

# Using a random assignment design to assess Texas summer bridge programs

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# Developmental Summer Bridges

- DSBs in Texas:
  - Are offered at 2- and 4-year colleges
  - Are designed for students who just completed high school
  - Are 4-6 week intensive summer programs
  - Include instruction in math, reading and/or writing
  - Include a “college knowledge” component
  - Offer multiple types of academic support.
- Emerging theoretical base for summer bridge programs, but little empirical research on outcomes or impacts (Garcia, 1991; Kezar, 2000).



# Potential benefits

- DSBs are used to:
  - Strengthen student preparation for college
  - Advance at least 1 developmental level
  - Expose students to college norms and expectations
  - Increase students' comfort with the college environment



# NCPR Research on DSBs

- **The NCPR Team**



## **Purpose of the Research**

To examine whether DSBs help students become college ready and improve other postsecondary outcomes.

To use a *random assignment methodology* to compare the outcomes of students who participate in DSBs with students who do not participate



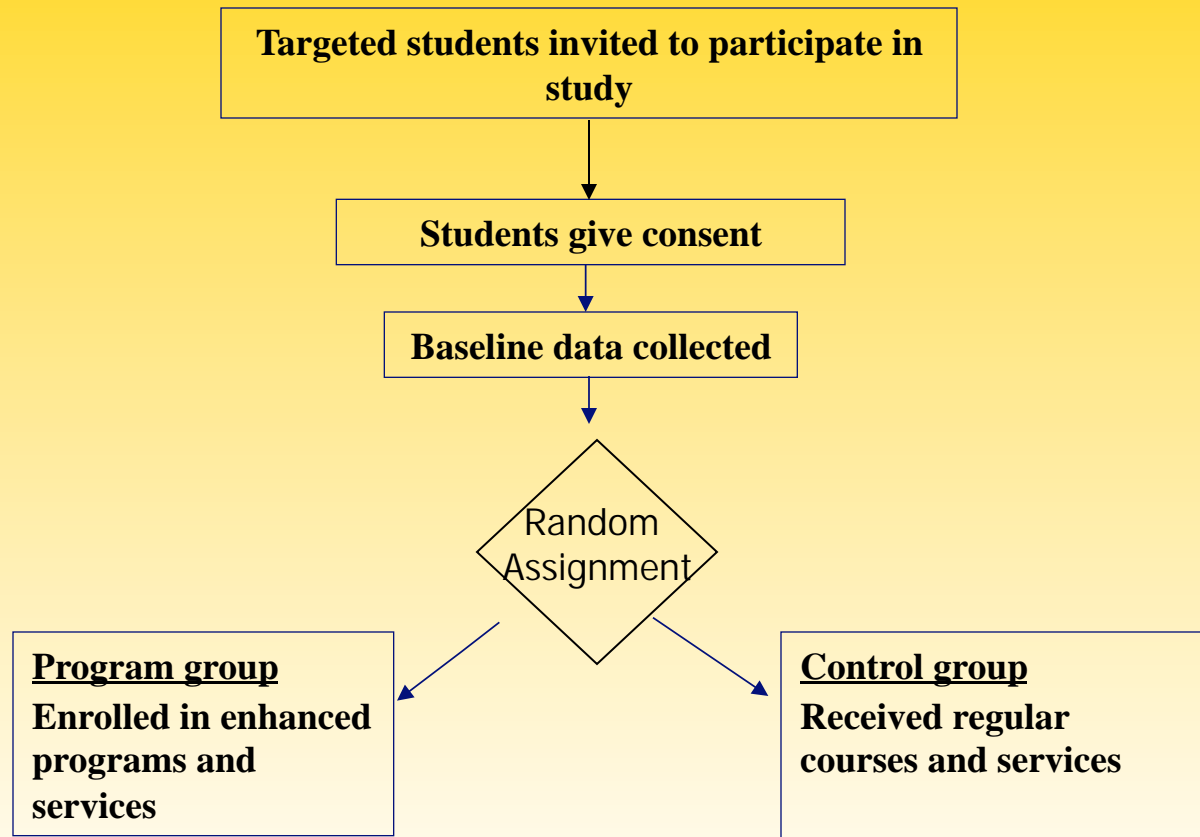
# Overview of the Research

- Site selection
- Support for strong implementation
- Recruitment and random assignment of students
- Site visits to learn about program practices
- Gathering student and program data during DSB
- Gathering student follow-up data in college for 3 semesters
- Comparison of program and control group students' outcomes.



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# Random Assignment Design



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# Outcomes of Interest

- College enrollment rates
- Need for developmental coursework
- GPA
- Persistence
- Credit accumulation.

Subgroup analyses will also be done.



# Participating Colleges

## Why colleges agreed to participate?

- Prestige of a national research study
- Information about program effectiveness
- Money to augment program

## COLLEGES

- El Paso Community College
- Lone Star College – CyFair
- Lone Star College – Kingwood
- Palo Alto College
- San Antonio College
- St. Philips College
- South Texas College
- Texas A & M International University



# DSB Students – final RA numbers

Texas DSB Random Assignment Build-up Chart 5/22/09						
Last Random Assignment on 5/21/09						
	<b>C (40%)</b>	<b>P (60%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>% of Target</b>	<b>Program Start /RA End</b>
South Texas College	55	83	138	167	83%	June 8
Palo Alto College	35	53	88	167	53%	June 8
San Antonio College	61	91	152	283	54%	June 8
El Paso Community College	108	165	273	233	117%	June 15
St. Philips College	104	154	258	300	86%	June 22
Texas A&M International University	85	126	211	167	126%	July 6
Lone Star College - CyFair	50	75	125	125	100%	July 13
Lone Star College - Kingwood	35	52	87	75	116%	July 20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>1332</b>	<b>1517</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>July 20</b>



How random assignment  
research changed business as  
usual at participating colleges



# Recruitment

- Increased numbers from previous summer
  - Served between 50 and 165
- Different methods of recruitment
  - New high schools & organizations (e.g., churches)
  - Highlighted the benefits & incentives to participation rather than program features
- Different population of students entered
- Stipend: \$400 in 2 parts



# Intake & Random Assignment

- Training of recruiters, counselors, staff
- Technical assistance for the first session
- Intake process
  - Group sessions v. individual
- RA versus first come, first served
  - 60-40 program control split



# Control Group Experiences

- Informing them of status
  - Student reaction: disappointment v. unfair process
- Procedures after RA
  - Informing them of options
- Counterfactual
  - Standard summer developmental courses
  - Other options



# Program Group Experiences

- Participated in program
  - Academic course, accelerated time frame, college knowledge, academic support, cohort
- Technical assistance enhanced program (?)
- Stipend
  - On successful completion
  - \$150 + \$250 = \$400 total



# Random Assignment Design – cost benefit considerations

## **BENEFITS**

- One of the only ways to assess impact of a program or intervention.
- One can have great confidence in the findings.
- May improve access.

## **COSTS**

- Expensive
- Changes student lives
- Changes business as usual
- May reduce access.



# For more information:

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