

### What is the community challenge?

Individuals with higher levels of educational attainment significantly and persistently accrue higher lifetime earnings compared to individuals with lower levels of educational attainment. Despite decades of focus on increasing access to higher education for students from economically disadvantaged families, large discrepancies remain between students from more- vs. less-economically advantaged families.

#### Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund  
Intervention: *Navigator Program*  
Grantee: New Profit  
Focus Area: Youth Development  
Focus Population: High school seniors  
Communities Served: 65 Schools across  
26 school districts in 9 states: CO, CT,  
FL, MD, MO, NY, SC, VA, & WV

### What is the promising solution?

The College Summit Navigator program (Navigator) is a nationwide program that aims to improve the college-going culture and college enrollment rates in high schools serving low-income, minority, and first-generation college-going students. Navigator aims to: (1) provide high school seniors with greater knowledge of the college search and admissions processes and (2) provide the support and tools necessary to navigate the college selection and enrollment processes. Core components of the program include Peer Leaders, tools and professional development for school staff (e.g., curriculum, online tools that include CSNav and Naviance), and college tours.

### What was the purpose of evaluation?

The evaluation of College Summit's Navigator by AIR began in 2011 and finished reporting in 2017. The purpose of AIR's evaluation was to understand if Navigator was implemented with fidelity across the participating schools, document any differences in school outcomes between College Summit and comparison schools, and to assess the impact of the program on college enrollment rates. To answer these questions, AIR conducted an implementation and impact study. The implementation study analyzed survey responses from staff, teachers, and administrators at schools where Navigator was used. The impact study used a comparative interrupted time-series design with a matched comparison group identified through propensity score matching to assess program impacts at the school level. The program sample size was 65 Navigator schools and 205 comparison schools in the same states.

### What did the evaluation find?

As a grantee/subgrantee of the Social Innovation Fund, New Profit's College Summit engaged independent evaluators to conduct a joint evaluation of Navigator (AIR and Policy Studies Associates) in a national study funded as part of a SIF grant to College Summit. The findings are as follows:

- Implementation of Navigator was successful in many schools. Several core components and the percent of students served varied across schools.
- Impact analyses found no statistically significant differences in student enrollment rates in any or four-year college following high school graduation between schools that implemented the Navigator program and the comparison schools.

### Notes on the evaluation

Although the study did use propensity scores to match treatment and comparison schools, individual-level data on student outcomes were not available, so the impact analysis was limited to school-level effects. As the

study acknowledged, the use of schoolwide data may have limited the ability to detect the effectiveness of Navigator on participating students. Furthermore, the report noted that implementation of the Navigator program varied across schools, which affected fidelity in some cases; and that the number of students served across schools varied widely, with only a subset of eligible students served across participating schools.

## How is College Summit using the evaluation findings to improve?

Informed by key findings from AIR’s evaluation of the Navigator program, as well as other data, College Summit relaunched itself as PeerForward in 2016 to focus on the power of its Peer Leaders who proved to be the intervention unit that was showing the most impact. PeerForward utilizes the influence and power of Peer Leaders and advisors to guide high school students in grades 9-12 to and through college. Teams of eight high school juniors and seniors (Peer Leaders) trained and coached throughout the year by a PeerForward youth development professional and supported by a faculty advisor guide their classmates to and through college. The PeerForward model comprises three campaigns, each tied to an outcome that has been proven to boost college enrollment: applying to three or more colleges, filing early for financial aid, and connecting academics to college and career. PeerForward therefore leverages the organizing power of youth; many partner schools find that the Navigator and Launch curricula supplement well the peer-to-peer campaigns. 2 quasi-experimental studies using propensity scoring techniques have already demonstrated that PeerForward method is yielding statistically significant results.

### Evaluation At-a-Glance

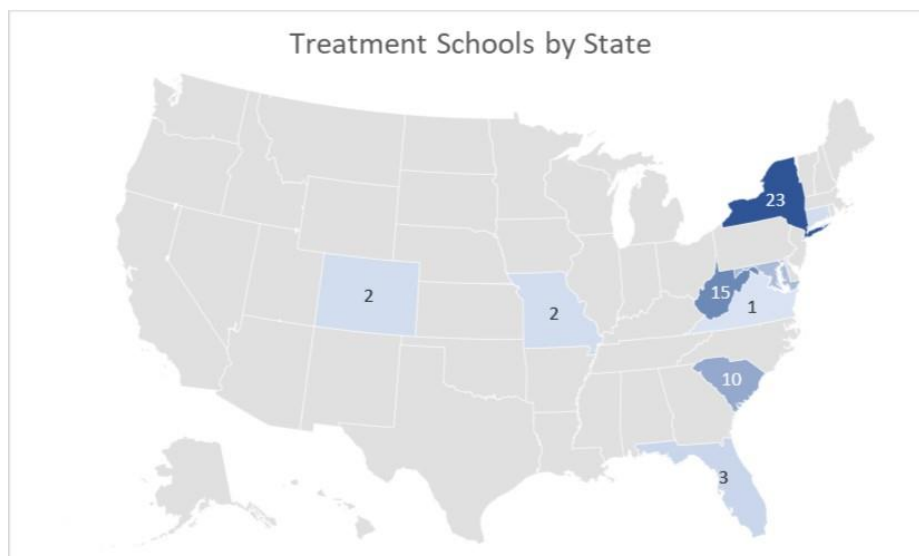
**Evaluation Design:**  
Comparative Interrupted Time Series with Matched Comparison Group formed by Propensity Score Matching

**Study Population:** High School Seniors

**Independent Evaluator:** American Institutes for Research (AIR)

**This Evaluation’s Level of Evidence\*:** Preliminary

\*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.



The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/research>.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.