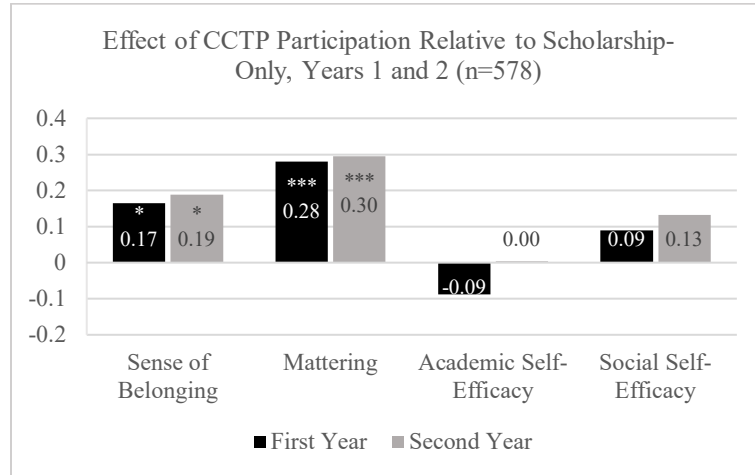


Comprehensive College Transition Program Increases Students' Psychosocial Outcomes

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Is there an added benefit of providing college students with comprehensive support in addition to a scholarship?

An experimental evaluation of the Thompson Scholars Learning Communities (TSLC) program in the University of Nebraska system finds that participating in a comprehensive college transition program increases students' sense of belonging (e.g. feeling part of the institution) and feelings of mattering (e.g. feeling they are valued on campus) relative to their peers. We find some evidence to suggest that program may be equity enhancing, given large observed increases in feelings of mattering among traditionally underserved students. We focus on the impact of the program on four key psychosocial outcomes that provide insight into students' experiences on campus and help capture a broader understanding of student success than purely academic outcomes. Our findings suggest that comprehensive programs can improve students' psychosocial outcomes.



Interpreting this chart: The chart shows effect size estimates for each psychosocial outcome at the end of students' first and second years in college. Models control for student characteristics and randomization block.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

What is the TSLC program?

TSLC is a group of three comprehensive college transition programs supported by the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation and implemented by three four-year campuses in the University of Nebraska system. Students in TSLC must have a high school GPA of at least 2.5 and an expected family contribution of \$10,000 or less. Students in TSLC receive up to five years of a generous financial scholarship and two years of structured support in the form of program staff who meet regularly with students to check on their academic progress and social and personal wellbeing (formally at midterms and throughout the semester at events, one-on-one meetings, and informal interactions), peer mentors, shared academic courses, dedicated housing or on-campus support, tutoring, community events, and a first-year seminar.

How did we estimate the impact of TSLC?

These findings are from an experimental evaluation of TSLC, comparing psychosocial outcomes between students who were randomly assigned to participate in TSLC or to receive the same five-year scholarship without the two years of comprehensive support. Students in both conditions were sent a survey to complete at the end of each year that measured their psychosocial outcomes. Our study included two cohorts of students who entered the program in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

This study is limited in that our estimates are based on students who enrolled in the University of Nebraska system, remained enrolled for at least their first two years, and completed both end-of-year surveys. We also focus on the impact of the comprehensive support of TSLC; [other work](#) has examined the impact of the scholarship students receive.

Our results are drawn from a larger, mixed methods evaluation of the TSLC program that examined student experiences and outcomes over the course of four years. For more information about this larger project, visit pass.pullias.usc.edu.

Full Article Citation:

Melguizo, T., Martorell, P., Swanson, E., Chi, W.E., Park, E., & Kezar, A. (2021). [Expanding Student Success: The Impact of a Comprehensive College Transition Program on Psychosocial Outcomes](#). *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2021.1917029>