An **individual paper** submission:

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- Title: Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) Ohio Demonstration

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Abstract: Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) Ohio Demonstration

Background/Context:

MDRC conducted an evaluation of an unusually comprehensive program designed to help students to stay in school and graduate with an associate's degree quickly. The City University of New York's (CUNY's) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) began operating in fall 2007. CUNY, who designed and implemented the program, reached out to MDRC to conduct a random assignment study of ASAP beginning in spring 2010. The evaluation found that ASAP almost doubled three-year graduation rates for developmental education students. ASAP's effects for students, described in a February 2015 report, are by far the largest effects MDRC has found for a community college intervention.

As a very promising model, ASAP has received a lot of attention in the higher education field. To help understand whether ASAP can be implemented by other colleges, in other settings, serving different populations of students and yield substantial effects, MDRC and CUNY are collaborating on a project to implement and evaluate ASAP in three community colleges in Ohio.

Purpose/Objective/Research Question:

This project seeks to answer two confirmatory research questions through the impact analysis.

RQ1: What is the average effect of the opportunity to participate in the Ohio ASAP demonstration on academic performance?

RQ2: Are the average ITT effects of the program positive for particular subpopulations of students?

Setting:

The study is being conducted at three Ohio colleges: Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cuyahoga County Community College, and Lorain County Community College.

Population/Participants/Subjects:

1,501 students from these colleges are in the study sample. To be eligible for the program, students must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Low-income (defined as students who are eligible for Pell Grants)

2. College-ready or in need of developmental education (the maximum amount of developmental education course needs will vary by college)

3. Credential-seeking and willing to attend college full-time (defined as 12 credits per semester)

4. Completed 24 or fewer college-level credits

5. In good academic standing (2.0 GPA at Cincinnati State; academically eligible for Pell Grants at Lorain and Tri-C)

6. In an eligible major (colleges may exclude a few majors that have requirements that make graduating within three years difficult, such as those with numerous pre-requisite courses that are not consistently offered each semester)

Intervention/Program/Practice:

Based on ASAP, the Ohio programs are multi-faceted including the following core components:

REQUIREMENTS AND MESSAGES

• Full-time enrollment: Required in fall and spring. Summer attendance encouraged and financially covered.

• Taking developmental courses early: Encouraged consistently and strongly.

• Graduating within three years: Encouraged consistently and strongly.

STUDENT SERVICES

• Advising: Students required to visit adviser twice per month in first semester and as directed based on need after that. Caseloads of no more than 125.

• Career services: Students required to meet with campus career services staff or participate in an approved career services event once per semester.

• Tutoring: Students required to attend tutoring if taking developmental courses, if identified as struggling by faculty/adviser, or if on academic probation.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

• Tuition waiver: Any difference between financial aid and tuition and fees is waived.

• Monthly incentive: Monthly $50 gas/grocery gift card, contingent on participation.

• Textbook assistance: Voucher to cover textbook costs through the campus bookstore.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

• Program management: Managed locally within each college, with periodic convenings and data sharing among the Ohio ASAP Network.

• Dedicated staffing: Fully dedicated program staff led by a director who reports to the provost or another senior leader at the college.

Research Design:

Random Assignment: The study uses a random assignment design to estimate the causal effects of the opportunity to participate in the Ohio ASAP demonstration. Students are the unit of assignment and they are randomly assigned within each campus by cohort combination. Control group members are blocked from enrolling in the programs for a three-year "embargo period." All three colleges began with a 50:50 ratio of program group members to control group members. In the spring 2016 semester, the ratio was changed to 60:40 at Cincinnati and 67:33 at Lorain in order to ensure all program slots would be filled. Tri-C remained at 50:50 throughout.

Data Collection and Analysis:

Baseline Information Form: Prior to random assignment, students fill out the Baseline Information Form, which includes baseline demographic and other background information. This information, along with the pre-random assignment academic data, is used to describe the sample, and to define subgroups for moderator (subgroup) analyses, and as covariates in the estimation models.

Transcript Data: Measures of academic outcomes were obtained through detailed college transcript records and exam data (for courses and exams taken at any schools that report to the ODHE), all of which were provided to MDRC by the colleges.

National Student Clearinghouse: Data from the National Student Clearinghouse, which covers students' enrollments in most (over 98 percent) postsecondary institutions throughout the United States, were used to examine academic outcomes like enrollment, and graduation rates.

Findings/Results:

Two-year findings from the random assignment evaluation show that the Ohio programs more than doubled two-year graduation rates: 19.1 % percent of the program group have earned a degree or credential compared with 7.9 % of the control group. Persistence and credit accumulation were also higher in the program group. The intervention had similar effects across demographic and academic subgroups (including older and non-traditional students). Additionally, most of the Ohio program components were well implemented, and the total annual direct cost per program group member is roughly $2,300, with some variation across colleges.

Conclusions:

The ASAP Ohio demonstration has shown that three colleges in Ohio were largely able to implement programs based on CUNY ASAP and that these programs dramatically improved academic outcomes for students over a two-year follow-up period. By combining opportunity with student responsibility, the Ohio programs were able to increase full-time enrollment while

providing students with the supports they need to be successful. Thus far, the programs have more than doubled the two-year graduation rates. MDRC's evaluation will continue tracking longer-term academic data. A future report will present three-year impacts, a cost-effectiveness analysis, and the full implementation story.