

Merit aid (for high school students) Higher Education

Literature review updated December 2016.

As part of WSIPP's research approach to identifying evidence-based programs and policies, WSIPP determines "what works" (and what does not work) to improve outcomes using an approach called meta-analysis. For detail on our methods, see our [Technical Documentation](#). At this time, WSIPP has not yet calculated benefits and costs for this topic.

Program Description: Students receive merit aid for college based on prior academic achievement, such as SAT/ACT scores or high school GPA. Students may be able to renew their merit aid awards each year if they continue to reach certain academic benchmarks. Merit aid rewards students for past achievements and encourages them to continue meeting high academic standards. Studies included examine effects of aid prior to enrolling in college.

Meta-Analysis of Program Effects

Outcomes measured	No. of effect sizes	Treatment N	Adjusted effect size and standard error			Unadjusted effect size (random effects model)	
			ES	SE	Age	ES	p-value
Graduate with 4-year degree	4	400331	-0.015	0.016	23	-0.015	0.333
Enroll in 4-year college	5	39282	0.060	0.038	18	0.060	0.114
Enroll in 2-year college	5	37583	0.000	0.055	18	0.000	0.995
Enroll in any college	8	439323	0.067	0.035	18	0.073	0.039
Graduate with 2-year degree	4	400331	-0.006	0.002	21	-0.006	0.008
Persistence into 2nd year	2	5672	0.015	0.045	19	0.015	0.729
Persistence into 4th year	1	20769	-0.063	0.012	21	-0.063	0.001

Meta-analysis is a statistical method to combine the results from separate studies on a program, policy, or topic in order to estimate its effect on an outcome. WSIPP systematically evaluates all credible evaluations we can locate on each topic. The outcomes measured are the types of program impacts that were measured in the research literature (for example, crime or educational attainment). Treatment N represents the total number of individuals or units in the treatment group across the included studies.

An effect size (ES) is a standard metric that summarizes the degree to which a program or policy affects a measured outcome. If the effect size is positive, the outcome increases. If the effect size is negative, the outcome decreases.

Adjusted effect sizes are used to calculate the benefits from our benefit cost model. WSIPP may adjust effect sizes based on methodological characteristics of the study. For example, we may adjust effect sizes when a study has a weak research design or when the program developer is involved in the research. The magnitude of these adjustments varies depending on the topic area.

WSIPP may also adjust the second ES measurement. Research shows the magnitude of some effect sizes decrease over time. For those effect sizes, we estimate outcome-based adjustments which we apply between the first time ES is estimated and the second time ES is estimated. We also report the unadjusted effect size to show the effect sizes before any adjustments have been made. More details about these adjustments can be found in our [Technical Documentation](#).

Citations Used in the Meta-Analysis

Castleman, B.L. (2014). *The impact of partial and full merit scholarships on college entry and success: Evidence from the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program* (EdPolicy Works Working Paper Series No. 17). Charlottesville, VA: EdPolicyWorks, University of Virginia.

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- Sjoquist, D.L., & Winters, J.V. (2015). State merit-based financial aid programs and college attainment. *Journal of Regional Science*, 55(3), 364-390.

For further information, contact:
(360) 664-9800, Institute@wsipp.wa.gov

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