utilized a mixed-methods, matched control group, quasi-experimental design; a longitudinal analysis, and a number of qualitative and quantitative methods to address the research questions. The main evaluation components are described below:

- The matched control group quasi experiment compared Bright Prospect graduating classes of 2003 through 2011 to non-participating students of the same year range in Pomona Unified School District (PUSD), matched on a variety of academic and demographic measures.
- The longitudinal study compared students across a number of graduating year ranges, to ascertain any change in college attendance rates and types of colleges attended throughout the PUSD system.
- A series of qualitative studies reinforced and triangulated the quantitative studies:
 - Sets of focus groups were conducted with high school students and with college students and alumni. Thematic analysis of focus group data was conducted, and the responses coded to the indicators that were developed by the project team with input from Bright Prospect staff.
 - On-line surveys were administered to high school students and college/alumni groups, containing both closed-end and open-ended questions. The survey questions were based on the preliminary indicators of success as well as information gained from the focus groups.

Appropriate statistical analyses were carried out on the resulting data. Finally, data from all sources were triangulated in order to arrive at the findings.

D. Program Indicators Provide Structure for the Study

At the beginning of the evaluation project Bright Prospect staff were asked to provide lists of possible indicators of success, or criteria by which they felt program success could be measured. The process of detailed indicator development went on for several months, from the initiation of the evaluation project through early data returns and frequent consultations with Bright Prospect staff. The evaluation team determined and defined indicators in three categories: Inputs, Throughputs, and Outcomes.

The Inputs are comprised of the material and human resources that feed into the Bright Prospect program. The main focus of the evaluation targeted the latter two categories: Throughputs and Outputs (or outcomes). The Throughputs are: 1) Staff counseling, guidance and assistance, 2)

Staff expectations, 3) Peer support, 4) Post-secondary plan/application, and 5) Continued college support. These are the elements that Bright Prospect staff report as their primary areas of effort. It was assumed that all Bright Prospect participants received all program throughputs. Survey and focus group questions were devised to query students' perceptions, opinions and experiences about the five areas of program Throughputs.

The third category, Outputs (Outcomes) reflect the resulting effects of the operation and implementation of the Throughputs. The Outputs include: 1) Social capital elements, which include the ability to make connections among people and resources, and the ability and desire to be of service and to help others in one's community; 2) Psychological capital elements, which refer to the participants' reliability, self-confidence, and proactive personal initiative in seizing opportunities and resources to achieve success; 3) College readiness factors, including high school academic performance and high school graduation. These Outputs, in turn, were hypothesized to enhance the following college-level outputs: 4) Matriculation to college and the types of colleges attended and 5) Persistence in college and ultimately success in and graduation from college.

Table 1 below displays the indicator categories. From each of the indicator categories, sub-categories (statements that indicate program success) were also developed; these indicator sub-categories are listed in Appendix 1.

Table 1. Program Indicator Categories

Program Elements	Indicator Categories
A. Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program staff • Students • Parents • High school support • College support
B. Throughputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling, guidance, assistance • Staff expectations • Peer support • Post-secondary plan/application • Continued college support
C. Outputs (Outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social capital elements – connections, proactive community initiative • Psychological capital elements – Reliability, self-confidence, proactive individual initiative and use of resources • College readiness – High school academic performance and graduation • Matriculation to college and type of college attended • Success in college – persistence and graduation

Within each of the indicator categories, specific statements were developed as items for determining success. For instance, in the Throughput category labeled “Counseling, guidance, and assistance,” we find the following examples of sub-indicator statements:

- Students rely on staff for academic, college, and career planning
- Bright Prospect staff works to convince students that attending college is both possible and affordable.
- Students know that Bright Prospect staff members are available to them for anything at anytime
- Staff reach out to students who are struggling academically or socially
- Students feel that they can trust Bright Prospect staff even with their toughest and most sensitive challenges.

Similar sub-indicator statements were developed for each of the indicator categories for the program elements, Inputs, Throughputs, and Output (outcomes).

The Throughputs and Outputs formed the basis of the surveys and focus group protocols. The data derived from the responses to survey and focus group questions thus formulated serve as the main topics of this report. The indicators provide a structure for the report, and will be useful in further evaluating the Bright Prospect program.

E. Findings Highlight Program Success and Uncover Underlying Logic Model

An unusually high volume of data were received from the various sources, and through the process of analyzing the data, a clear pattern of the process through which Bright Process transforms its students emerged. Specifically, a logic model arose highlighting the relationship between the Inputs, Throughputs, and Outputs.

Logic Model

The logic model can be conceptualized as follows: Program Inputs/Throughputs → Relationships → Agency → College Readiness → College Success (see Figure 1). The logic model shows the linkages between program participation, as represented by Inputs and Throughputs, and resulting relationships between staff and students, as well as, relationships among students. The profoundly trusting and supportive relationship between staff and students is clearly identified as being one of the high impact factors of Bright Prospect programming which students report as significantly guiding their success and personal development. These findings speak to Research Questions 2 and 3, regarding the aspects of programming that influence academic and personal growth and how they impact indicators of academic success as well as social and psychological capital.

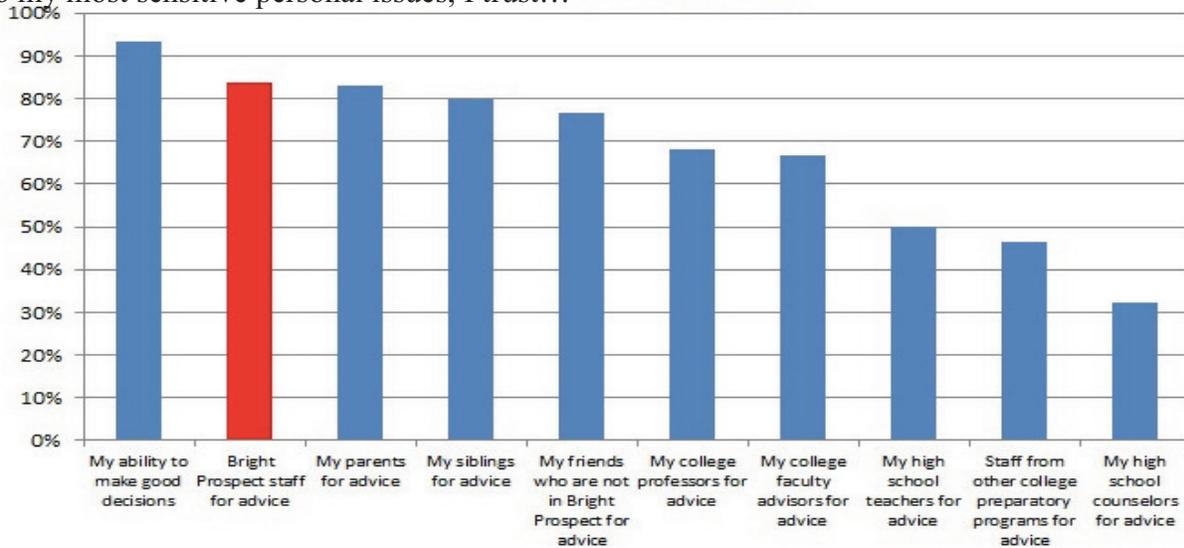
Figure 1. Program Logic Model Derived from Evaluation Findings



Relationships Between Students and Staff

Relationships with Bright Prospect staff are characterized by support, expectations, and trust. A key finding about the relationships formed within Bright Prospect indicates that high percentages of high school and college students (96% and 97%, respectively) stated that Bright Prospect staff members go out of their way to help them with anything at any time. Most of the high school students and college students (85% and 86%, respectively) stated that the staff members are like family to them. Being able to trust Bright Prospect staff with advice on their most sensitive personal issues also rated highly with both high school students and college students/alumni (85% and 89%, respectively; see Figure 2 for a more detailed comparison). It should be noted that college students/alumni trust Bright Prospect staff in this regard *more* than they trust their parents, siblings, friends, high school teachers, high school counselors, college professors or college advisors.

Figure 2. Percent of Bright Prospect college students and alumni who agree that, “When it comes to my most sensitive personal issues, I trust...”



² Self-efficacy is the belief that one can succeed on a certain task and is domain-specific (Zimmerman, 2000). As a self-evaluation of one’s own ability, it is often contrasted with task value (how much one values the task) and expectancies regarding outcomes.

An important finding was the appreciation expressed by students for the consistent, detailed assistance with the college application and financial aid processes. Students, and often their parents, are guided through the application phase until completion and acceptance. In addition to college visits, workshops are provided to prepare students for college life. Cultural experiences are also included in Bright Prospect programming, as a way of broadening students' perspective and stimulating new ideas.

Bright Prospect staff expectations and trust also play key roles in the personal development of students. For instance, 99% of high school students and nearly 100% of college students expressed that staff expects every student will attend and graduate from college. In terms of trust, 98% of both student groups believe that Bright Prospect staff trusts them to make good decisions for their lives. Additionally, 98% of both student groups expressed that staff show them that they believe individual students will succeed.

Positive relationships with not only staff, but with other students were emphasized. Most students (94% of high school students and 88% of college students) expressed that they created open, honest, caring, and deeply trusting relationships with Bright Prospect staff and/or fellow crew members.

“The most valuable aspect of the Bright Prospect Program has been the social and moral support the staff provides. I know that if I have a problem, I can call the office, and someone will drop what they are doing and help me solve my issues. Bright Prospect has been a great resource to have for those who feel like they do not have any other safety net available...”

~ College Student Participant

Peer-to-Peer Student Relationships – The Crews™ Structure

Central to the structure and processes of the Bright Prospect Academy Program is the grouping of high school students into three to six student peer-support teams called Crews™ led by crew leaders trained by Bright Prospect. Much of the Academy programming, which is designed to build strong life skills, attitudes and values essential to success in college and beyond, is organized and in some cases delivered by the students themselves.

In addition to skill building, Bright Prospect's purpose in establishing the Crews™ structure is to provide an organizational structure in which students bond with one another, support one another to overcome obstacles, and provide positive peer reinforcement of their common goal of graduating from college.

Survey responses clearly demonstrate that the Bright Prospect high school Crews™ structure achieves these objectives, with over 90% of students reporting that their crew leaders and members encourage and support each other to succeed academically, serve as role models who inspire all to do their best, and help them maintain a positive, can-do, motivated attitude. In fact, 90% state that their crew members and leader are like family to them, and 93% count on their crew to give them honest and supportive feedback that will serve their best interests. Moreover, the crews have been essential in creating “a safe space where it’s cool to be smart” (95%)—a significant departure from typical cultures of low-income high schools in which students demonstrating academic success are often shunned, or worse.

Agency (Social and Psychological Capital)

The relationships and program experiences lead to the agency effects of social and psychological capital, helping students to develop confidence, leadership qualities, high expectations for themselves, proactive initiative and the ability and desire to access resources and information for their own betterment. Coupled with the staff’s nearly unshakeable belief that each student should, can, and will go to college and graduate, trusting and supportive relationships make the difference for program participants. The social and psychological capital that the students acquire is stimulated by the trust and expectations that the staff has and instills in the students. Reflecting enhanced self-confidence, the majority of students (88% of high school students and 90% of college students/alumni) confirm that they have become transformed as individuals as a result of their participation in Bright Prospect. Furthermore, students describe themselves as open, better able to communicate with others, and willing to take on challenges and welcome new experiences. Reflecting enhanced proactive individual initiative and having more access to information and resources, high school and college students (95% and 92%, respectively) report that Bright Prospect has contributed to their ability to make wise decisions in their academic life. Reflecting leadership and proactive community initiative, 93% of high school students and 91% of college students express the desire to return to their home community after college to “give back” to others.

College Readiness

In response to Research Questions 1 and 4, Bright Prospect students thrive academically—not just personally—in both high school and college. Compared to matched control group students, Bright Prospect high school students perform better on academic measures such as the state tests, CST and CAHSEE (20 and 10 points higher on Math, respectively; and 17 and 6 points higher on ELA, respectively). On average, they take two more honors courses (34% more) and four more AP courses (81% more) than control group students. Bright Prospect students complete A-G courses (i.e., high school courses that are required to be admitted to Cal State or UC) at a higher rate than students not participating in Bright Prospect, 89% versus 58%. Bright Prospect students also report that they are much better prepared for college academic life, not only in subject matter but also in confidence and determination to succeed. They have adopted the conviction shown by the staff that each student can go to college and be successful, given the

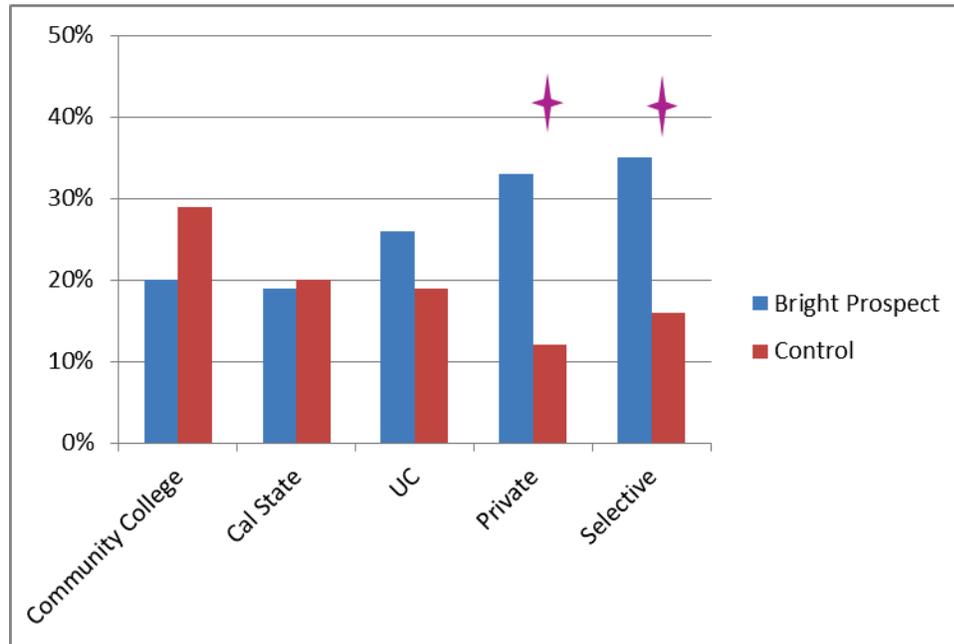
opportunity and his or her own efforts. Although most students trust that staff will be available to help them when they are in college, some perceived a loss of connection and expressed desire for additional support after college.

College Attendance and Persistence

A remarkable finding is that 100% of Bright Prospect students graduate from high school and go to college, as compared with only 82% of high-performing students in the matched control group. Perhaps more importantly, 80% of Bright Prospect students attend a 4-year institution compared to just 49% of the control group. College persistence for Bright Prospect students is also higher; at the second-year mark, 100% of Bright Prospect students persisted as compared with only 84% of their non-Bright Prospect counterparts. Of particular note was the finding that Bright Prospect students attending private colleges were persisting at much higher rates (100%) than students in the control group (75%). There is also evidence indicating that Bright Prospect students are completing college at a higher rate than non-Bright Prospect students; however, this data preliminary and needs further evaluation in the future.

As seen in Figure 3, compared to students in the control group, Bright Prospect students attended community colleges at lower rates, Cal State schools at about the same rate, and UC schools at higher rates, although none of these differences was statistically significant. However, they differ on attendance rates for private colleges and colleges identified as being highly selective (as indicated by US News and World Report's list of the top 50 national universities and top 50 liberal arts colleges in the country) and these differences are statistically significant. Bright Prospect students attend private colleges at nearly three times the rate (33%) than that of students in the control group (12%). In addition, Bright Prospect students attend highly selective colleges at twice the rate (35%) than that of control group students (16%). Thus, not only does Bright Prospect empower students to attend college, but enable them access a fuller range of colleges that better match their individual abilities, goals and ambitions.

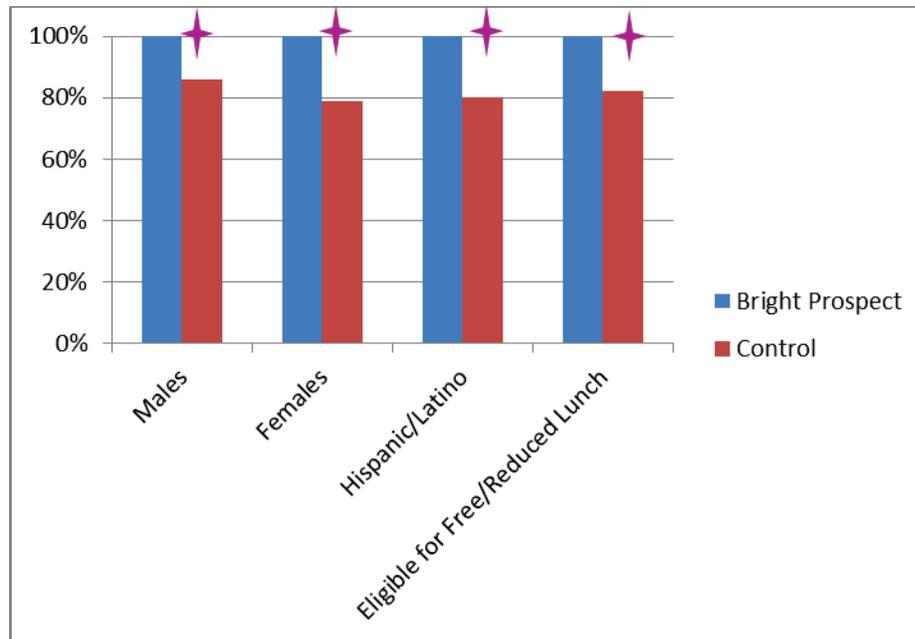
Figure 3. College Attendance by Type of School (Community College, Cal State, Other State, UC, Private) and Selectivity for Bright Prospect and Control Group.



Note: The star represents a statistically significant difference.

College attendance was examined for different demographic groups, including gender, ethnicity, and free/reduced lunch eligibility. As seen in Figure 4, Bright Prospect participants and control students significantly differ on college attendance rates, regardless of which demographic subgroups are being compared. Both male and female Bright Prospect participants attend college at higher rates (100% and 100%, respectively) than male and female students in the control group (86% and 79%, respectively). Additionally, Hispanic Bright Prospect students are more likely to attend college (100%) than control group students (80%). Finally, Bright Prospect students who were eligible for free/reduced lunch attend college at a higher rate (100%) than those in the control group (82%).

Figure 4. College Attendance Rates for Males, Females, Hispanic/Latino Students, and Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch in Bright Prospect and Control Group.



Note: The star represents a statistically significant difference.

F. Conclusions Hail Bright Promise of Bright Prospect Program

The Bright Prospect program and its highly dedicated staff provide participants with a carefully planned series of experiences and support services that guide the students through high school, through the college and financial aid application procedures, and through college. The high expectations of the staff for the students, and the continuously encouraging confidence that college is accessible transfers to the students themselves, who become more secure in their own capabilities and believe that college is well within their grasp. The staff provide the necessary tools and the students learn to utilize them by their own efforts, to succeed academically, gain social and psychological capital, to broaden their horizons and prepare for the future. The strongly trusting nature of the staff-student relationships provides impetus for student success. All Bright Prospect high school students go to college. What's more, they stay, and most graduate.

Students are intensely loyal to Bright Prospect and freely express their gratitude and appreciation for the assistance and opportunities they have received. Over 75% of the students responded to the on-line surveys, which represents a notably high percentage as compared with typical client survey response rates. Strong peer support is also characteristic of the program. Participants frequently mention their desire to engage in community service activities, to "give back" as they have been helped.

Overall, the effects of Bright Prospect on the academic and personal lives of the students are clearly positive and life changing. The importance of trusting and supportive relationships is emphasized and their linkage to agency is supported by both qualitative and quantitative data. Bright Prospect offers potentially transformative effects for students academically and personally. Even the least exciting results are still suggestive of program success in achieving student academic outcomes. Students are personally transformed, and their lives and futures are dramatically changed in ways that open opportunities they may not have even considered otherwise, much less known how to access, or followed through with applying, attending, and persisting. These outcomes hold true across all subgroups – females and males, socio-economically disadvantaged, and Hispanic/Latino.

In terms of academic success, 100% of Bright Prospect high school seniors graduate from high school, apply to colleges, are accepted to colleges, indeed attend college, and persist at least into their second year of college. This is markedly higher than the average high school graduation rates in PUSD, which were 71% and 77% in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

Students rate staff dedication to and concern for their well-being and success just as high as their own parents' dedication to them. They consistently report that Bright Prospect staff members believe in them, expect them to succeed, and go beyond the call of duty to support and empower their success, and they identify this factor as the greatest contribution to their success.

Program fidelity among both staff and students is inordinately high. Students' loyalty to the program ensures their full participation in all program aspects and is associated with their success. The student survey response rate of 75% is a strong indicator of this loyalty, as are the survey results themselves, and the high rate of students' post-program participation in Bright Prospect. These factors all evidence students' deep commitment and gratitude to the program and their desire to give back to Bright Prospect and their community.

“It changed my life... when I was a junior in high school. It opened the door for a private college education, a full ride education that I never knew was accessible to me. I am forever grateful for that opportunity that has since opened many others. I would not be where I am today if it were not for the opportunities that Bright Prospect provided me six years ago.”

~ College Student Participant

G. Recommendations for Even Brighter Future for Bright Prospect and Its Students

Given the findings of the evaluation study, several recommendations to strengthen and enhance trusting and supportive relationships—which are at the heart of the program’s success—are suggested:

1. The program may wish to consider ways to ensure continued individual attention and greater personal contact for students as its membership grows, while keeping costs at the low per student rates heretofore achieved.
2. Consideration may be given to strengthening the current Alumni Network to help with career placement and guidance for students during and after graduation from college.
3. Systems, structures, and regular activities may be put in place to generate more contact with college students and alumni both from student initiative and by staff.
4. The Crews™ programs may be further strengthened and supported at the college level. Some crews may need to be restructured geographically to allow for greater contact. Online social networks using remote access technology may also be considered to facilitate the collegial support and collaboration that college students need.
5. The program may wish to consider documenting the training elements and expectations for staff, as data indicate that much of the success of the program is dependent on its staff.
6. Bright Prospect may wish to consider documenting and detailing its program elements (Throughputs) with a view to replication and future scale-up.
7. Consideration may be given to putting a comprehensive data collection system in place to monitor progress along all program indicators – Inputs, Throughputs, and Outputs.

Additionally, future studies may include:

1. Comparing Bright Prospect with other college preparatory programs in order to glean information on best practices for future scale-ups or start-ups with similar programming to Bright Prospect.
2. Further exploration of specific aspects and linkages in the logic model, especially the links between relationships, agency (social and psychological capital) and college readiness. For instance, how self-efficacy and academic success may be differentially impacted by self-expectations or expectations expressed by staff or peers.

3. Quasi-experiments comparing PUSD Bright Prospect students to a control group of students from another district selected due to its similarity to PUSD, to allow for more specific analysis of the Academy program on its own (not possible within PUSD due to lack of adequate sample for the control group).
4. Longitudinal studies on culture change in PUSD in addition to graduation rates, matriculation rates, types of colleges attended, college persistence, college graduation rates, and career paths pursued.
5. Quantitative and qualitative studies of Bright Prospect students throughout their college career, including academic data, as well as career and leadership activities.
6. Study of program Throughputs, such as leadership components and program elements and activities, to determine specific aspects of the program that impact students most favorably.