

Paying for Persistence: The Louisiana Opening Doors Project

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Addressing Achievement Gaps Symposium

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The Louisiana Opening Doors Demonstration

- TANF Surplus used to fund scholarships and support services for low-income parents (not just welfare recipients)
- Administered through the Louisiana Workforce Commission and Community and Technical College System
- Two colleges selected as test sites:
 - Delgado Community College
 - Louisiana Technical College-West Jefferson
- Demonstration ran from 2003-2005

Program Details

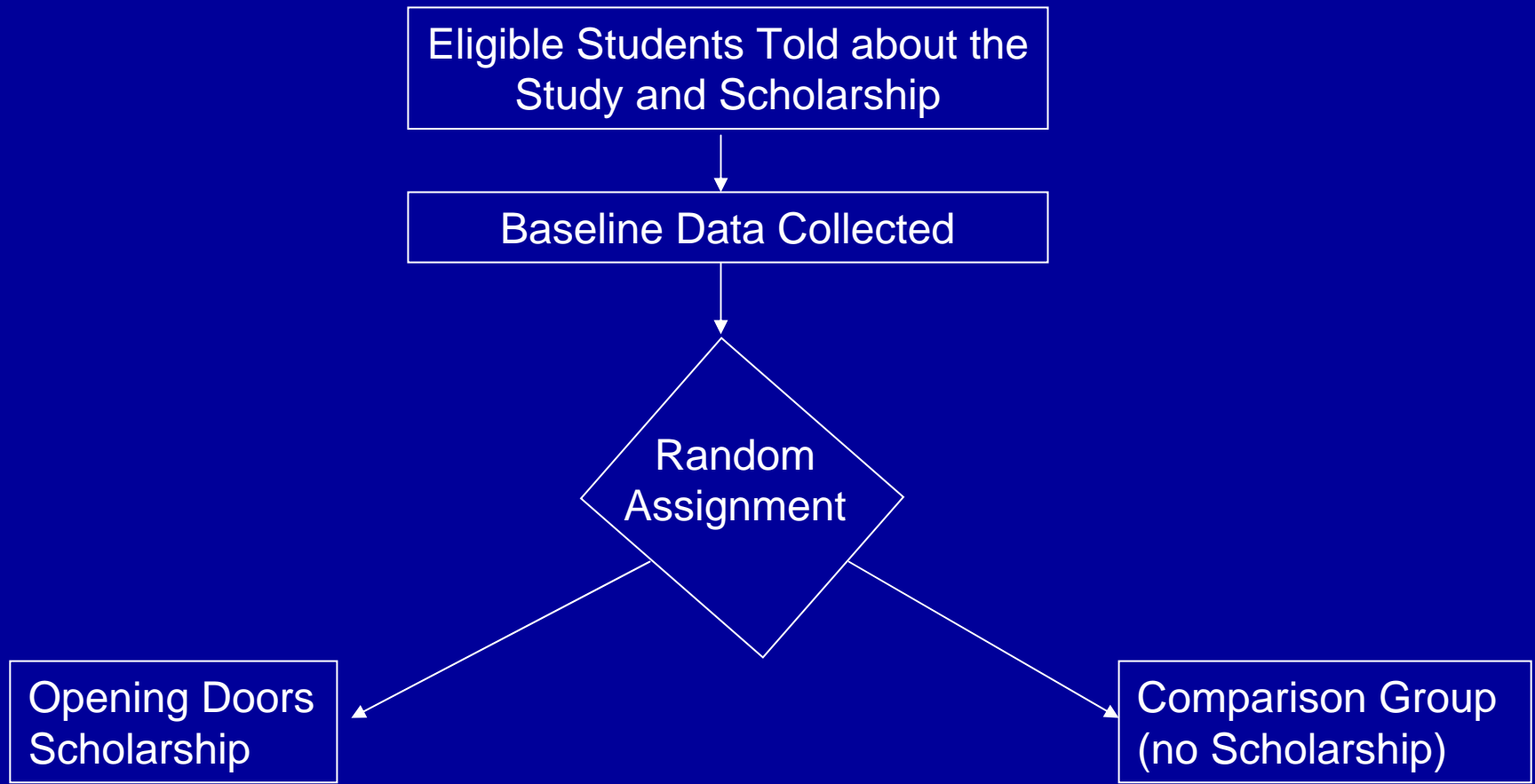
Scholarship tied to academic performance:

- \$1,000 on top of regular financial aid for two semesters, paid in increments:
 - \$250 on enrollment
 - \$250 on passing midterms
 - \$500 on passing courses
- Opening Doors counselors monitor academic performance and disburse payments to students
- Counselors maintain caseloads of 125 students

Eligibility Criteria

- Ages 18-34
- Parent of at least one dependent child under age 19
- Family income below 200 percent of poverty level
- Possess high school diploma or GED and pass college entrance exam
- Do not already have a postsecondary degree/certificate

Evaluation Is Using an Experimental Research Design



Major Evaluation Questions

1. Implementation

- How is the Opening Doors program operated?
- How are students counseled and monitored?
- How many students receive the full scholarship?
- What are the operational lessons?

2. Impact

- How does the Opening Doors program affect student retention, achievement, graduation, employment, and other outcomes?

3. Cost

- How much money does it take to run Opening Doors?
- Do the benefits outweigh the costs?

Characteristics of Opening Doors Sample ($n = 1,019$)

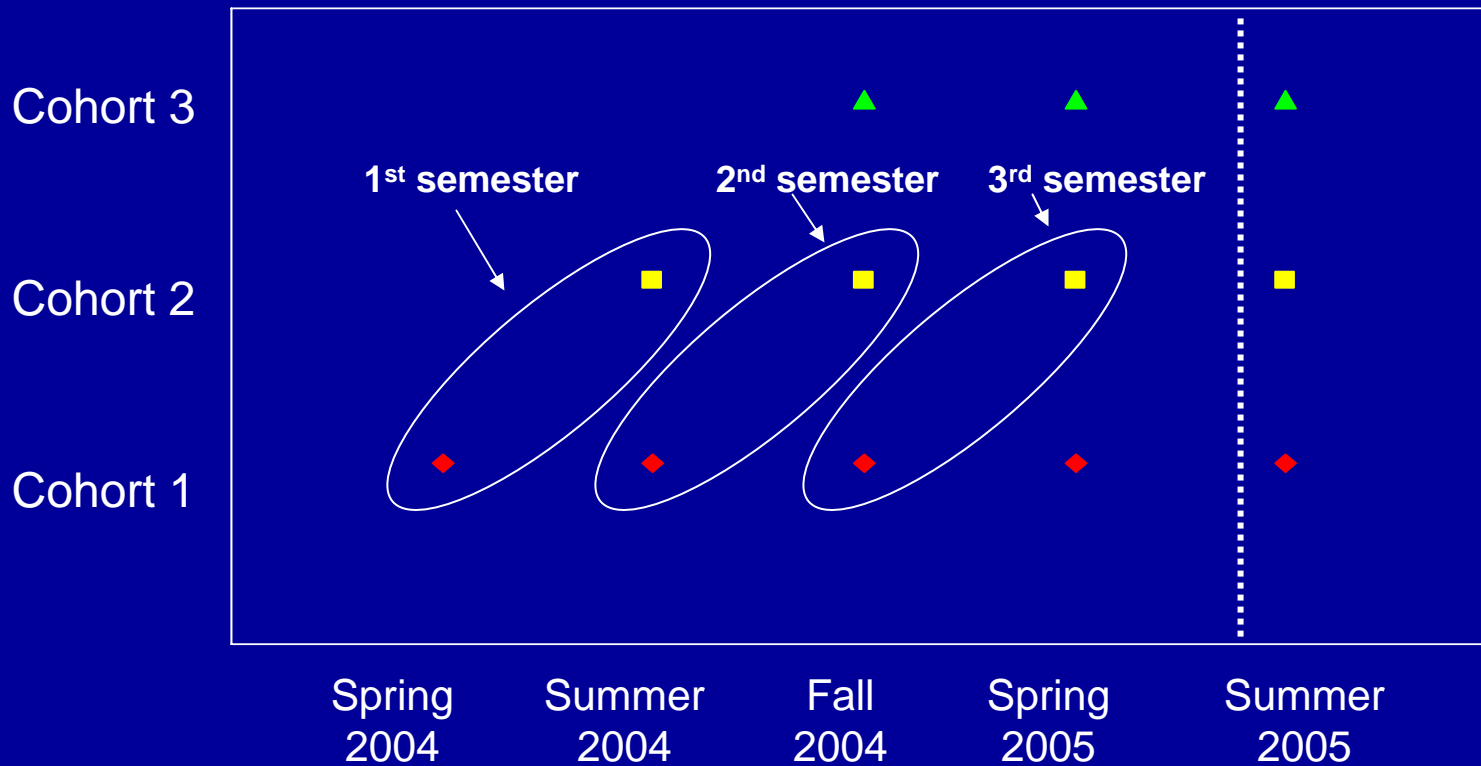
- 93 percent female
- Average age: 25
- 85 percent black, 11 percent white
- 75 percent unmarried, not living with partner
- Half have one child, half have two or more children

Main Reason for Enrolling in College ($n = 1,019$)

- Obtain Associate's degree: 56 percent
- Transfer to 4-year college/university: 16 percent
- Earn occupational certificate: 14 percent
- Obtain/upgrade job skills: 13 percent

First 2 Cohorts Analyzed

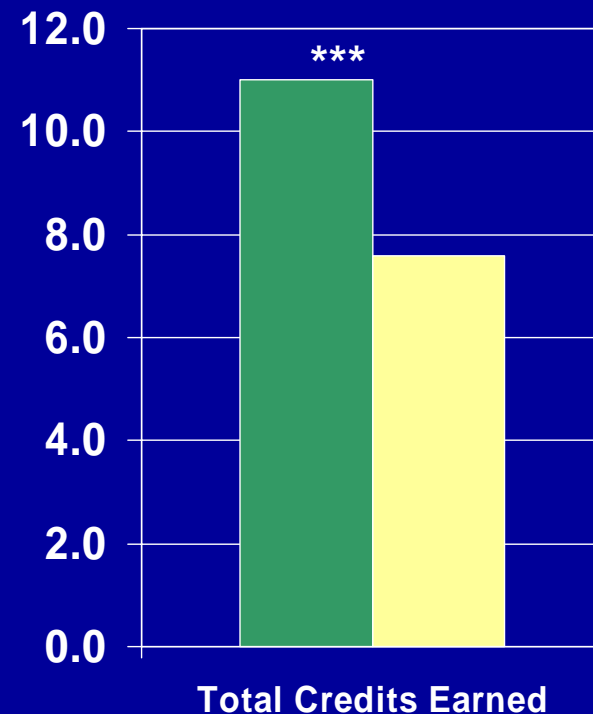
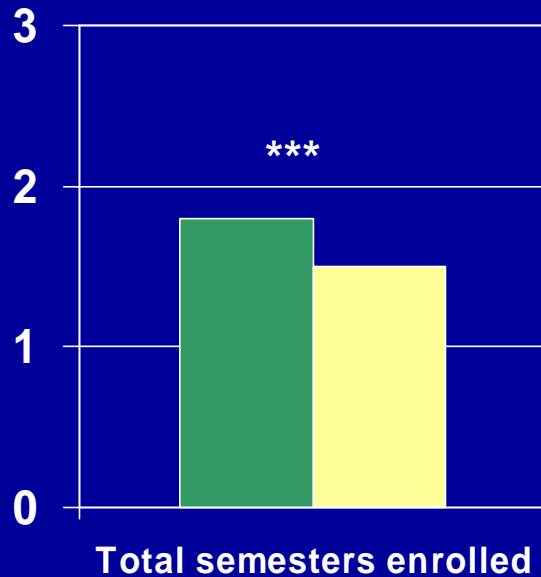
◆ Spring 2004 ■ Summer 2004 ▲ Fall 2004



Selected Findings ($n = 537$)

	Treatment	Control	Impact
Registration			
First semester	74.6	70.0	4.5
Second semester	57.5	39.3	18.2 ***
Third semester	49.1	37.9	11.2 ***
Number of courses passed			
First semester	1.5	1.2	0.4 ***
Second semester	1.2	0.7	0.4 ***
Third semester	1.1	0.8	0.3 **
Total credits earned			
First semester	4.5	3.4	1.1 ***
Second semester	3.4	2.1	1.2 ***
Third semester	3.1	2.2	0.9 **

Cumulative Program Impacts after Three Semesters ($n = 537$)



Conclusions

- Benefits of collaboration between Welfare, Workforce and Community College Systems
- Scholarship based on academic performance is workable and seems to lead to large, positive effects
 - Academic achievement
 - Retention in college
- Katrina may have compromised the study, but we will still track employment and other outcomes

Future Work

- Post-Katrina survey ($n=427$)
- 12-month report in 2007
- Replication of incentive scholarship