Abt Associates Inc.

College as a Job Advancement Strategy: An Interim Report on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project The New Visions Evaluation

Cambridge, MA
Lexington, MA
Hadley, MA
Bethesda, MD
Washington, DC
Chicago, IL
Cairo, Egypt
Johannesburg, South Africa

May 2003

Prepared for
Riverside Community College
4800 Magnolia Avenue
Riverside, California 92506

Prepared by
David J. Fein
Erik Beecroft
David A. Long
Anne Robertson

Abt Associates Inc.
55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Acknowledgements

The New Visions demonstration has benefited from an unusually strong dedication to evaluation on the part of the leadership and staff at Riverside Community College (RCC) and Riverside County's Department of Public and Social Services (DPSS).

At RCC, the authors thank Sal Rotella, Joan Wells, Shelagh Camak, Greg Aycock, and David Torres for their strong support of, and participation in, the evaluation. We owe a special debt to the late Sandy Foster, RCC Vice President for Planning and Development, whose clear vision and deft collaborative skills were crucial in developing this demonstration. We are grateful as well to the college's many other administrators, instructors, and staff who participated in interviews and helped us collect data for the study. New Visions students who took time from their busy days for interviews contributed immensely to our understanding of the program.

At DPSS, key administrators and staff have been devoted partners in the design and conduct of this evaluation. We thank especially DPSS' Dennis Boyle, John Rodgers, Cynthia Hinckly, Nancy Presser, Ron Quinn, Jeremy Samsky, and Stephanie Beckett. We acknowledge the many other administrators and case managers at DPSS who participated in interviews and those who provided sterling assistance in implementing random assignment and data collection procedures.

We gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Policy Research and Evaluation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In particular, we thank ACF's Lenny Sternbach, Nancye Campbell, and Howard Rolston for their advice and guidance throughout the demonstration.

Judy Reichle and her staff at the California Chancellor for Community College's Office deserve our thanks for providing statewide data on community college enrollment of the New Visions sample, and for arranging a stimulating discussion with the CCCCO's advisory group. We also are grateful to Max Elsman of Cygnet Associates, for bringing his keen skills to bear on the New Visions recruitment challenge.

At Abt Associates we thank Jon Wilwerding, Jennifer Giancola, Wang Lee, Ozan Jaquette, and Daniel Weinberg for assistance with data analyses; Jesse Valente for yeoman service organizing interview notes; Denise Young for help preparing this document; and Judy Alamprese for valuable comments on an earlier draft of this report.

Finally, a special thanks to RCC, DPSS, and ACF staff who took time to review and share comments on earlier drafts of this report. We accept full responsibility for any remaining errors. Also, all interpretations in the report are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of RCC, DPSS, ACF or their staffs.

Contents

List of Exhibits

Executive Summary

This report is the second in a series on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project, an innovative program designed to help welfare recipients go to college and advance to better jobs.[1] First implemented in August 1998, the project is a partnership between Riverside Community College (RCC) and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) in Riverside County, California.

New Visions tests the thesis that success in college and at work require similar skills, and that these skills can be imparted in a single program. The design consists of a 24-week phase of preparatory studies at RCC, followed by a short sequence of regular college courses providing training for a specific job. New Visions participants must be working in an unsubsidized job for at least 20 hours a week in addition to attending 12 hours of classes.

An assumption underlying New Visions is that students who work are in a good position to apply new skills and advance in their jobs. Evidence for or against this proposition is pertinent to the current national debate about how much education and training will be feasible if work requirements are increased for welfare recipients. The New Visions demonstration also addresses the question of whether specially-designed programs for low-income parents can promote college achievement and thereby movement to higher-wage jobs.

Abt Associates Inc. is conducting a five-year evaluation of New Visions under a grant to RCC from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The evaluation is assessing the program's implementation and estimating its impacts on participants' educational attainment, earnings, and welfare reliance. The demonstration incorporates an experimental design, which randomly assigned 1,076 volunteers to treatment and control groups. Results provide the first rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of a college promotion program for welfare recipients.

The first New Visions evaluation report (Fein *et al.* 2000) looked at early implementation lessons and short-term impacts for a small sample of early demonstration participants. The present report covers the full implementation period, provides detailed analyses of participants' experiences, and assesses impacts for a larger sample over a two-year follow-up period. The final report will provide impact analyses for the full demonstration sample and a longer follow-up period

Background

Special college programs for welfare recipients received a boost from the 1988 Family Support Act, whose Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program made education and training (E&T) the cornerstone of the nation's welfare policies. Many states encouraged post-secondary education under JOBS, and colleges—particularly community colleges—developed a variety of innovative program designs. Little is known about whether these programs were effective, as the handful of studies of them were largely descriptive in nature.

[1] In early 2003, there were several changes to New Visions' design, and the program was renamed the Workforce Preparation Skills Program. Our final report will describe these changes.

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) shifted the emphasis in national policy from education and training to employment services and rapid transitions from welfare to work. An earlier experiment finding large positive employment impacts for Riverside County's employment-focused program was influential in promoting this philosophy, which came to be known as "work first." PRWORA's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, which replaced AFDC/JOBS, contained strong work activity participation requirements and restricted the circumstances under which states could count education and training as work activities.

PRWORA initially led states to restrict opportunities for welfare recipients to attend college. A counter-reaction developed in the late 1990s in response to strong evidence that, although work first moved many recipients from welfare to work, it did little to increase their net incomes. A number of states developed policies and programs to encourage college, sometimes working within, and sometimes around, the TANF work participation rules.

Interest in mixed employment-education approaches was particularly keen, given evidence that educational programs may be more effective when developed in a strong employment context. Evaluation researchers are beginning to describe emerging approaches to promoting college under TANF. Until now, however, none of these evaluations has included a rigorous impact study.

The New Visions Program

Riverside County was among the earliest jurisdictions to recognize and systematically address the problems of job retention and advancement. Its current TANF program embodies a three-phase design. In Phase 1, DPSS's employment service counselors help clients find jobs. Clients advance to Phase 2 after finding unsubsidized jobs for at least 20 hours a week, where special case managers concentrate on job retention and job advancement. Phase 2 case managers encourage clients to enroll in one of a variety of E&T programs in the community; alternatively, clients may choose to work full time to meet the overall participation requirement (32 hours for single parent cases and 35 hours for two parent cases). In Phase 3, the program offers extended services to support job retention and advancement after clients leave the welfare rolls.

New Visions is a specially-designed Phase 2 program for recipients with a high school diploma or equivalent preparation. Operated by RCC, the program has its own classroom, offices, and computer laboratory on the college's main Riverside City campus. The program is funded partly through TANF grant dollars provided directly to California community colleges and partly through the college's general funds.

New Visions' goals are to prepare welfare recipients for college, foster lifelong learning, and promote job advancement. Following a one-week orientation session, New Visions participants enter a 24-week core program of academic instruction and career guidance. The program includes college preparatory classes in math, English, reading, office-related computer software, and guidance. Academic instruction relies heavily on applied learning and hands-on assignments drawn from work situations (e.g., math problems arising in varying occupations, resume and cover letter preparation) and other areas of daily living (e.g., interest on loans, income taxes). The guidance class concentrates

on critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and study skills needed for success at college, work, and home.

The core program design addresses the special needs of low-income working parents. It offers a flexible schedule and individualized instruction delivered in a group setting. Classes are taught in three-hour time blocks each day, four days a week, with each block repeated three times daily to suit varying work, child care, and transportation needs. Small class sizes (typically no more than 15) allow instructors to work with students on an individual basis. Lessons and assignments are structured so that students can move through the curriculum at their own pace. Courses are divided into three six-week segments, each providing one unit of credit, to reward progress and make it easier for dropouts to re-enroll in the program. All credits appear on students' RCC transcripts, although only the three guidance course units are degree-applicable.

After the 24-week core program, New Visions seeks to move participants into an occupational mini-program at RCC. These programs consist of identified sequences of courses in the regular RCC curriculum normally requiring four-to-seven months of part-time study. The mini-programs are designed to train students for entry-level jobs in their chosen occupations. Credits for completed courses also are applicable towards state-recognized certificate programs and associates and bachelors degrees.

The strategy breaks up longer college programs into a series of segments corresponding to successive steps on participants' career ladders. The New Visions design assumes that an incremental approach to higher education will be more achievable for working parents than the sustained, full-time schedule in the traditional college model. The mini-programs also fit within DPSS' Phase 2 training philosophy, which emphasizes short-term programs training for specific jobs. Although well-suited for New Visions graduates, RCC mini-programs are open to all of the college's students, and most of the students in these classes are not welfare recipients.

Implementing New Visions

As with many ambitious new interventions, it was not certain at the outset that New Visions could be successfully implemented. Would a sufficient number of working parents be willing to devote 24 weeks to preparing for college and then go for further studies? Was it possible to create a program that simultaneously prepared students for college and fostered short-term job advancement? Would New Visions build a sturdy bridge between the core program and regular college courses? The evaluation's implementation study uses information from on-site interviews and observations to answer these and related questions.

Recruitment

Recruitment proved to be far more challenging than RCC or DPSS initially had envisioned. Eligibility restrictions greatly limited the pool of potential volunteers (to no more than 15 percent of the caseload), and recruiters faced growing competition from other Phase 2 training programs in a period of declining welfare caseloads. Eligible clients often were not an easy sell. Past academic difficulties left them skeptical about college, financial needs impelled them towards full-time work, and other Phase 2 programs promised faster pathways to better jobs.

The earliest outreach efforts mainly involved calls and mailings by RCC to Phase 2 clients who indicated an interest in New Visions or RCC on a form implemented by DPSS. The resulting flow of volunteers—about 30 per six-week cycle, of which half were assigned to the treatment group—was below half the level needed to fill seats and meet demonstration enrollment requirements.

Over the next few years, senior staff at the two agencies collaborated closely on an extensive recruitment effort. Notwithstanding DPSS's philosophy of not intervening in the training program marketplace, agency administrators and Phase 2 case managers took an active role in this effort. The campaign developed a wide array of techniques, including home visits, presentations at the welfare office, on-campus picnics, ads in local media and public spaces, use of New Visions students as recruiters, marketing to welfare clients before they found jobs, offering work study positions, and hiring an expert consultant to advise. The latter recommended revising the message about New Visions' benefits and helped implement steps leading to a more uniform message across the two agencies. The revised message told welfare recipients that New Visions was a program for people like them that provided skills that all employers would reward. Previously staff had placed more emphasis on the program as a chance to improve basic educational skills (DPSS) and acquire skills needed to succeed in college (RCC).

The two agencies' experiences with work study illustrate how programs like New Visions require that both partners be able to understand and accommodate to each other's policy environments. RCC staff saw offering work study jobs to Phase 1 (pre-employment) clients as a good recruitment tool that would help participants to coordinate their work and school and gain experience with the college environment. DPSS policy normally did not allow work study because it viewed these subsidized, short-term jobs as diverting clients from sustained movement towards financial independence. The agency nonetheless agreed to test the use of work study positions in recruitment. When a surge of volunteers proved too great for the college to place quickly in work study positions, the welfare agency returned to its policy of requiring unsubsidized work.[2] College staff subsequently came to understand better the reasons behind DPSS' stress on unsubsidized employment and have accepted the need to work within this framework.

Through its extensive recruitment efforts, the demonstration was able to maintain overall intake (treatment and control) at nearly 40 volunteers per cycle and eventually meet the target of 1,000 volunteers. Although not that much higher than early intake, administrators had feared substantial declines as they worked through the initial backlog of eligible clients and as competition increased from other Phase 2 providers. An early 2002 survey of eligible Phase 2 clients found that 27 percent had volunteered for New Visions. This result seems a good one, given competition from other programs, apprehensions about college, and the pull of full-time employment in a robust economy. It suggests that ultimately it was the small pool of eligible clients, rather than failure to make the case for the program, that limited demonstration inflow.

[2] DPSS administrators believed that some Phase 1 case managers were using the work study option as an easy way to secure job placements for their less employable clients. After ending work study generally, the agency allowed a few participants to hold work study jobs as New Visions recruiters.

The Core Program

Compared with recruitment, relatively few serious problems arose in implementing the New Visions core program, and it quickly reached its steady state. RCC administrators designed a solid core curriculum and hired an instructional staff committed to working with low-income working parents.

Teaching approaches varied across courses and over time, but generally emphasized a mix of group discussion and self-paced work periodically punctuated with short lectures. New Visions largely eschewed the traditional lecture-based model. Faculty used a combination of textbooks, worksheet assignments, and computer software as teaching resources.

Each course moved through its subject matter sequentially in six-week blocks timed to correspond to the inflow of students in new cohorts, who were enrolled about every six weeks. More frequent entry opportunities reduced the wait to begin classes but required that faculty engage new students in ongoing courses who had not had mastered previous material. Instructors responded by devoting time to review, by working with individuals and small groups of students, and by designing curricula to allow substantial self-paced work.

Faculty found that New Visions students' low academic skills made teaching these courses more challenging than teaching comparable courses offered in more traditional formats to the general RCC student body. Program developers had expected 7th to 8th grade competencies, but academic skills of incoming New Visions students actually averaged between the 5th to 7th-grade levels on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). The gap that New Visions needed to close to bring participants to the college level was therefore substantial.

In the program's first year, counseling staff were stretched thin by multiple responsibilities for counseling, recruitment, instruction, and administration. When the college added more counselors (around the end of New Visions' second year), the program was able to take a more proactive approach to counseling current students, re-engaging drop-outs, and building stronger bridges to post-core training at RCC.

Strong connections to employers are an important requirement for programs seeking to foster short-term job advancement. New Visions initially hired a job developer and developed ties to several employers—including a local bank—but ultimately decided it made more sense to rely on welfare agency staff for job development. As a consequence, employers were not as directly involved as they might have been in the core program, which focused more on preparation for work and school than on securing direct job placements.

The two organizations held somewhat different views of what an ideal core curriculum would look like. DPSS staff felt that the program would be more appealing if it introduced occupational training earlier—during the six-month core program. RCC staff shared this view to some extent, but believed also that virtually all New Visions students needed intensive academic preparation to succeed in the college's regular occupational programs. They noted that the program already provided some flexibility to start occupational training earlier by allowing students to test out of core courses.

Post-Core College Training

An integral component of the original New Visions model was a period of regular college coursework following core program completion. This part of the program was not as fully designed as the core program at the outset, and its subsequent development took a back seat to recruitment efforts on the part of RCC administrators and staff. During the first two years, this component consisted mainly of *ad hoc* efforts by counselors to interest students in what then was a relatively limited number of occupational mini-programs.

Two developments eventually strengthened this part of the program. First, the college hired more counselors, who had more time to take a proactive role in career planning and post-core coursework. New Visions also added a special workshop—the Capstone course—designed to solidify career goals and training plans during the last weeks of the core program. Second, a surge of interest in shorter training programs in the general college community led to the creation of many more occupational mini-programs.

Administrators and faculty created these mini-programs in response to the requirements for specific jobs in demand in the community, sometimes working directly with employers to create programs. Most of these occupational mini-programs simply identified short sequences of existing courses needed for a particular job, although some broke up existing courses into smaller (e.g., one-credit) chunks, and still others incorporated new courses and programs customized to the specifications of local employers. Illustrative programs include training for: medical transcription, cardiac monitor technician, pre-school teacher's aide, PC publishing, and administrative assistant.

Whereas the original New Visions design portrayed post-core training as an integral part of the program, the implemented program mostly ends with graduation from the core program. New Visions counselors periodically contact participants continuing at RCC to assess their progress, and counselors also contact non-continuers to encourage them to return to school. Continuing students also remain eligible for other special services the college provides to CalWORKS students, including counseling and help with tuition and school materials.

Further efforts to extend the program beyond the initial preparatory phase could be beneficial. Steps might include adding short extension segments to core courses after graduation (e.g., a one-unit guidance follow-on) and offering special workshops, seminars and social events to alumni. Initiating short introductory segments of occupational training courses within the core program, as well as more visits to and introductory lectures by faculty outside New Visions, also might create a stronger bridge between the core program and post-core training.

Overarching Lessons

Perhaps the most important lesson from this demonstration is that it is feasible, if challenging, to develop and operate college engagement programs for low-income working parents. Successful implementation required extensive collaboration between the welfare agency and community college, particularly with regard to recruitment. New Visions was fortunate to have strong support from both the director of DPSS and president of RCC, who jointly conceived the program. Senior and mid-level administrative staff at both agencies also worked together closely from the beginning. The partnership was tested on several occasions as staff negotiated differences in organizational philosophies and perceived responsibilities.

Working relationships between front-line staff took somewhat longer to emerge, partly because it took some time before both agencies had hired their full staff complements. Senior staff bolstered inter-agency working relationships by organizing staff meetings, by encouraging visits and briefings, and by out-stationing a DPSS case manager at New Visions. The eventual outcome was exceptionally strong day-to-day coordination and mutual reinforcement in arranging needed services, responding to problems at work, and encouraging clients to continue in school.

A final lesson is that developing new college-attachment programs requires a flexible outlook and management capacity to make any needed adjustments over time. The New Visions core program was operational at start-up and needed relatively modest refinements. In contrast, strategies for recruitment and the post-core program phase of occupational mini-programs initially were not fully developed. Administrators at both DPSS and RCC devoted substantial energy to program recruitment, generating a series of innovative responses that ultimately met the recruitment targets, but it has taken longer to create a strong bridge to post-core occupational training.

Experiences of New Visions Participants

Here we describe the experiences of volunteers assigned to the treatment group and allowed to participate in New Visions. Analyses are based on an early 2002 survey of 684 New Visions-eligible clients, on administrative data on educational and economic outcomes for 353 clients assigned to the treatment group by the end of 2000, and on in-depth interviews with 29 current students and graduates conducted during October 2000 and November 2001 site visits.

Volunteering for the Program

The typical New Visions participant we met in our in-depth interviews with current students and graduates was a single mother who had dreamed of going to college but felt she had insufficient ability or financial means to do so. She was attracted to the program by its promise of a highly supportive environment offering an opportunity to go to school with people in similar circumstances. Some volunteers saw the program as a chance to go to college as a route to a better-paying job. Many had a strong sense that the program initially would focus on academic preparation and guidance, but others were not as clear on what the program would involve.

Among non-volunteers in the 2002 survey sample, three-quarters said that they had heard of New Visions, and half of these said that they were interested in the program. Main reasons this half cited for not applying included wanting to learn more about the program and not having time to apply.

Among the other half—who had heard about New Visions but said that they were not interested in the program—key reasons were preferring another program, not needing more education, and wanting to have more time to spend with their children. Respondents working full-time were substantially less likely to volunteer than those working part-time.

New Visions students given work study jobs as program recruiters also stressed that many welfare recipients felt they did not have time for school or preferred shorter programs directed towards specific jobs. Both recruiters and other students told us that use of student recruiters sent a strong message that the program was feasible and beneficial. Student recruiters felt that they had received

valuable experience from these jobs, resulting in improved public speaking skills and increased self-confidence.

The 24-Week Core Program

Two-thirds of all recipients who volunteered and were randomly assigned to the treatment group actually enrolled in classes—a respectable rate for welfare-to-work programs. The result reflects volunteers' enthusiasm for the program, efforts by counselors to stay in touch during the up to six weeks between volunteering and orientation, and outreach to volunteers who did not show up for orientation.

Volunteers who did show were more likely to be working fewer hours and have previous college experience than those who did not show. Analyses of baseline data for the full sample also reveal lower academic abilities and more apprehension about college readiness among those who showed up than among those who did not. This finding reinforces impressions from staff interviews that many people saw New Visions as a program for students who needed remedial education.

Just over half (55 percent) of volunteers who came to the program completed the 24-week core program. Although we could not find statistics for comparable programs, this result seems fairly good given the challenges of balancing work, parenting, and school. Interviews with students and staff suggest that New Visions fostered retention by creating a highly supportive environment and an engaging curriculum; also that counselors were able to help many students resolve problems that otherwise would have led to dropping out.

For participants who did drop out, no single factor emerged as most important. In-depth interviews with program staff and students, including several drop-outs, identified a wide range of causes. The consensus was that early dropouts tended to be reacting to a perceived mismatch with the program (often a preference for quicker entry into occupational training), whereas later dropouts tended to be triggered by external events such as a job change or family illness.

In interviews with a small sample of current students and graduates, nearly all respondents had very positive reactions to New Visions' courses, staff, and general environment. About half felt that the courses were taught at the right level, and they found most of the instructors to be enthusiastic, warm, and effective.[3] Students especially liked instructors who combined high expectations with an engaging manner. A repeated observation was that the math and computer classes had helped to break down longstanding fears of these subjects (developing basic facility with computers was especially satisfying), and students also appreciated the Internet experience they gained through the reading class. Many credited English with giving them the skills to communicate more effectively with their employers, their customers, and their children's teachers. Students cited the guidance course as equipping them to deal with problems and plan their lives, as well as helping them to improve their social skills and self-esteem.

Average tested math and language skills at graduation were at about the eighth-grade level, reflecting average gains since enrollment of two years for math and one year for language.[4] Forty-two (42)

[3] As discussed in the next section, several graduates who went on to other RCC courses felt that the core New Visions courses needed to be more advanced to prepare students for regular college classes.

[4] New Visions administered the Test of Adult Basic Education at orientation and graduation.

percent of graduates tested at or above the 9th-grade level in math (compared with only 9 percent at intake), and 57 percent tested at or above this level in language (compared with 37 percent at intake). Notwithstanding their substantial progress, most students remained at least two grades below that of a well-prepared high school graduate.[5] It does not immediately follow that New Visions graduates were at an academic disadvantage relative to incoming high school graduates at RCC, however, as many of the latter also had poor academic skills.

When asked about skills useful at work, about half of the students we spoke to were able to identify specific ways they had used things they had learned at New Visions in their jobs and at home. Examples included improved ability to tally receipts and calculate percentages in retail sales jobs, and better oral and written communications with supervisors and customers. At home, several students reported that their own school work had helped to foster a better learning climate for their children, both from the role model they provided as students and from their improved ability to help with their children's homework.

Finally, student feedback indicates that New Visions succeeded in creating a strong learning community. Students liked especially the opportunity to go to school with other people in similar situations, the friendliness of the faculty and staff, and being on a college campus and having access to its resources.

Experiences after the Core Program

Within a year of completing the core program, a fairly high fraction—59 percent—of New Visions students enrolled in at least one regular RCC course. The most popular areas of study were: computers, early childhood education, business (including office administration), social services (counseling and social sciences), and health care. Rigorous impact analyses reported in the next section suggest that a substantial fraction of these participants would not have enrolled at RCC absent New Visions.

Substantially fewer no-shows (11 percent) and dropouts (20 percent) enrolled in regular RCC courses. No-shows were somewhat more likely than dropouts to engage in another DPSS Phase 2 training activity (34 versus 25 percent), indicating that preferences for different types of programs may partly explain the no-shows.

The small sample of continuing graduates we interviewed said they found regular RCC courses much more difficult than the New Visions classes. Two students mentioned that more advanced preparation during the core program would have been helpful.

As in the core program, graduates continued to experience multiple sources of stress from external life crises that made schoolwork difficult. The list of issues they mentioned included: divorce and other changes in relationships; unplanned pregnancies; drug and alcohol problems; health issues for self, children, and extended family; family conflicts; mental health problems; housing problems; concerns about children's behavior and school performance; job loss; and increasing debt.

---

[5] Department of Education guidelines classify TABE scores of grades 9-10 as "low adult secondary education" and scores of grades 11-12 as "high adult secondary education" (U.S. Department of Education 2001).

Notwithstanding substantial continuing counseling and service needs, most program participants—especially those who left before finishing the core program or who graduated but did not continue at RCC—reported that their relationships with New Visions counselors, faculty, and fellow students largely ended after they left the core program. Several acknowledged vigorous outreach by New Visions counselors to offer encouragement and services and to try to re-engage them in school. A number of students also mentioned that they continued to work with their GAIN Phase 2 case managers on their education and training plans.

Neither administrative data nor in-depth interviews revealed dramatic improvements in participants' employment situations in the period immediately following graduation. Thus, although students felt that they had acquired skills useful at work from the core New Visions classes, in the short run these benefits were not of a kind or magnitude commensurate with job advancement. The next section summarizes more rigorous evidence on the program's short-term economic impacts that is consistent with these findings.

Two-Year Impacts for Educational and Economic Outcomes

The New Visions demonstration provides the first rigorous impact estimates for a program promoting job advancement through college among low-income adults. The experimental design randomly assigned a total of 1,076 volunteers in roughly equal numbers to treatment and control groups. The only systematic difference between the two groups was that the former could participate in New Visions, whereas the latter could participate only in other DPSS Phase 2 education and training activities.

Estimated impacts—calculated as the treatment-control difference in average outcomes after random assignment—capture the degree to which New Visions improved educational and economic outcomes for volunteers, compared with the outcomes they would have experienced had they participated only in other Phase 2 activities. In general, these alternative activities provided short-term training for specific jobs.

As of the cut-off point for this report, sufficient time had passed to observe 658 volunteers in the overall sample for roughly two years after random assignment.[6] Analyses of this sample draw on administrative data from DPSS, RCC, the state community college information system, and the state Unemployment Insurance wage reporting system.

Educational Impacts

Substantially more treatment (83 percent) than control (51 percent) group members ever participated in at least one education or training activity during the first two years after random assignment (see first panel of Exhibit ES.1). The treatment-control difference—32 percentage points—is statistically significant. This impact arises mainly because most treatment group members participated in New Visions.

[6] Actual follow-up varies from 1½ to 2½ years, depending on the data source.

Although lower than the treatment group, the control group's 51 percent E&T participation rate is impressive considering that, unlike prior demonstrations, these welfare recipients also were working at least 20 hours a week. The finding underscores the point that the New Visions experiment is comparing the effectiveness of a particular college-attachment model to a variety of alternative training options in the community. The latter mostly involve shorter-term job training offered by non-college providers, although they also include regular occupational courses at RCC without New Visions.

Exhibit ES.1
Summary of New Visions' Impacts on Educational and Economic Outcomes

Outcome	(1) Treatment Group	(2) Control Group	(3) Impact (1)-(2)	(4) Pct. Impact ((3)/(2))*100
Participated in GAIN Education and Training Activities (over 2 years):				
New Visions (%)	74.8	0.0	74.8***	NA
Vocational training (%)	38.3	49.2	-10.9***	-22.2
Basic education (%)	4.5	5.8	-1.3	-22.4
Any education/training (%)	82.9	51.1	31.9***	62.4
Avg. total quarters of E&T	3.0	1.7	1.3***	76.5
Enrolled at RCC (over 2½ years)				
Taking any course (%)	72.4	26.7	45.7***	171.2
Taking non-New Visions courses (%)	40.2	25.7	14.5***	56.4
Avg. quarters took non-NV courses	1.7	1.1	0.6***	54.5
Avg. degree-applicable credits earned	7.5	2.0	5.6***	280.0
Employment and Earnings (over 1½ years)				
Avg. quarters worked	4.9	4.9	-0.1	-2.0
Avg. total earnings ($)	11,499	12,092	-594	-4.9
TANF Receipt and Payments (over 2 years)				
Avg. quarters of receipt	6.1	5.7	.4***	7.0
Avg. total payment amount ($)	7,077	6,252	825***	13.2
Sample Size	336	322		

Notes:
Follow-up periods vary across outcomes due to differences in data available at the time of this analysis.
Results of subtracting treatment and control columns (1 and 2) may differ slightly from impact column (3) due to rounding.

*** Impact is statistically significant at the 99-percent confidence level; **at the 90-percent confidence level; * at the 90-percent confidence level.

New Visions participants were significantly more likely to enroll in regular (non-New Visions) occupational courses at RCC (41 percent) than their control group counterparts (27 percent) during the 2½ years after random assignment (second panel of Exhibit ES.1). The 15-point difference

represents a 56-percent proportionate increase in community college attendance.[7] This finding means that New Visions was moderately successful in one of its key objectives—to foster longer-term community college education through occupational mini-programs.

There also was a substantial impact on degree-applicable credits earned at RCC. Over the first two years following random assignment, the average treatment group member earned eight credits, compared with only two for the average control group member. The average treatment group member had ten credits overall (including several pre-New Visions credits). By comparison, the threshold for state approval of certificate programs is 18 credits.[8]

Economic Impacts

Impact findings for employment and earnings do not bear out hopes that New Visions would promote job advancement while fostering college engagement in the short run. The program had no statistically significant effects on either the average number of quarters worked or total earnings during the first 1½ years after random assignment (see bottom panel of Exhibit ES.1).[9]

It is possible that these average measures (which are based on quarterly earnings from jobs covered by Unemployment Insurance) conceal more subtle effects. For example, if some participants secured raises and promotions, while others curtailed their work hours to leave more time for school, impacts might cancel in the aggregate. We have not yet collected the data needed to investigate this hypothesis.

New Visions was associated with increased welfare receipt and higher average welfare payments, possibly because treatment group members restricted other activities—such as full-time employment or marriage—that might interfere with school. A hint that this may be so is that negative impacts on earnings emerge around the beginning of the second follow-up year (not shown in exhibit). Although the earnings impacts are not statistically significant, their timing nonetheless corresponds to the period of largest increases in welfare use.

Conclusions

The New Visions demonstration provides an unparalleled opportunity to examine the issues that arise in promoting college for welfare recipients in a work first environment. Findings suggest that a vigorous, varied and well-coordinated recruitment campaign can achieve good penetration of the eligible population. They suggest further that a highly supportive environment, customized courses,

---

[7] Results for RCC enrollment can be interpreted as impacts on community college enrollment generally, as analysis of statewide records showed virtually no treatment or control group members enrolled in other colleges.

[8] Although this comparison helps to put the ten credits in perspective, it is not meant to imply that the average treatment group member had completed 10/18ths of a certificate program. Some or all of the credits earned may not applicable to the same certificate program, and programs can be longer than 18 credits.

[9] The observable follow-up horizon is shorter for these than for other outcomes due to lags in the availability of wage records from the state Unemployment Insurance system.

dedicated instructors and intensive guidance can sustain a fairly high level of program participation and subsequent college enrollment. Programs should extend beyond the preparatory phase given evidence of continuing needs for intensive supports. Whereas the original New Visions design envisioned such an extension, the program as implemented provides extended counseling but otherwise ends with completion of the preparatory phase.

Impact findings indicate substantial early success with college engagement. The program increased the percentage ever taking regular RCC classes by 15 points and boosted degree-applicable credits earned by an average of six units. Among participants who showed (67 percent) and then graduated (55 percent) from the core program, impacts likely were much higher. As an illustration, assuming no significant impacts on no-shows and dropouts, the estimated impact on college engagement for New Visions graduates rises from 15 to 41 percentage points.[10] It seems unlikely that programs like New Visions could achieve graduation rates approaching 100 percent, but it is at least tantalizing to contemplate the potential effects of their doing so.

Although New Visions was fairly successful in meeting its short-term educational goals, it did not increase the average participant's earnings during the first two years after random assignment, and it led to somewhat longer welfare stays for program participants. These results are not necessarily signs of failure: the absence of earnings impacts suggests New Visions performed no worse than other programs in the community, while longer welfare stays may be inevitable, and even instrumental, for low-income single mothers who wish to continue in school.

Whether a more concerted effort to promote short-term job advancement within the core program would have made a difference is unclear—an alternative possibility is that low-income single mothers simply cannot simultaneously devote sufficient energy to work and school to achieve on both fronts in the short run. Models that encourage welfare recipients to combine part-time work and school must acknowledge the fact that part-time jobs generally offer fewer benefits and more limited prospects for advancement than full-time positions.

The key questions ahead for this evaluation are how many New Visions participants eventually complete RCC's occupational mini-programs and then move to solid, career-track jobs. Future evaluation reports will explore the dynamics of work and school and analyze program impacts over a longer time horizon.

[10] 41 = 15/.37, where .37 is the fraction of all treatment group members who graduated (.67*.55). Because New Visions may have helped some dropouts to attend other RCC courses, the true impact for graduates probably is not this high.

Chapter 1
Introduction

This report is the second in a series on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project, an innovative program designed to prepare welfare recipients for college and help them advance to better jobs.[11] First implemented in August 1998, the project is a partnership between Riverside Community College (RCC) and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) in Riverside County, California. New Visions provides a 24-week core program of academic instruction, guidance, and support services, designed to prepare students for further education in one of RCC's many occupational programs. While enrolled in New Visions, participants must work at least 20 hours a week in an unsubsidized job.

Abt Associates Inc. is conducting a five-year evaluation of New Visions under a grant to RCC from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The evaluation is assessing the program's implementation and estimating its impacts on participants' educational attainment, earnings, and welfare reliance. The impact study is based on a random-assignment design.

The New Visions demonstration is the first rigorous evaluation of a program seeking to engage welfare recipients in college. Hitherto policymakers have had little information to guide in designing, planning, and operating such programs. The prior New Visions evaluation report (Fein *et al.* 2000) looked at initial implementation lessons and outcomes for early demonstration participants. The present report covers the full implementation period, analyzes participants' program experiences in detail, and extends impact analyses to a larger sample with somewhat greater follow-up. The project's final report will assess impacts over a longer time period.

1.1 College for Welfare Recipients

During the 1990s, welfare programs nationally embraced the philosophy known as "work first," which emphasized the benefits of moving welfare recipients as quickly as possible into the labor market. An important catalyst in this movement was an experimental evaluation in Riverside County finding large positive employment impacts associated with this approach (Riccio *et al.* 1994).[12] The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)'s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program promoted work first through rules favoring employment services over education and training programs and through limits on the time families could receive assistance. Both experimental and econometric evaluations have found that the resulting state programs led to higher levels of employment and lower levels of welfare utilization (Grogger, Karoly, and Klerman 2002).

[11] In early 2003, there were several changes to New Visions' design, and the program was renamed the Workforce Preparation Skills Program. Our final report will describe these changes.

[12] Findings from this evaluation had a substantial influence on policymaking in other states (Greenberg, Mandell, and Onstott 2000).

The same studies also have found that the mid-to-late 1990s reforms have had very little effect on total family income or poverty, since gains in earnings largely were offset by welfare losses. Descriptive research confirms that most welfare recipients who go to work enter and remain in low-wage jobs. The median hourly wage for former welfare recipients in 1997 was only $6.61, and only 23 percent of those who worked received health insurance from their employers (Loprest 1999). Subsequent wage growth typically has been very limited. An analysis by Pavetti and Acs (2001) of current and former recipients in their 20s shows that more than half never make the transition from 'bad' to 'good' jobs (the latter defined as jobs paying at least $9.50 per hour for 35 or more hours per week). For those who do make the transition, it normally takes at least four years. Results like these have provoked renewed interest in education and training, particularly approaches compatible with an emphasis on work attachment.

The Potential Value of College

In an economy that increasingly rewards advanced skills, college-level training has become recognized as the surest pathway to financial self-sufficiency. This fact underlies the substantial interest in interventions to promote college attendance by welfare recipients and other low income persons.

In the general population, researchers have demonstrated a strong relationship between college attainment and future earnings, an association that persists after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics linked to college enrollment.[13] Less clear is how many welfare recipients could benefit from college-level training. Carnevale and Desrochers (1999) have estimated that nearly one-third of adult welfare recipients already have the educational preparation needed for college work, and that many others may be close to having the necessary preparation. Educational preparation is only one requirement, however, as low-income parents face special logistical, financial, and psychological barriers to attending and succeeding in school. These barriers may include the competing demands of parenting and employment, self-doubts stemming from past difficulties in school, low self-esteem, unsupportive family members, and substance abuse.

Researchers have only begun to study these challenges and identify strategies effective in responding to them. A handful of studies in the early 1990s examined college engagement programs launched under the 1988 Family Support Act's Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training program (e.g., Gittell *et al*. 1993, 1996). Practical recommendations from this research are that programs should provide educational remediation and supportive services; help students juggle transportation, child care, and other responsibilities; and create a positive environment and supportive peer group culture. Although these and other (Hollenbeck *et al.* 1997, Boldt 1999) studies reported positive outcomes for program completers—both in isolation and in comparison with various groups of non-participants—the true impacts of the programs studied are unknown. Simple outcome statistics do not tell us how many recipients programs helped beyond the number that would have succeeded on their own. Non-experimental comparison groups potentially offer a way to benchmark the gains, but substantial biases can affect such estimates if the comparisons fail to control completely for non-program differences between groups.

Other than the present evaluation, there have been no random assignment studies of programs seeking to promote college among welfare recipients or other low-income groups. The National Evaluation of

[13] See Kane and Rouse (1995), Rouse (1998) and review by Pascarella (1999).

Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS) evaluated the net effectiveness of a wide mixture of education and training services—including basic education, vocational training, and post-secondary education—and compared this mixture with results for work first. Although NEWWS did not isolate the effects of college within this mixture, a pertinent finding was that education and training services produced short-term economic gains only for recipients with high-school-level academic preparation (Hamilton *et al.* 1997). Within this group, another key finding was that impacts were larger for programs providing *both* education and employment services than for those providing *only* quick-employment services.

Several other random-assignment studies have evaluated education and training services such as basic education, high school, GED preparation, short-term classroom vocational training, and on-the-job training (Strawn and Echols 1999). Traditional adult basic education classes alone generally have not had substantial impacts on earnings. Like NEWWS, other evaluations have shown that the most effective education and training programs emphasized employment preparation and work skills in addition to academic subjects.

Past experimental research suggests that welfare recipients with high school credentials may be particularly able to benefit from education and training, especially in mixed-strategy program designs. As college has been only a small segment of the services offered in previously tested programs, however, this evidence does not speak directly to the promise of strategies for promoting college. Results for the Portland NEWWS site, which featured services provided by a community college, have sometimes been cited as providing such evidence. Although Portland achieved impressive impacts on both employment and welfare receipt, it is not possible to tell how much the education and training provided at the college contributed to these impacts.[14]

PRWORA and College Enrollment

The enactment of PRWORA in 1996 accelerated states' movement toward work first strategies. State policies quickly responded to PRWORA's time limits and provisions requiring job search and other work activities.[15] Many state TANF programs restricted access to college, and the number of welfare recipients attending college declined substantially (Greenberg *et al.* 1999, Gruber 1998).

In recent years, interest in education and training has re-emerged amidst strong evidence that TANF-induced transitions from welfare to work have brought little net effect on family income or poverty

---

[14] The Portland site also placed a substantial emphasis on placement in jobs with better wages and increased work experience and on-the-job training (see Scrivener *et al.* 1998, Appendix Table D.4).

[15] PRWORA levies financial penalties when states fail to meet specified work-activity participation rates. For FY 2000, for example, 40 percent of all non-exempt families must participate in approved work activities for at least 30 hours per week, and 90 percent of two-parent families must participate for at least 35 hours a week. Work activities are defined to include mainly employment activities such as job search, job readiness training, community work experience, and subsidized and unsubsidized employment. The rules allow education only under limited circumstances, with college allowed only if it fits requirements for vocational education and job skills training. No more than 30 percent of recipients can be either engaged in vocational education or a parent under age 20 enrolled in high school. Vocational training is countable as a work activity for no more than 12 months. Job skills training counts only if it is directly related to employment and comes in addition to 20 hours of another approved work activity (Greenberg *et al.* 1999, p. 11).

(Grogger, Karoly, and Klerman 2002). There has been particularly keen interest in ways programs at community college might be combined with employment to promote job retention and advancement. States have learned how to take advantage of flexibility in the TANF regulations to allow education and training (Golonka and Matus-Grossman 2001, Greenberg *et al.* 1999, Schmidt 1998).[16] In a July 1999 survey of TANF policies in 42 states, the Center for Law and Social Policy found that 35 states, including California, allowed welfare recipients to meet at least some required TANF work activity hours through college enrollment. Twelve states were willing to count college for all required work activity hours (Greenberg *et al.* 1999).

The ways states have approached college in their TANF policies are highly varied (Golonka and Matus-Grossman 2001, Grubb *et al.* 1999, Greenberg *et al.* 1999, Kates 1999, Price and Greene 1999). For example, Illinois and Maine have not only counted college as a regular TANF work activity, but have also stopped recipients' "time clocks" (i.e., have not counted months in college toward the federal time limit on TANF assistance) if recipients made satisfactory progress in school.[17] Some states, including Washington and Maine, have taken an active role in working with education agencies, colleges, and industry organizations to develop programs. Other states also are beginning to consider extending education and training after families leave cash assistance, under less restrictive rules governing so-called TANF "non-assistance" (Greenberg *et al.* 1999). Community colleges have been especially active in developing programs for TANF recipients. A 1998 survey found that more than half of the nation's community colleges had at least one program for TANF recipients (Kienzl 1999).

1.2 New Visions: Setting and Program

Riverside County's New Visions program offers an excellent example of a creative partnership to promote college under a strong work first regime. The county's welfare agency, DPSS, has a reputation for testing one most successful early work first programs and, more recently, for experimenting with a variety of approaches to job retention and advancement. The community college, RCC, has launched a number of other innovative approaches to promoting college attendance, including a model program promoting high school-college partnerships. In this section, we briefly describe the county setting, welfare policies in Riverside, and the New Visions model.

[16] Federal TANF funds and state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds can be used to support tuition, academic support services, and other program costs. Within TANF programs, states have flexibility to count a certain number of hours of college work as either job skills or vocational training without risking a federal penalty for not meeting work participation rates. Also, most states could assign many clients to college programs without penalty because they are exceeding required work participation rates. Furthermore, states are not required to count clients receiving assistance through separate state programs funded through MOE funds or when federal TANF funds are spent on so-called "non-assistance" (essentially, other assistance provided to former welfare recipients or other low-income persons who are not receiving regular cash payments).

[17] States wishing to stop federal time clocks can choose to provide assistance through separate state programs funded through TANF MOE funds, as this assistance does not count against the federal limits.

The County Setting

Riverside is a large, socio-economically diverse county located in southern California. Much of the county's western portion is economically linked to the highly urbanized portions of Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The City of Riverside, in this western section, is home to the main RCC campus where New Visions is located. To the east, on the other side of the San Jacinto mountains, lies Palm Springs. Further east, a vast, sparsely populated desert region stretches to the Arizona border. Riverside County's 2001 population of 1.6 million made it the 6th largest county in California and the 16th largest county in the U.S. At 5.2 percent, Riverside County's 2001 unemployment rate was nearly the same as the overall rate for California (5.3 percent) and only slightly higher than the U.S. as a whole (4.8 percent).

The county's economy was growing steadily over most of the period covered by this report. From 1995 to 2001, this economic growth contributed to a substantial decline in the welfare caseload—from 38,764 to 20,477 families.

Welfare Reform in Riverside County

New Visions is one aspect of a broader shift in emphasis towards job retention and advancement in DPSS' welfare-to-work program. Prior to 1997, the county's GAIN (Greater Avenues to Independence) program focused almost exclusively on providing job search and other assistance aimed at moving clients quickly to work. Since then, the county's program has evolved considerably. Under the current model, called "Work Plus," DPSS encourages welfare recipients to participate in education and training after they find unsubsidized jobs for at least 20 work hours a week.

The program consists of three distinct service phases. Phase 1 services are essentially the same as those embodied in the work first approach that DPSS had used prior to 1997. Phase 1 case managers and their clients concentrate on job entry, and clients remain in Phase 1 until they are working at least 20 hours a week. While in Phase 1, most clients meet their total activity participation requirement (32 hours for single parent cases and 35 hours for two parent cases in CalWORKs, California's TANF program) mainly through employment and related services (e.g., job club, job search, and unsubsidized employment).[18]

After recipients find jobs providing at least 20 hours of work per week, they advance to Phase 2, where the emphasis shifts to education, training, and job advancement. Phase 2 clients are assigned to special case managers, who encourage them to take advantage of the various education and training opportunities available in the community. Whereas the agency's performance assessment scheme rewards Phase 1 case managers primarily for job placements, Phase 2 case managers are assessed on the degree to which their clients engage in and complete education and training, and retain and advance in their jobs.

Phase 2 clients must meet at least 20 of their required 32 or 35 hours of CalWORKs activity through unsubsidized employment. Beyond this level, DPSS encourages them to engage in training and education to the extent that is feasible and most consistent with their personal goals.

[18] Phase 1 clients also can meet the program's participation requirements with hours spent in mental health and substance abuse counseling, and, when appropriate, through educational activities such as adult basic education, GED preparation, English as a Second Language classes, and "Self-Initiated Programs."

RCC's New Visions program is one of a number of Phase 2 service options. Other options include adult basic education, vocational training, and on-the-job training at a variety of proprietary schools and community colleges (including other RCC programs). The program's philosophy is that better matches will result if the agency encourages clients and providers to find each other, rather than case managers deciding where clients should go. Therefore, DPSS sees its job mainly as strongly encouraging education and training in general—and providing information about a range of opportunities—but not as making referrals to specific programs.

After an assessment phase, under CalWORKs rules, recipients can participate in approved education and training activities for up to 24 months, after which the 32 or 35-hour participation requirement must be met through unsubsidized employment or community service. In Riverside County, the clock is triggered when the welfare-to-work plan and activity agreement is signed, which typically occurs at the end of the initial Phase 1 job club/job search period. After 24 months, DPSS may allow recipients to continue in school if such activity is linked to a community service assignment.

Clients remain in Phase 2 until either (a) they leave welfare, or (b) their weekly employment falls below the 20-hour level (in which case they are returned to Phase 1). Recipients who find employment that allows them to leave welfare enter Phase 3 of the program. Clients in Phase 3 are offered mentoring and other services intended to foster job retention and advancement.

New Visions is funded substantially through a special state grant program for welfare recipients at California community colleges. The state's TANF legislation allocates a portion of the state's TANF dollars directly to the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) for distribution by formula to local community college districts. At RCC, these funds cover senior administrative, counseling, and support staff within the Department of Workforce Preparation, who devote part of their time to New Visions and part to the college's several other CalWORKS students. The salaries of New Visions' academic instructors (English, math, and reading) are funded through the college's own budget, rather than through the CCCCO grant. New Visions students (and other needy students) also are eligible for a waiver of the $11 per unit fee charged by the state's community colleges.

New Visions: Combining Work with College Preparation

New Visions was conceived by the director of DPSS and president of RCC, who were intrigued by the notion that success at work and college involved similar skills that might be developed by the same program. By focusing on these skills while welfare recipients were working, they hoped to foster more rapid job advancement and cultivate an interest in college and lifelong learning.

New Visions packages intensive academic preparation with job skills training, a combination designed to create pathways to both continuing community college coursework and job advancement. The program's academic classes take on an exceptional challenge: to prepare students with serious skills deficiencies (most of the recipients it targets have verbal and math skills well below high school level) for college-level classes. At the same time, New Visions maintains a strong employment focus. First, the program requires participants to work at least 20 hours a week in an unsubsidized job while attending the community college. Second, in both its academic and non-academic classes, the program stresses skills that have been identified as necessary for labor market success. Third, the program provides intensive guidance in career development and life planning.

The New Visions Model

The program is housed in a single building on the largest of RCC's three campuses, located in the City of Riverside. It has its own classrooms, administrative offices, resource center, and computer lab.

New Visions consists of a specially designed 24-week core program followed by a period of occupational training in regular RCC courses. Prior to classes, a one-week orientation session introduces students to the campus and New Visions, makes sure support services are in place, and assesses academic needs through testing and counseling. In the core program, students attend special preparatory classes in key academic subjects (math, English, and reading), as well as in computer skills and career/life planning. After completing the core program, participants are encouraged to enroll in individual courses, or sequence of courses (called occupational mini-programs), that provide occupational training in careers of interest. Unlike the core courses, credits from post-core classes are applicable to an associate's degree and can be transferred to four-year institutions in the University of California (UC) system.

Core Program. The core program provides 24 weeks of instruction, with courses in English, math, reading, office computer software, and guidance. Although their contents resemble comparable preparatory courses at RCC, the New Visions courses place special emphasis on basic communication and computational skills critical for work. Targeted skills are those specified in the SCANS model developed by the U.S. Department of Labor.[19] Otherwise, classes cover the same material as other RCC preparatory classes offered to high school graduates as prerequisites for transfer-level RCC coursework. For example, based on placement tests RCC assigned over half of all recent high school graduates to take English 60, the college's regular version of the New Visions English class. Like other students, better-prepared New Visions participants can test into a higher level of English, such as English 50 (the next level up), or English 1A (a UC transfer-level course).

The curriculum emphasizes SCANS skills such as reasoning, critical thinking, and decision-making. Classes stress group discussion and are organized to foster a supportive peer environment. In addition to the three academic classes, students also take an Office Administration class covering office and computer skills and a Guidance class covering a range of study, workplace, and life management skills. Towards the end of the 24-week core program, students also participate in a "Capstone" workshop designed to prepare them for successful career transitions after graduation.

The academic program offers small classes, a flexible schedule, and highly individualized instruction. New Visions students attend class for three hours daily from Monday through Thursday (for a weekly total of 12 hours of instruction). Each day, classes are repeated during three different three-hour time blocks (noon–3 p.m., 3–6 p.m., and 6–9 p.m.). Students may choose the time slot most convenient to their work, child care, and transportation schedules, and they may change slots as their needs change. Students are encouraged to use the computer lab for study and homework on Friday and Saturday.

---

[19] In 1992, the Secretary's Commission on Needed Skills (SCANS) identified five broad competencies and a series of associated skills required for employment success. Broad competency areas include using resources, working with others, gathering and using information, understanding systems, and using technology. Associated skills include basic, thinking, and interpersonal skills. See www.doleta.gov/SCANS.

Approximately every six weeks, a new cohort of students enters the program. After orientation, incoming students join ongoing students in core program classes. The new students work on the same sequence of assignments as ongoing students. Small classes make it possible to provide the highly individualized instruction needed to manage students at differing stages in the curriculum. Students who drop out before completing New Visions are encouraged to return when they are ready. Instructors start re-entrants at an appropriate stage, based on the assignments they had completed prior to dropping out.

To help New Visions students build their academic records, the college awards academic credits for the five core program classes on students' official RCC transcripts. However, only the three Guidance class credits count towards an associates degree and are transferable within the UC system.

While students are enrolled in the core program classes, they receive close attention from RCC counselors as well as from their Phase 2 case managers. Clients meet regularly with New Visions counseling staff to review their progress, conduct career exploration, and work on personal growth issues. Counselors help each client to arrange child care and other supports, develop educational and professional goals, and formulate plans for activities following the core program. This planning effort addresses goals for both employment and continuing college studies.

In order to graduate from the New Visions core program, students must complete required assignments and pass final exams in math and English.

Post-Core Program. After graduating from the six-month core program, New Visions program designers envisioned that most students would move into an occupational mini-program as the second component of New Visions. These programs entail sequences of occupationally-relevant courses providing marketable training in a shorter time period than required for an associates degree or state-recognized occupational certificate. The mini-programs also yield regular (i.e., transferable) credits that students can apply towards more advanced certification or degrees.

The program sees the mini-programs as opportunities to help students take first steps on the career ladders that they developed in the New Visions core program. The objective normally is to provide training sufficient to secure a job that represents the first step in participants' chosen occupations.

The building blocks for mini-programs are a wide variety of courses at RCC. Training is available in fields as diverse as nursing, medical assisting and technician fields, computer information systems, early childhood education, corrections, police dispatching, culinary arts, business administration, graphics, paralegal, human services, office administration, and manufacturing and construction. RCC developed these mini-programs programs for all of its RCC students, but sees them as especially well suited to New Visions participants.

Most mini-programs are simply shorter sequences of existing courses, although some involve new or re-formatted courses. Chapter 2 discusses these programs in greater detail and gives examples. The number of identified mini-programs has grown steadily over the past five years in response to increasing interest in such offerings on the part of RCC administrators, faculty, and students.

The college encourages New Visions participants to enter programs lasting between four and seven months. Depending on the field of study, the wider range of occupational programs can take from a few weeks to one or more years to complete. Some sequences in early childhood education and allied

health specialties may require six or fewer units and be finished in a single 12-week academic term. Others, such as the culinary arts and registered nurse (RN) programs, require a year or longer to complete. Although DPSS Phase 2 case managers are unable to approve programs longer than 12 months, regional managers can make exceptions when there is a high potential for job advancement.

Program Staffing and Administration

Although DPSS provides extensive support services and case management for participants, the New Visions program itself is operated by RCC. Within the college, the Associate Dean of Workforce Preparation administers New Visions, as well as services to CalWORKs and other needy students not in New Visions. The New Visions program coordinator is responsible for day-to-day management and coordination with DPSS. Both individuals who have held the coordinator position have been trained counselors who also provided counseling to students.

Five faculty members teach the core program courses in Office Administration, English, math, reading, and Guidance. Most of these faculty members also teach other courses at RCC. A half-time financial aid clerk facilitates students' transitions to regular academic programs at RCC and elsewhere by helping students to access financial aid and other services available from RCC and from other state and federal programs.

The program originally had a job developer to coordinate with employers and help students secure job placements. RCC administrators discontinued this position because they felt that it was duplicative of services participants received at DPSS. The program's managers and staff continued to work with Riverside County's Economic Development Agency and local business leaders, however.

RCC's Vice President for Planning and Development and DPSS's Deputy Director for Planning and Evaluation have been closely involved in planning and ongoing coordination of New Visions. Other managers and line staff in the two agencies also are in frequent contact. DPSS GAIN Phase 2 case managers encourage clients to pursue further education and training, inform them of New Visions, and provide assistance with transportation, child care, and other work-related expenses and services. DPSS stations a liaison case worker in the New Visions Resource Center, where a computer provides secure access to DPSS's case management system. RCC staff have primary responsibility for New Visions recruitment, curriculum design, and day-to-day program operations.

New Visions staff have established linkages with an array of public and private community service agencies and refer participants to these agencies as needed. Participants receive supports such as housing, substance abuse treatment, and rape crisis services that help students address workplace, family, and personal problems that may disrupt school and work.

1.3 The New Visions Evaluation

Abt Associates Inc. is studying New Visions' implementation, operations, and impacts over a five-year period. The implementation and process studies are examining how the original program design was translated into an actual program and the experiences of participants in this program. The impact study is using an experimental design to measure New Visions' effects on employment and earnings, welfare reliance, and educational attainment.

Implementation Study

Chapter 2 of this report presents the latest findings from the implementation study. For the evaluation's implementation study, the research team is documenting the program model as it is actually implemented and assessing responses to challenges faced along the way. The implementation study also is assessing how the program's welfare policy context and socioeconomic environment have affected its design and implementation.

The implementation study draws heavily on interviews with DPSS and RCC administrators and staff and observations of program activities. The interviews and observations took place during site visits made by the research team in October 2000 and November 2001. Material from program documents and subsequent communications supplement this site visit information.

Several important questions underlie the implementation study. Has the program been implemented as intended? How does the program differ from other services available in the community? What have been the major obstacles to program implementation? Information on whether and how the program succeeds in meeting its key challenges will be useful both in improving New Visions and in designing similar efforts elsewhere.

Process Study

Chapter 3 provides analyses from the process study. The evaluation's process study is examining the paths followed by New Visions enrollees as they move through the program. The process study is determining how many of the enrollees have made it through the program's core and post-core phases, and why some students do and others do not complete the program.

The process study also is describing and measuring the program's net treatment—that is, the program experiences of enrollees in New Visions compared with what would have occurred had they not been in the program (as suggested by the experiences of the control group). This information, which is important in itself, also is crucial to our understanding of the program's impacts.

The process study draws on several very different data sources. Quantitative analyses on demonstration participants utilize information gathered on a baseline form administered to sample members at random assignment and extracts from automated information systems maintained by DPSS and RCC. Another quantitative data source is a special mail survey of the wider population of New Visions-eligible clients conducted early in 2002. Qualitative analyses are based on in-depth interviews conducted with 29 current and former New Visions students during the two site visits. Chapter 3 describes these data in greater detail.

The New Visions process study is addressing a number of important questions. Can working parents be convinced to shoulder college studies in addition to their employment and parenting responsibilities? What fraction of enrollees is able to complete the core program? What prevents some enrollees from completing the program? Which areas of college study do completers of the core program pursue, and how well do they perform academically? Do participants and staff feel that the program provided effective academic preparation?

Impact Study

The last chapter of this report provides findings on early program impacts. The evaluation's impact study is measuring New Visions' effectiveness in (1) increasing welfare recipients' earnings, (2) decreasing welfare reliance, and (3) fostering educational attainment. The evaluation utilizes an experimental design, randomly assigning half of 1,076 program volunteers to New Visions and the remainder to a control group that is allowed to receive other Phase 2 services besides New Visions. The study measures employment, welfare, and education outcomes for both groups over time using a variety of administrative and survey data sources. Impacts are estimated by calculating differences in average outcomes for the two groups.

One set of research questions addressed by the impact study concerns whether New Visions increases participants' earnings through jobs that pay better, provide more hours and greater stability, and lead to upward mobility. Another line of inquiry addresses whether the program reduces welfare payments, increases welfare exits, and reduces welfare recidivism. A third set of analyses measures New Visions' effectiveness at increasing participants' engagement in educational activities after the core program. The emphasis on college-level mini-programs at RCC leads to particular interest in impacts on enrollment, credits earned, and certificates and degrees from RCC. We also must assess impacts on a wider range of educational institutions and programs to understand what control group members received and the degree to which New Visions may have fostered education beyond RCC.

Two points concerning the experimental design deserve note. One is that the experiment was designed to measure impacts only for clients who met New Visions' eligibility rules and volunteered for the program. The design's strength is its power to isolate the direct effects of program participation. However, the design will not capture any indirect effects on behavior that may occur before clients actually volunteer. For example, the New Visions offer might encourage ineligible clients to complete a GED or increase their work effort in order to qualify for the program. New Visions' marketing efforts also may convince some eligible clients to return to school without volunteering for the program, another impact that would not be captured by the experiment.

A second point is that impacts do not represent the effects of participating in New Visions compared with *no* educational and supportive services, but, rather, the *incremental effects* of a particular college attachment model compared with other DPSS GAIN Phase 2 services. These other services include enrollment at RCC in which students do not participate in New Visions. An accurate interpretation of the impact findings thus requires that we analyze the education and training services received by the control group.

An especially important aspect of the impact analysis will be to examine the time path over which any impacts emerge. The program is unusual for trying both to foster short-run job advancement while also engaging participants in college coursework expected to have a longer-term payoff. For some students, program designers expected that improvements in employment-relevant skills in the core program would lead quickly to job advancement. Alternatively, some New Visions participants may choose to concentrate more heavily on school than on work in the short run, thereby delaying job advancement and the arrival of positive earnings impacts.

The impact analyses in this report assess impacts over approximately a two-year follow-up period for the 658 sample members (336 treatment and 322 control) for whom this much time had elapsed as of late-2002, the data collection cut-off point for this report. The current results therefore represent short-term effects of the program.

Chapter 2
Implementing New Visions

This chapter assesses New Visions' implementation and operation. One purpose of the analysis is to describe the "mature" program—as documented in late 2001—and identify important ways in which program operations at that time differed from those of earlier years. A second purpose is to identify key implementation challenges and assess how RCC and DPSS responded to these challenges. These analyses are essential to understanding the program that underlies findings in subsequent (process and impact) chapters and should be of interest to planners contemplating similar programs elsewhere.

The chapter is organized around five major New Visions program components: recruitment, pre-classroom activities, core program classroom activities, case management and supportive services, and post-core classes and supports. Each section of this chapter discusses a different component.

2.1 Recruitment

As discussed below, only a narrow slice of the welfare caseload is eligible for New Visions based on educational, work, and geographic criteria. Furthermore, those who are eligible may opt for another of the many programs in the community or for full-time work. Although all Riverside County TANF recipients must devote at least 32 (single parent cases) or 35 (two parent cases) hours a week to employment and training activities, recipients can choose to meet the requirements entirely through work. Another challenge, which is unique to random assignment demonstrations, is that only half of New Visions volunteers were randomly assigned to the treatment group and allowed to enroll in the program. Together, these factors made recruitment substantially more difficult than program designers originally envisioned.

Recruitment requires first identifying eligible GAIN clients and then convincing these clients to volunteer for the program. This section discusses how New Visions approached each of these tasks.

Identifying Potential Participants

New Visions' approach to identifying potential participants evolved as RCC and DPSS experimented with a wide variety of techniques. We first describe how the agencies were identifying potential participants in 2001 and then discuss differences from earlier years.

Participation Identification in 2001. As of late 2001, New Visions' eligibility required clients to: (1) be working at least 20 hours per week, (2) have a high school diploma, a GED, or Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test scores above a specified level, and (3) live in Riverside County. CASAS test score thresholds are set at the fifth- to sixth-grade range, based on DPSS's finding that such scores were the average for previous New Visions volunteers with high school or equivalent credentials. Given the size of the county, it is not realistic to expect many students who live far from RCC's Riverside City campus to attend the program. The college concentrates recruitment on DPSS clients living within the RCC college district (northwestern Riverside and the communities of Riverside, Moreno Valley, and Corona-Norco) who are able to access the main campus.

DPSS is responsible for the initial identification of eligible clients, whereas both agencies play a substantial role in recruitment. As of late 2001, RCC was devoting most of its efforts to clients still in GAIN Phase 1 (pre-employment), and DPSS case managers were concentrating on clients in Phase 2 (post-employment).

RCC counselors market New Visions to GAIN clients in Phase 1 activities such as job club sessions, and through periodic telephone outreach efforts. For the latter, DPSS regularly provides RCC with lists of Phase 1 welfare recipients who do not yet meet the work-hours requirement. RCC counselors use the phone contacts to identify clients who are interested in New Visions. They ask about educational backgrounds and vocational interests, describe the New Visions program, and explain what recipients need to do to qualify and apply for the program.

When Phase 1 clients express interest in New Visions, GAIN workers put them in a special pool and collect the baseline information necessary for random assignment. Once these clients move into jobs of 20 or more hours a week, RCC counselors contact them to ascertain that they still are interested in participating. If they are, DPSS randomly determines treatment-control status. Thus, by the time these volunteers first meet with their Phase 2 case managers, they already are ready for New Visions (if in the treatment group) or for another education and training program (if in the control group).

DPSS case managers concentrate on clients who reach Phase 2 without being in the Phase 1 pool. We asked case managers at DPSS if they approach all of these clients the same or target some clients as stronger potential candidates than others. Some case managers said that they approached all eligible Phase 2 cases as potential New Visions participants unless the client explicitly indicates that she does not want to go to school. These case managers inform nearly all of their clients about New Visions. Typically they explain the program, discuss its pros and cons, provide a New Visions brochure, and recommend that the individual discuss the program further with RCC staff. Case managers may or may not encourage clients to volunteer for New Visions (see section on marketing below).

Other case managers said that they concentrated on individuals who they felt had enough of an academic skills base to benefit from New Visions, but were not well enough prepared to head directly to regular RCC courses. Case managers appeared to hold somewhat varying standards for judging college-readiness. Some felt that stronger students would be better served by advancing directly to college-level classes, rather than spending time in a program these staff see as largely remedial. Other case managers felt that the program also was appropriate for more advanced students, because it allowed them to test out of core academic classes and be placed in higher-level classes at RCC while taking advantage of some of the other core New Visions classes.

DPSS case managers held mixed views of New Visions as an avenue to job advancement in the near term. Some felt that New Visions' emphasis on basic academic and SCANS skills could lead to successes at work in the short-run, as well as longer-run educational progress. Others felt that the program placed too much emphasis on academic remediation and took too long to get to the occupational training components to suit many of their clients.

Both DPSS Phase 2 case managers and New Visions counselors agreed that clients who were working full-time were unlikely to volunteer for the program, and they tended to devote less time to recruiting these clients.

Participant Identification in Earlier Years. The participant identification approach in fall 2001 differed somewhat from earlier years. Prior to October 2000, the program was strictly limited to clients with a high school diploma or GED. The purpose of the original educational qualifications was to help ensure that program participants would be able to complete the program within the allotted time. From October 2000 on, the program broadened educational criteria to include clients without high school diplomas or equivalents if their CASAS scores fell above the average academic level of previous New Visions volunteers. The purposes of this change were to provide a larger pool of potential recruits and increase the number of clients who might benefit from the program.

Another change in program operations affected RCC's access to lists of eligible welfare recipients. During the program's first year (1998-99), DPSS provided a list limited to clients who reached Phase 2 and expressed interest (on a special form) in learning more about programs at RCC and other schools. DPSS eventually expanded the list they shared to include all welfare recipients who were eligible for New Visions.

The final change was to extend recruitment efforts to clients who were still in Phase 1. DPSS administrators decided that recipients should hear about New Visions as soon as possible after they started GAIN, to give the program a head start in engaging potential recruits.

Marketing New Visions

After identifying potential candidates, the next challenge is to persuade them to volunteer for New Visions. Although marketing technically falls to providers such as RCC under DPSS policy, agency staff have participated in New Visions recruitment to an unusual degree.

Program Marketing in 2001. At the time of our second site visit (November 2001), RCC counselors and Phase 2 case managers were concentrating much of their efforts on one-on-one discussions with potential participants. Although the specifics of these discussions vary, the message—crafted with help from an outside consultant—is highly consistent. The message's key points, also highlighted in program brochures, are the following:

- *New Visions is an opportunity—a "stepping stone" to a better job and a better life. The program has demonstrated that it can help people like you earn more.*
- *New Visions teaches "the skills that employers want," and prepares students to take college-level classes to train them in specific vocational areas.*
- *New Visions teachers and staff are wonderful and "will help you with everything."*

As noted earlier, GAIN Phase 2 case workers often concentrate their recruitment efforts on clients they deem the most promising prospects for New Visions. One Phase 2 caseworker reported that 10 to 15 percent of his clients are interested in some kind of education program at the time he first sees them—that is, they have already "considered it on their own"—and hence usually respond quickly and positively to New Visions. Another 25 to 30 percent of clients are not at all interested in further education. This worker was concentrating on the remaining 55 to 65 percent of his caseload. He said some of the clients in this category "need a little time to come around" and are "more responsive to our pitch" after finding they are "not getting anywhere in their jobs."

RCC uses a limited number of work study positions to hire New Visions participants as recruiters. The use of student recruiters helps to dramatize the program's feasibility for disadvantaged working parents.

RCC staff and New Visions student recruiters give regular presentations to groups of GAIN participants at the DPSS program offices. Venues for these presentations include Phase 1 job club classes and other group meetings involving Phase 1 or Phase 2 clients. RCC staff presentations explain New Visions, stress the selling points indicated above, and offer opportunities for questions and discussion. In their presentations, New Visions student recruiters highlight their own experiences to make vivid the program's supports, feasibility, and benefits. Student recruiters also make telephone calls and home visits to GAIN clients, affording opportunities to discuss personal concerns that might not come up in group discussions.

Program Marketing in Earlier Years. Both the message and the communication channels in late 2001 differed from those in earlier years. Initially, RCC and DPSS staff both emphasized the educational focus of the program, with DPSS case managers somewhat more likely to focus on opportunities to develop and polish basic skills and RCC placing somewhat more emphasis on the program as a chance to go to college. Over time, the agencies came to believe that other benefits might be more persuasive for some potential participants. DPSS staff felt that many of their clients were looking for concrete, near-term financial benefits. RCC staff found that the idea of college could be a turnoff for recipients with negative previous school experiences. The agencies engaged an experienced consultant over the winter of 2000-01 to develop a new message stressing the more immediate employment benefits of the program.

During New Visions' first few years, recruitment efforts relied heavily on special events and advertising. For example at "Tiger Tailgate parties," the college offered free food and children's activities along with opportunities to meet staff and students and learn about New Visions in a relaxed atmosphere.

Staff at both RCC and DPSS believed that a key to selling New Visions was convincing potential participants to visit the RCC campus, see the program's facilities, and talk to the teachers and staff. There was universal agreement among the staff of both institutions that the program has an exciting, supportive atmosphere that anyone who visited could feel. Indeed, several DPSS case managers said they had often urged undecided individuals to enroll in the program (provided they were randomly assigned to the treatment group) and attend the orientation to see how supportive the program really was.

During the first two years of New Visions, the college also took out advertising spots in local radio and print media, mailed brochures to lists of interested clients provided by DPSS, and conducted multiple waves of telephone outreach calls. Together, these efforts generated a modest but steady flow of volunteers. RCC administrators came to believe that it was important to vary approaches, because the effectiveness of individual approaches tends to wear out over time.

One recruitment innovation, mentioned earlier, was the decision to use New Visions students as program recruiters. Starting at the end of the second year, RCC hired and trained a small number of students (typically one or two) as recruiters, using work-study positions for this purpose. The administrators and staff we interviewed were enthusiastic about this arrangement. They felt that the student recruiters' ability to share their own experiences with hesitant prospects added substantial

credibility and appeal to the program's recruitment message. Student recruiters also benefited from the experience, as described in Chapter 3.

The intensity and creativity of the New Visions marketing effort have been impressive by standards of other welfare-to-work and community college programs, including other programs in Riverside County. DPSS staff reported that no other employment or training activity is marketed to Riverside County's welfare population nearly as aggressively as New Visions. Outside of Riverside, the only comparable recruitment efforts described in the literature on welfare-to-work programs have involved other special, high-visibility program initiatives. Like New Visions, these initiatives usually have been demonstration programs with additional funding to support such efforts.

The New Visions recruitment effort also represents a relatively vigorous marketing effort from RCC's standpoint. Like other California community colleges, and unlike private colleges, burgeoning enrollments in recent years have created little pressure on marketing from a standpoint of institutional survival.[20] Rather, the college has engaged in marketing efforts with more focused goals. For example, RCC has devoted substantial effort to high school outreach programs designed to increase the region's relatively low rate of college attendance.

Assessing the New Visions Recruitment Response

RCC and DPSS initially did not anticipate great difficulty in reaching the target of 1,000 total volunteers, given Riverside County's large TANF caseload. Nonetheless, it took 3½ years to meet this target—roughly twice as long as originally expected. Program recruitment efforts confronted two major difficulties:

- *Finding suitable candidates for New Visions*. Although the county has a large caseload, fewer than 15 percent of clients meet New Vision's eligibility requirements. The fraction of these clients who are good candidates is further restricted by the fact that many leave welfare fairly quickly or already are engaged in another training program. Workers may judge others as having academic skills too poor or too high to be appropriate for New Visions. Logistical barriers, such as living and working too far from the main RCC campus, also rule out participation in many instances.

- *Convincing candidates to participate in the program*. Some clients may feel they do not have time or energy to go to school in addition to work and parenting responsibilities. As discussed in Chapter 3, other reservations include concerns about being able to succeed in school and preferences for programs offering more immediate training for specific jobs.

As the dimensions of the recruitment challenge became clear, the two agencies instituted a variety of joint planning responses. One was a fall 1999 "recruitment summit" involving top RCC and DPSS administrators and Abt Associates staff. The agencies made a number of important decisions at this meeting.

[20] According to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, Thomas Nussbaum, the statewide increase in college enrollment at the beginning on the 2001-2002 academic year—nearly 100,000 more students than in the previous year—was the largest increase in history. Press release by California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, November 21, 2001.

One decision was for DPSS to explore broadening the base of eligible clients to include individuals who did not have a high school diploma or GED, but whose standardized test scores indicated academic skills at or above those of the average New Visions volunteer with high-school-level credentials. DPSS made such a change in early 2001 using Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test scores. The impact of this change was modest, however, because test scores were not available for many clients.

Another decision was to engage a consultant to review New Visions recruitment and marketing practices. This consultant recommended the following strategies:

- *Clarify who is eligible for New Visions.* Make it clear that the program accepts applicants who lack a high school diploma or GED if their reading and math skills are adequate. Similarly, let it be known that New Visions accepts applicants who work full- as well as part-time, who do not have cars, who already have college credits, and who live in outlying sections of RCC's catchment area.

- *Provide additional supportive services.* Additional services, particularly transportation, could make it easier for more eligible individuals to enroll and participate. DPSS experimented with transportation assistance for New Visions students, operating a van service for short period. It proved difficult to make this service sufficiently convenient for clients without incurring high expense, however, and the service was discontinued.

- *Improve marketing to eligible people.* Agree upon a "common language" to be used by RCC and DPSS staff in recruiting participants. Use the term "job advancement" rather than "college prep," "skills review" or "skills brush-up" instead of "remedial," and "skills that employers want" instead of "occupationally specific skills."

- *Strengthen ongoing RCC/DPSS communication.* Closer communication between RCC and DPSS staff on recruitment matters would help clear up misconceptions about eligibility criteria as well as about program activities and services.

In addition to helping prepare marketing materials that embodied the new message, the consultant trained DPSS and RCC staff in delivering this message.

A third decision was to initiate the Phase 1 recruitment effort for New Visions described earlier in this chapter. Initially this effort primarily involved GAIN Phase 1 case managers, although presentations that New Visions counselors and students gave at Phase 1 job clubs also were important. Later, New Visions counselors began making the telephone calls to GAIN Phase 1 enrollees.

Fourth, during the summer of 2000 the partners briefly experimented with the use of work study jobs at RCC as a way to increase recruitment directly from DPSS's Phase 1 program (i.e., of clients who had not yet secured jobs). The response was a rapid influx of new volunteers—roughly double that of previous cohorts. DPSS administrators also believed that some Phase 1 case managers were using the work study option as an easy way to find job placements for their least employable clients. RCC was not prepared to find work-study jobs for so many clients—of whom a number had poor job skills, felony records, and other problems—and thus many remained without jobs longer than DPSS had anticipated. For these reasons, and also because work study was inconsistent with its policy of promoting unsubsidized employment, DPSS ended the work study recruitment experiment.

The work study experience provides a good illustration of how welfare agencies and colleges must adjust to each other's policies in developing programs like New Visions. The issue prompted the two agencies to recognize and negotiate a profound difference in philosophies about work and school. For the welfare agency, work study positions represented a clear departure from its mission of promoting long-term, unsubsidized employment. DPSS staff believed that subsidized work study jobs did not provide the kind of real experience required for job advancement, and they felt that the short-term nature of these positions militated against the objective of promoting job retention. In contrast, RCC staff saw work study as useful tool for furthering educational objectives, because it provided a way to help students minimize the difficulties of coordinating work and school and offered wider experience with college facilities and programs.

Each agency made significant accommodations to, and ultimately gained a better understanding of, each other's point of view. DPSS was willing to try work study in the limited context of addressing a serious recruitment problem, despite its philosophical reservations. Struck by the benefits of a direct student-to-student recruitment appeal, the agency continued to allow several participants to hold work study positions as student recruiters even after ending more general use of work study (this idea predated the broader work study experiment). For their part, RCC staff learned to adapt their programs to fit DPSS's policies and have come to appreciate better the rationale for maintaining a clear focus on the employment side of the equation. The two agencies' ability to understand and accommodate to each other's policies has been crucial to their success in fostering a strong partnership.

Other jurisdictions developing programs like New Visions may not have as deep a divide to bridge on work study as did the Riverside partners. It is, however, inevitable that differences in policies and ways of thinking will arise. New Visions offers a constructive example of how success is possible when both partners are able to understand and adjust to each other's policies.

In assessing their recruitment efforts overall, RCC administrators emphasized the importance of using a wide variety of methods and alternating methods as the effectiveness of each strategy inevitably began to diminish. RCC administrators also emphasized the importance of personal communication, through one-on-one discussions and presentations and discussions in group settings such as job club.

A different approach to recruitment would be to make changes in the New Visions program itself that might make it more attractive. Building in a job development piece aimed at helping clients arrange regular jobs near school is one possibility. Work study is another possible strategy, where local policies allow. Additional help with child care and transportation services—reported to be important concerns for potential volunteers as well as for actual participants—are other strategies for making it easier to attend school. Finally, the substance of the New Visions core program might be revised to introduce at least some occupational training earlier in the 24-week period. DPSS administrators and staff felt that such a change would make it easier to sell the concrete benefits of the program.

2.2 Pre-Classroom Activities

Before actually starting classes, New Visions takes several steps to help participants get ready for the program. This section discusses the program's formal orientation session and New Visions counselors' efforts to increase the number of initial volunteers who actually show up for the program.

Orientation Activities

Before actually starting classes, New Visions students participate in a one-week orientation session. The interval between the point students volunteer and orientation can be as much as six weeks, since whereas random assignment is ongoing, orientation sessions are held approximately every six weeks. The session helps both students and RCC plan for the program.

The New Visions orientation lasts four days, with each daily three-hour session offered at three different times: noon, 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. These options allow participants to choose times that best match their work and family schedules. New Visions counselors run the sessions.

The first day of orientation is spent largely in introducing students to New Visions teachers, counselors, and staff and providing basic information on the program and RCC. Students tackle paperwork—including a college application, college financial aid forms, an intake questionnaire, and several DPSS forms—on the second day. On the third and fourth days, staff administer academic assessments—including the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and RCC reading, writing, and math placement tests—and check to make sure that needed support services are in place. A key purpose of the placement tests is to identify any students who may be able to start at a higher level than the standard core New Visions classes.

As of our late 2001 site visit, orientation had changed only in fairly small ways since the inception of New Visions. Counselors reported placing somewhat greater emphasis on the importance of short-term steps toward long-term goals. They also said they that they placed even more emphasis on helping students feel socially comfortable during their first week in the program. Several items also have been added to the program's orientation agenda. For example, recent orientations have included a discussion of GAIN time limits, which limit to two years the time clients can count New Visions, other education and training (including post-core program courses), and supportive services as meeting their work participation activity requirements. Participants also receive an information packet with a class schedule, information on campus resources, and guides to bus transportation and services. This packet was not available in the initial program period.

The New Visions orientation program is more intensive than other welfare-to-work program orientations, which typically last at most a few hours. The extra time is partly attributable to the need for academic testing. However, New Visions also allows more time for group discussions and one-on-one counseling sessions.

Early Communication with Counselors

Over time, the New Visions counseling staff has increased its efforts to meet with volunteers even before the formal orientation, especially when there will be a relatively long interval to the next session. During these meetings, counselors address students' individual needs, especially regarding transportation and child care; problems the participant may have encountered as a student during previous school experiences; personal and family issues; and academic and employment goals.

A pre-orientation meeting was not part of the original New Visions design. During the first two years of program operations, New Visions staff's contacts with new participants occurred largely at the latter's initiative. Over time, program staff have come to understand the importance of maintaining contact during this interval. The show-up rate was fairly high (79 percent) during the program's first

(pilot) year, but fell somewhat (to 61 percent) second year and rose only slightly (to 64 percent) in beginning of the third year.[21] Program administrators felt that show-up rates could be improved and decided to take a more proactive approach to engaging volunteers in the period before classes began. Apparent reasons for not showing—analyzed in Chapter 3—include second thoughts about the program and life circumstances that make it difficult to go to school.

The main pre-classroom challenge for New Visions is keeping volunteers engaged so that they will show up for the first day of classes. RCC counselors feel that the key to minimizing the no-show rate is getting treatment group members into the New Visions building on campus. Once there, participants can talk to staff, work out problems that may prevent them from attending, and learn how supportive the program is. In the words of one New Visions counselor, "we need to let them know they are safe."

The pre-orientation meeting, an additional meeting during orientation week (if possible), and frequent counselor/participant contact during the first few weeks of classes were efforts to strengthen early engagement in the program. We have not yet analyzed show-up rates for recent cohorts to see if there have been improvements.

2.3 Classroom Activities

The New Visions core program provides both academic remediation and skills training. Academic classes include English, mathematics, and reading. Two additional classes teach computer skills (Office Administration) and a wide variety of life skills (Guidance). The core program also includes a weekly discussion session towards the end of the program, the Capstone workshop, in which guidance teachers and students discuss specific plans and needs for transitioning from New Visions to regular college classes. The core program normally takes 24 weeks to finish.

Students attend two 90-minute classes each day, Monday through Thursday, during this 24-week period. Students can choose between three different three-hour time blocks (at 12-3, 3-6, or 6-9 o'clock) to take their classes.

More than 100 treatment group members have attended at least some core classes each year (except for the first year, when New Visions was a small program just getting underway). The totals for the second, third, and fourth years each include cases that had been enrolled in classes in a previous year, had dropped out, and then had re-enrolled in New Visions to resume their participation in the core program. Typically, about 50 to 70 students have been enrolled in core program classes at any given time (except in the first year), although the number sometimes has been higher or lower than this. Because each core program class is offered in three sessions, the average number of students assigned to each class has been roughly 20. The average number actually coming to a given class has been 14, with daily numbers ranging from a handful to about 25 students.

[21] The second-year rate in the text excludes a special group of 66 volunteers allowed to go directly from Phase I to New Visions before they had an unsubsidized job, with the understanding that the program would place them in work-study positions. The show-up rate for this group was substantially higher (85 percent) than for other members of this cohort.

Approach to Academic Subjects

In late 2001, all three academic courses (English, math, and reading) were taught in four six-week segments, with a new cohort of students joining the classes after each individual segment was completed. As described below, a key challenge of this design for instructors is that they must start new students in the next scheduled six-week course segment who have not necessarily covered material offered in earlier segments of the course.

English Class. The English class, taught Tuesdays and Thursdays, emphasizes the development of basic communication skills in writing and speech. It is designed to promote student mastery of basic punctuation; spelling; grammar; paragraph development, structure and coherence; and summarization and argument strategies appropriate for e-mails, memos, and other written and oral communication. The objective is to prepare students to write effectively in any work place or college environment. Students may also be sufficiently prepared to take a pre-college English class (or higher) at RCC. These skills correspond approximately to the "High Intermediate Basic Education" level in the U.S. Department of Education's guidelines for adult basic education (U.S. Department of Education 2001).

The course relies principally on traditional classroom instruction, including a mix of lecture, group discussion, and individual writing and problem-solving activities. Individualized computer work with the proprietary software package PLATO, and Internet-based research, supplement the course's group activities. Students also devote some of their class time to completing worksheets. All work is completed in class; there is no homework. The teacher said she attempts to respond to the challenge of integrating new students into an ongoing course every six weeks by "focusing on the topic I'm supposed to during the six weeks. [T]his means that during paragraph construction, half of the students won't be punctuating worth a nickel."

Math Class. The math class, also taught on Tuesdays and Thursdays, provides "a bridge between arithmetic and algebra." It teaches arithmetic up to the eighth-grade level and stresses the development of critical thinking skills. The course covers skills and applications relating to number sense, percents, ratios and the addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers, decimals, and fractions. This course also seeks to promote skills at the High Intermediate Basic Education level as described in U.S. Department of Education adult basic education guidelines.

This course relies more heavily on computer-assisted instruction (PLATO) than the English class. However, the course also utilizes traditional classroom instruction. Class time typically is divided evenly between group lessons (lecture and discussion) and individual computer work.

Math instructors said that they found the entry of new students every 6 weeks into the 18-week math course challenging. The natural sequencing of topics would take students from basic math (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) to more complex topics (fractions, percentages, decimals, and eventually pre-algebra). The math instructor emphasized the difficulties posed by New Visions' "open entry" approach as follows: "No one can teach them all at once." The instructor said that, therefore, he often lectures to one group of students while another group works on PLATO "in the lab with help from our lab assistant."

Thus, students entering the program who find lectures are too advanced can work on less difficult material on the computer and receive individualized help from the instructor and lab assistant. Unlike

other core subjects, math classes normally last only 18 weeks. This schedule allows an extra six-week period in which students can finish the math course before the core component ends.

Reading Class. The reading class is offered only once a week, but continues for all 24 weeks of the core program. This course emphasizes developing, expanding and improving vocabulary, and mastering spelling rules using contextual, structural and phonetic analysis. Students are taught to evaluate text for clarity, completeness and consistency, to identify main ideas and supporting details, and to develop conclusions by summarizing essential concepts in reading materials. The course also supports the acquisition of information-gathering competencies by teaching about the World Wide Web, performing web searches, assessing the validity of web based resources, using e-mail, and downloading information from the Internet. Again, these skills correspond approximately to the High Intermediate Basic Education level.

Students spend most of their classroom time working individually on computer-based instructional programs and other reading assignments. The instructor makes substantial use of the Internet to foster research and reading skills. Sequencing of instruction topics has been much less of an issue than in English and math. Some students in the reading class have had to master basic skills, such as word decoding, but most have been able to keep up in the same classes as their fellow students.

Changes from Earlier Years. Over New Visions' first four years, the math and reading courses have changed more than the English course. In math, a major change in 2001 was to reduce reliance on individualized computer-based instruction. Conversely, the reading class increased reliance on computer-assisted instruction in 2001 (using the WEAVER system). The instructor began assigning more reading based on news articles (from CNN, the New York Times, etc.) on the Internet. These changes reduced time spent in group instruction, but there has been some increase in time for group discussion of the news articles. The reading instructor feels this change has helped her diagnose individual reading problems, while developing students' "ability to be independent learners and workers." The only changes in English have been discontinuing homework assignments from textbooks in response to students' preference for more practice through assignments on worksheets.

New Visions instructors generally have found New Visions students to be substantially less well-prepared academically than other RCC students in comparable low-level courses. Test scores on the college's standardized placement exams bear them out (see Chapter 3). The program's design calls for 80 percent of participants to advance two or more grades on the TABE *and* for 70 percent to pass the RCC placement tests signifying mastery of the material covered in core courses.[22] The latter presents an especially difficult hurdle, as faculty feel many New Visions students have serious learning difficulties, in addition to challenging work and home environments.

The New Visions classroom environment helps to address these barriers by being much more supportive than typical RCC classes and other GAIN education and training programs. As discussed in Chapter 3, New Visions curriculum, the program's separate office and classroom space, small class sizes, and the dedication and skill of instructors and staff all combine to create an unusually nurturing environment. GAIN Phase 2 case managers told us that this aspect of New Visions is one of their strongest selling points in presenting the program to potential volunteers.

---

[22] These objectives appear in the *Program Design for the New Visions Program* and other program planning documents.

Teaching Life Skills Needed for Success at Work and School

Workplace literacy requires a wide range of practical skills beyond basic academic competencies. New Visions' Guidance and Office Administration classes address these skills. RCC staff developed these courses to cover workplace skills specified by the U.S. Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, or SCANS. The Commission identified essential work skills through surveys asking employers to identify the key attributes of productive workers. The results, published in 1992, cover skills in five broad areas: resource management abilities, interpersonal skills, information processing abilities, communication skills, and the ability to monitor and correct performance.[23]

New Visions program design documents establish the goal of 70 percent of participants achieving competency in all SCANS skills. Thus, by the end of the 24-week core program, most New Visions participants are expected to have not only the academic preparation to take regular college courses at RCC, but also the skills needed to advance in existing jobs or to obtain new, higher-paying jobs. The college does not implement a formal assessment of SCANS skills at graduation, however.

Office Administration Class. The Office Administration course, offered on Wednesdays, is divided into four six-week segments. Students receive instruction in computer basics, keyboarding, Microsoft's Word and Excel software, and Internet use. Classes typically begin with a brief lecture and then move on to discussion and student exercises. Students spend a substantial amount of time keyboarding, practicing, and completing exercises on the computer.

When asked about sequencing, the teacher of the Office Administration class told us that it was preferable, although not absolutely necessary, for a student to be exposed to the "computer basics" unit before moving on to the Word, Excel, and Internet segments. Students who come in after the group has covered the basics are at somewhat of a disadvantage, but the order of the other topics is less important.

Guidance Class. The Guidance class meets two days per week (on Monday and Wednesday) throughout the 24-week core program. It is one of the more innovative courses in the core curriculum. The class covers a wide range of topics corresponding to particular SCANS workplace skills. These topics range from money and time management, to job search techniques, to managing interpersonal relationships in and outside the workplace. The course also includes a segment on study skills and other skills needed to survive in college. The class draws from curricula in existing RCC courses on career exploration, life skills, and skills for college success. The class has a workshop format and places substantial emphasis on classroom discussion.

The Office Administration and Guidance classes have evolved gradually since the classes were developed at the outset of New Visions. Changes in Office Administration include a re-worked introductory segment and addition of an Excel segment in 2001. The approach to the Guidance class has varied over time, mainly due to the styles and emphases of the New Visions counselors teaching the class. Responding to feedback from administrators and students, instructors recently have sought to increase the emphasis on practical skills needed in job search. Specifically, they reduced the amount of general discussion of life planning issues in favor of more specific activities such as resume development and mock job interviews.

[23] For details on SCANS, see www.doleta.gov/SCANS.

Capstone Workshop. As noted earlier, the Capstone workshop was a recent addition to the New Visions curriculum as of our November 2001 site visit. It is offered during the last six weeks of the core program (in the time available after the end of the 18-week math class). Created in August 2001, the Capstone workshop helps students transition from New Visions' supportive environment to less supportive work and school settings. The Capstone course emphasizes the planning individuals must do to follow through on their career plans, helping to make sure that students take the steps necessary to enroll in regular RCC courses and pursue other education and job goals immediately after graduation from the core program. Specific goals include helping students to become familiar with RCC resources, identifying subsequent job and educational goals, selecting an occupational mini-program or certificate program, and improving resume and interviewing skills. At the time of our November 2001 site visits, the format of this course was informal and discussion-oriented. New Visions administrators were planning to formalize the Capstone curriculum over time.

Teaching Challenges in New Visions

In considering the experiences of the New Visions core classes, three main teaching challenges stand out. The first is resolving the tension between the sequential order in which many academic subjects must be taught while accommodating the program's flexible approach to students' entries and exits. New Visions' structural answer to this challenge is to segment each course into shorter six-week (one-credit) pieces and design each piece to be as self-contained as possible. This approach allows new cohorts to enter the program every 6 weeks, rather than waiting as long as 24 weeks. It also helps in re-engaging dropouts, providing a clear record of material returning students already have mastered. However, the approach is challenging for instructors, since new cohorts (whether new students or returning dropouts) typically join courses that already are underway and thus may have missed material needed to understand current lessons fully.

Instructors varyingly responded by devoting time to review, by working with individuals and small groups, and by designing their courses to allow substantial self-paced work. Small class sizes allow instructors to work with individual students, and class formats are organized to provide sufficient time for individualized study and self-paced computer-based instruction.[24]

A second challenge is the familiar teaching problem of reaching all members of a class with widely-varying academic skill levels. Instructors felt that the extremes were particularly pronounced among New Visions students.

At one extreme, a small number of students tested well above the level of the core courses. New Visions allows students to test out of core academic courses based on standardized tests administered during the orientation week. Teachers also reported giving advanced students harder assignments and opportunities to mentor other students. At the other extreme, a substantial minority of students had severe learning difficulties. Small classes and in-class time for individual study give instructors a chance to work with students who were struggling. Another response was the math class's 18-week design, which allowed students unable to finish an additional 6 weeks to complete the course. Although program staff went to great lengths to accommodate these students, several faculty

[24] The New Visions coordinator explains the approach to returning dropouts as "If a student returned at a segment that they had already completed, they would enter into an independent study status and continue from where they had left off until they completed the program or until a new segment they hadn't completed began."

members felt that stricter screening out at the low end—particularly to identify volunteers with learning disabilities—was needed.

In the vast majority of cases, students who have persisted have been able to complete the core program. The philosophy is to provide maximum encouragement to students who make a good effort to succeed. As a result, faculty described students as graduating New Visions with varying levels of mastery of core subjects. Administrators and faculty believe it is important to recognize workplace-applicable skills, as well as subject knowledge, in graduation decisions.[25]

A third teaching challenge has been finding the right balance between lectures, group work, and individualized—often computer-assisted—instruction. Most teachers felt it was essential to present the basic concepts in lectures but also essential to allow substantial time for group discussion. They saw the group time as vital in encouraging students to get to know one another and gel into a supportive peer group. Teachers also saw the need for independent study time, allowing instructors sufficient time to help those needing extra help.

Teachers emphasized that lectures should not be overemphasized in programs like New Visions. "The students' eyes glaze over," said the math instructor, who keeps his lectures brief. In general, New Visions classroom instruction emphasizes group activities and in-class assignments rather than lectures. As one teacher concluded, "Less lecture and more activities are far more effective." She noted that although "individual and group activities both work well, it is important to respond to students' individual needs and learning styles."

Instructors appreciated the flexibility offered by computer-based instruction, but also recognized students' needs for substantial interaction with their teachers and peers. As one instructor put it, computers make it too easy to say "Here you go, use the computer, enjoy…." Use of individualized computer-based instruction has varied over time and across teachers, as the program has tried to find a good balance of instruction modalities.

2.4 Case Management, Counseling, and Coordination

Throughout the core program, New Visions participants receive individualized counseling, guidance, and support from specialized DPSS and RCC staff. At DPSS, each participant is assigned to a GAIN Phase 2 case manager, who helps with welfare benefits and other supports needed for success in school and at work. At RCC, New Visions counselors advise on a range of academic and personal issues to help students do well in core program classes and continue in school after graduation.

Case Management and Counseling

During our site visits, we found that Phase 2 case managers and New Visions counselors provided a robust array of case management and counseling services to New Visions participants.

[25] The New Visions coordinator put it as follows: "Whenever the issue of graduation for a borderline student came up in our faculty meetings, the standard question…was 'Does this student demonstrate the necessary skills to be… successful in an entry level position in [their chosen field]?'"

Phase 2 case managers concentrate on employment retention and advancement through training and education activities. In support of these services, Phase 2 case managers also offer child care and transportation. The average case manager handles a caseload of between 60 and 70 clients, no more than 25 of whom typically are New Visions participants.

To improve coordination between the welfare office and RCC staff, in the program's third year DPSS assigned a special Phase 2 case manager to work at the New Visions site three afternoons each week. Because this person did not carry a regular caseload (even New Visions students were assigned to other case managers), she was free to concentrate on special problem-solving and facilitation needs, which often concerned students' employment, welfare benefits, and supportive services. Both DPSS and RCC staff said that this on-site Phase 2 case manager was critically important in helping to integrate welfare and education services.

New Visions counselors normally take responsibility for students' educational planning needs, whereas their DPSS counterparts handle income and related supports. New Visions counselors are concerned mainly with New Visions participants' class attendance, academic performance, and progress toward both graduating from the core program, and subsequent RCC coursework. Like the Phase 2 case managers, these counselors also provide services to other (i.e., non-New Visions) GAIN clients who are students at RCC.

Although New Visions initially had its own job developer, RCC administrators came to see this role as duplicating DPSS case managers' responsibilities and discontinued the position. As of fall 2001, the delineation of responsibilities between RCC and DPSS was clear to all concerned. As one DPSS case manager put it "[I] wouldn't dream [of getting involved in educational matters, but when participants need a job] that's where I kick in." The result was that direct ties between New Visions and area employers were not as strong as have been reported for other programs (e.g., Portland Community College) with direct responsibilities for TANF job development and placement. New Visions counselors said that they nonetheless did encourage students to seek internships and jobs providing relevant work experience wherever possible. Program staff made a concerted effort to prepare students to apply for an internship program operated by Washington Mutual bank, for example.

The level of counseling that participants receive is one of the distinctive features of New Visions. New Visions counselors described their jobs as involving a mix of regular and *ad hoc* activities. To illustrate the latter, one counselor related the last several issues students had raised with her: a husband who just returned to Riverside was demanding that the student stay home to take care of their children; an overweight participant was having self-esteem troubles; and a student had experienced a sudden babysitting crisis.

Counselors' jobs also entail more routine duties, such as monitoring attendance and helping each participant to prepare her academic plan. The academic plan lays out the pathways required to meet educational goals—typically sequences of specific courses needed for certificates or associate's degrees. Counseling staff work with students to keep plans up to date and maintain a database containing all plans.

Counseling and case management resources grew steadily over New Visions' first four years. RCC did not hire New Visions counselors until the program's second year, and it took even longer to reach a full counseling complement. The DPSS liaison position was not filled until the beginning of the

third year. Hiring of regular Phase 2 case managers also progressed steadily over the period covered by this report.

Support Services

DPSS provides the same support services to New Visions treatment and control group members. Child care has been the major support service. Agency staff help clients find appropriate child care services and arrange for provider payments. The welfare office also has covered certain work- and training-related expenses, such as tools, books, and program fees.

RCC also provides additional supports to New Visions participants, most notably textbooks and financial aid. In addition, a limited number of child care slots have been made available on campus through a program operated by RCC's Early Childhood Development Department.

Lack of access to transportation is widely seen as one of the most significant barriers to convincing welfare recipients to participate in New Visions, as well as a major barrier to sustaining participation. New Visions' relatively small size and the county's underdeveloped mass transit system have made it difficult to develop viable transportation solutions for New Visions.

DPSS provides Phase 2 clients with bus passes, as well as reimbursement for transportation expenses such as gas, car maintenance, and car repairs. For a time, the agency experimented with a special van pool arrangement for New Visions, but it proved too difficult to match routes to students' schedules and preferences.

Most of the students we spoke to had access to a car. Within the program, students also said that there was a fair amount of informal car pooling and ride sharing.

Given the difficulties in helping with transportation arrangements, the best recourse for programs like New Visions may be to help students find jobs and child care close to (or on) campus. The popularity of work-study among New Visions students and staff during the brief period DPSS allowed it suggests that any steps to bring work and school closer together geographically are likely to be helpful. Another option would be to encourage students to move closer to the RCC campus.

Sustaining Program Participation

High dropout rates are characteristic of programs serving disadvantaged adults. New Visions counselors have devoted substantial effort to this issue.

First, they have tried to assess the major factors leading to program dropout. Counselors told us that only a minority of New Visions dropouts—typically those occurring early in the program—are the result of dissatisfaction with the program. Students who do express dissatisfaction are often looking for more rapid access to occupational training and see New Visions as too long and too academically oriented. Although the program does waive core academic courses for students who test out of them, at the time of our site visit both RCC and DPSS administrators were discussing possible program modifications to facilitate earlier occupational training.

More often, counselors have found that dropping out is caused by events outside of New Visions. The most common of these events is a change in employment. Some students choose to move to

better-paying, full-time jobs partway through the program and decide that they can no longer manage the New Visions workload. Other students' employers require them to change their schedules or total hours. Like other low-wage workers, New Visions students typically have little control over their jobs and are vulnerable to sudden changes at work, including job loss. Under the GAIN Phase 2 rules, clients who lose their jobs and do not find another within 30 days are not eligible for support for education and training from the agency. GAIN Phase 2 case managers told us that they try to adopt a liberal approach to such cases, to minimize the interruption of progress in school. Finally, a wide range of other crises—such as child care, transportation, and family emergencies—often interfere with New Visions attendance.

It is much easier to help students solve such problems before than after they drop out. Counselors stress the importance of maintaining close relationships with participants in order to encourage early identification and resolution of difficulties. Strong relationships are needed to identify the root causes underlying apparent barriers. As one counselor said, "Sometimes a 'transportation problem' is really only an excuse." The underlying problem could actually be a self-esteem issue, a domestic violence matter, or any number of other problems.

The New Visions design recognizes the inevitability of some students dropping out despite the program's efforts to address barriers to retention, and over the last two years New Visions counselors have increased their efforts to re-enroll dropouts in the program. Counselors routinely attempt to contact dropouts by telephone, encourage them to come in for a conversation, and sometimes visit them at home.

There are no special requirements for re-enrollment, other than waiting for the beginning of the next six-week session of New Visions classes. If classes were in the midst of material returning students already had covered, they would be allowed to enter into an independent study status until classes moved into segments new to them.

The dropout rate was relatively low for the first-year pilot cohort (38 percent), climbed rapidly among second-year enrollees (to 66 percent), and then declined (to 42 percent) among early third-year enrollees.[26] Analyses of fourth-year enrollees for the final report will support a more definitive conclusion about the program's success in promoting retention.

Service Coordination

Programs like New Visions require a high level of coordination between welfare agencies and community colleges. Such coordination inevitably is challenging, because philosophies and policies emphasize different objectives and strategies, and because different decision making and management processes must be meshed.

DPSS' philosophy is self-sufficiency through employment. In Phase 1 of the County's GAIN program job attainment and retention are the case managers' primary goals. After clients move into Phase 2, the emphasis shifts to employment retention and advancement. Case managers encourage

[26] The second year dropout rate includes 66 volunteers assigned directly from Phase 1 who had not yet attached to unsubsidized employment and were allowed to take work study positions. The dropout rate for this special group (64 percent) was not statistically different from the rate for other second-year volunteers (67 percent).

clients to enter education and training programs with a clear occupational orientation and they are allowed to approve programs only if they are 12 months or shorter. Agency policy specifies that longer programs must be approved by the DPSS regional administrator.

In RCC's institutional culture, education is the key objective. Within this culture, one important strand is committed to workforce preparation and occupational training, whereas another emphasizes preparation for further education at four-year institutions. But compared with DPSS, RCC's culture places education, rather than work, at the center of its mission.

In New Visions, senior administrators and research and policy personnel from DPSS and RCC worked together intensively during the program' first two years, but there was relatively little coordination between DPSS case managers and RCC counselors. With staff growth at both institutions, however, the amount and quality of interaction have increased steadily. RCC counselors have become well known to their DPSS counterparts through frequent visits to the welfare agency. The advent of an on-site Phase 2 case manager at New Visions (noted earlier) also has helped to improve communication. Finally, more formal academic planning and progress monitoring at RCC have made it easier to share information about individual students' goals and progress with DPSS.

RCC's counselors initially held an "education first" philosophy, whereas their counterparts at DPSS tended to see work first as the main pathway to self-sufficiency. Over time, each side developed an appreciation of the other side's point of view. By promoting communication between the two staffs, administrators were able to create an atmosphere of support for the mixed strategy approach reflected in New Visions.

By the time of our site visit in late 2001, the two agencies had achieved a remarkable level of cooperation. Staff of both agencies reported strong working relationships with their counterparts in assisting individual participants. On the day we interviewed one New Visions counselor at RCC, for example, two-thirds of her e-mail messages were communications from DPSS case managers about individual New Visions participants. As one DPSS case manager said, "It's no longer us versus them."

2.5 Post-Core Classes

A key objective of the New Visions core program is to prepare participants for more demanding occupational training programs offered at RCC and other post-secondary institutions. Accordingly, an integral component of the original program design was for core program completers to move on to subsequent occupational training programs at RCC. During this phase of the program, students would take special sequences of courses designed to help them take steps up their career ladders.

Although especially appropriate for New Visions participants, these course sequences, called "occupational mini-programs," were developed for RCC students generally. They aim to provide faster (typically four-to-seven month) paths to marketable occupational skills than standard certificate and degree programs. However, because these classes earn regular (i.e., transfer) credit, completing a mini-program gives students a good start towards a state-recognized certificate or a two- or four-year degree.

Mini-programs are especially relevant to the employment situation facing New Visions graduates. On the one hand, TANF rules limit to two years the time that education and training can count toward required hours of work activity participation. On the other hand, the New Visions philosophy acknowledges the unusual degree of stress and unpredictability in the lives of low-income adults and assumes a need for a more incremental approach to college. Thus, the New Visions model seeks to create academic pathways consisting of smaller, more achievable steps. Between steps, the design recognizes that students may need to take a break from school.

Even before the full dimensions of the New Visions recruitment challenge became clear, RCC administrators understood that the volume of New Visions graduates alone would not be sufficient to justify the creation of many mini-programs. However, the College's president and many faculty members saw ample demand for alternative programs in the larger population of RCC students. With encouragement and support from RCC's Workforce Development Department, administrators and faculty began developing a wide variety of mini-programs.

By early 2001, the College had identified many occupational mini-programs. Most of these programs, which were published in the college course catalogue, represented shorter sequences of existing courses. Some programs featured new courses designed to meet the need of specific jobs and shorter courses created by breaking existing courses up into smaller, occupationally-relevant pieces.

Types of Occupational Mini-Programs

Occupational mini-programs at RCC generally require fewer than 18 credits. (Longer programs must be approved by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.) They are offered in a wide range of fields, including nursing, other healthcare services, child development, office administration, and welding.

Some mini-programs simply divide the required course curriculum of a given certificate program into shorter sequences. Several programs go further, creating new courses or dividing existing courses into shorter segments. Changes like these provide substantially more flexibility to students. For example, if a student has to leave a course after four weeks, he or she can still receive a unit of credit and have the option of returning later to complete the remaining units. A number of programs offer certificates for highly concentrated short-term training in marketable occupations. For example, in the healthcare field a student can receive a certificate as a phlebotomy technician (blood specimen extraction) after completing a three-unit course and a one-unit practicum.

Several RCC academic departments have worked closely with industry to develop entirely new programs in areas of growing labor demand. One such program trains students for jobs in the area's film industry. These jobs cover fields like project management (e.g., account manager, line-level scheduler, and web architect), technical development (e.g., database administrator and HTML scripter), and creative development (e.g., animator, audio editor, and imaging technician). Another new program is RCC's Alternative Fuels Curriculum. This program provides courses on compressed natural gas, methanol and ethanol fuels, and hybrid electric technologies.

RCC has created some new courses specifically to train students to pass state occupational exams. Examples in the healthcare field include a two-unit course preparing students for the home health aide exam and a two-part, four-unit course for the nursing assistant test.

Faculty involved in developing these new programs cited substantial evidence of their appeal to employers, including some instances of students receiving job offers before finishing their programs. Faculty told us that local employers in the computer information systems, office administration, and food services fields were especially prone to hire students from RCC mini-programs.

Three Examples of Post-Core Education Options

To illustrate the range of post-core programs available to New Visions students, this section describes programs available in three key RCC departments as of late 2001.

Early Childhood Studies. This field has been one of the three most popular for post-core study by New Visions students. A child care center, housed in the same facility as the early childhood program's classrooms and offices, provides jobs and internship positions to students, as well as practical training required for many of the certificates and permits awarded by the program.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, a certificate in Early Childhood Studies required 31 units of course work. Twenty-five of these units were supplied by eight required classes:

- EAR-19: Observation Methods in Early Childhood Education (3 units)
- EAR-20: Child Development (3 units)
- EAR-22: Early Childhood Programs (3 units)
- EAR-24: Creative Activities through Curriculum (3 units)
- EAR-26: Child Health (3 units)
- EAR-28: Principles and Practices of Early Childhood Education (3 units)
- EAR-30: Internship in Early Childhood Education (4 units)
- EAR-42: Home, School and Community Relations (3 units)

The other six units were elective courses. Students could choose from a number of Early Childhood Studies courses such as EAR-34 (Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers) or EAR-41 (Working with Children with Special Needs). Alternatively, they could select courses from other RCC departments, such as Music 11 (Music Skills for Teachers) or Sociology 12 (Marriage and Family Relations).

According to the RCC counselors, New Visions students in post-core programs rarely have been able to manage more than six units per academic term. Thus, the Early Childhood Studies certificate would typically require about a year and a half of course work beyond completion of the core program. By taking another 29 units of classes outside this certificate program—which typically would require more than a year of study beyond the certificate—a student could qualify for the Associate of Science (A.S.) degree.

Courses taken in the Early Childhood Studies program also allow students to qualify for Child Development permits issued by the State of California. The academic credit and supervised work experience requirements for the four non-administrative permits issued by the State as of late 2001 were as follows:

- Child Development Assistant Permit: 6 Early Childhood Studies units
- Child Development Associate Permit: 12 Early Childhood Studies units, 50 days of child care/development experience

- Child Development Teacher Permit: 24 Early Childhood Studies units, 16 general education units, 175 days of child care/development experience
- Child Development Master Teacher Permit: 35 Early Childhood Studies units, 16 general education units, a baccalaureate degree, 350 days of child care/development experience

California's Child Development Site Supervisor and Program Director Permits require further study and experience.

Thus, the least demanding option in Early Childhood Studies requires only six units of study. Moreover, under the Early Childhood Studies "Fast Track" program, these units can be completed in only eight weeks. Doing so entails taking two of the four Fast Track options, which are compressed versions of EAR-20, EAR-22, EAR-24, and EAR-42. After eight weeks, the student can gain a permit to become a preschool teacher's aide.

By taking all four Fast Track courses—which could be completed in only 16 weeks—a student can become an associate preschool teacher. The work experience required for the necessary permit can be obtained at the child care center.

A student who leaves RCC after completing the Child Development Assistant Permit can return later to take the six additional units required for the Associate Permit or the 34 additional units needed for the Teacher Permit. RCC counselors reported instances in which New Visions participants in this and other fields have returned to school after working for several months, aware that they would earn more and be given more job responsibility if they completed additional course work.

Healthcare Services. As of late 2001, the Healthcare Services field had more mini-programs than any other RCC department. Many of the department's key courses had been divided into smaller chunks, and several certificate programs were offered based on these shortened courses. Examples of the classes include:

- HET-77: In-Home Support Services Provider (3 units)
- HET-81: Certified Home Health Aide (2 units)
- HET-82: Phlebotomy Technician (4 units)
- HET-83A: Cardiac Monitor Technician (2 units)
- HET-83B: Electrocardiogram (EKG) Technician (1 unit)
- HET-86: Acute Care Nursing Assistant (1 unit)

Numerous healthcare mini-program options are available to New Visions students. Completion of a single course satisfies the academic requirements for two occupations: HET-77 is sufficient for a student to become an in-home service provider, and HET-82 is enough to satisfy the requirement to be a phlebotomy technician.

Only two or three courses are required for several other health occupations. To become a certified home health aide, a student needs to take two classes (six units) on nurse assistant theory and clinical practice and then take HET-81. To become a certified EKG technician, a student needs to take HET-83A and HET-83B, a total of only three units. Completion of HET-81 and HET-86—also a total of only three units—allows a student to become an acute care nursing assistant.

Students have a number of other certificate and degree options in the related areas of Nursing and Medical Assisting. In Nursing, for example, a nursing assistant occupational mini-program required 12 units of course work during the 2001-2002 academic year. The RN (registered nurse) and LVN (licensed vocational nurse) programs required 72 and 51 units respectively.

Office Administration. Another popular field for New Visions students has been Office Administration. In late 2001, a Certificate in Office Administration required 32 units. The associate's degree required 28 additional units beyond what was needed for this certificate.

However, Office Administration also offers a growing number of mini-programs built around several key courses:

- OFC-1A: Business Etiquette (1 unit)
- OFC-3: Computer Applications Using Windows (3 units)
- OFC-30: Business English (3 units)
- OFC-40: Administrative Office Management (3 units)
- OFC-50: Keyboarding and Document Processing (3 units)
- OFC-51: Document Formatting (3 units)
- OFC-61: Electronic Office Procedures (3 units)

For example, the Clerk Typist sequence requires 14.5 units, including OFC-1A, OFC-30, OFC-51, OFC-61, plus 4.5 other units. The Secretary program also requires 14.5 units, but consists of different classes: OFC-3, OFC-40, and 8.5 other units in Office Administration. The department's Administrative Assistant sequence combines the Clerk Typist and Secretary requirements, and requires students to take five additional one-unit courses in various skills.

Counseling in the Post-Core Program

The initial New Visions design did not specifically address the need for continuing counseling after graduation from the core program. However, as program staff watched increasing numbers of graduates face challenging transitions to other education and training programs, this need became increasingly apparent. In 2001, New Visions counselors began a concerted outreach effort to graduates, including those who were and those who were not continuing in school.

Before 2001, core program graduates were not without services. DPSS' GAIN Phase 2 case managers continued to help their New Visions clients (provided they remained on public assistance), and RCC had special counselors for CalWORKs students. The difference was that initially these counselors did not provide much outreach specifically to help New Visions students during and after their transitions to regular RCC courses.

When students finish New Visions' supportive core program, their challenges at school, work and home continue. As observed in the next chapter, however, regular RCC occupational programs provide much less flexibility and social support compared with New Visions. As the number of New Visions counselors has increased, the program has sought to increase its outreach to graduates.

Doing so has proven difficult. The main thing counselors have done is to attempt to maintain regular contact with graduates and offer continuing emotional support and practical assistance. However, staying in touch after students leave New Visions has been challenging. Graduates who go on to

other programs tend to see New Visions as having ended and put less energy into maintaining relationships with their former counselors. Also, graduates who do not continue in school sometimes avoid counselors out of embarrassment.

Accordingly, RCC counselors interact far less frequently with core program graduates than they do with core program students. During the core program, counselors seek to prepare New Visions students for the transition to post-core classes by introducing them to RCC student services (e.g., library, career and transfer center, registration, tutoring center) and by devoting intensive time to developing individual educational plans. Whereas counselors see New Visions participants often during the core program, they rarely meet with graduates continuing at RCC more than once a semester. During these meetings, the counselors review students' progress with their academic plans. Occasionally, RCC counselors also contact teachers and staff in post-core academic programs to see how graduates are faring and identify possible needs.

New Visions graduates receive varying degrees of support from faculty and other staff in their new programs. According to several RCC counselors, a few academic programs at RCC—such as Nursing, Early Childhood Studies, and Culinary Arts—are known for being especially supportive of their students. In these programs, New Visions graduates may receive attention comparable to what they received in the core program.

Chapter 3
Experiences of New Visions Participants

In this chapter we turn from program implementation to the experiences of program volunteers. The chapter examines volunteers' characteristics; motives for volunteering; experiences in the core program; and initial educational, economic, and family experiences after the core program.

The analyses utilize both quantitative and qualitative data. Much of the quantitative analysis is based on administrative data from DPSS and RCC for 353 treatment group members who, at the time we assembled our data, could be observed for at least a year after random assignment. Several analyses utilize broader samples. Statistics on the initial characteristics of all 765 volunteers observable for at least a year (treatment and control) are based on data from a Background Information Form (BIF) administered at random assignment. Some analyses also are based on a special mail survey in early 2002 of 684 New Visions-eligible GAIN clients.

As with most programs for low-income persons, significant numbers of New Visions volunteers either did not show up initially, or showed up but dropped out before graduating. To understand the reasons underlying not showing up and dropping out, in some analyses we look separately at characteristics and experiences of New Visions graduates, dropouts, and no-shows.

For a richer perspective on the personal stories behind the statistics, we also present findings from in-depth interviews with a small sample of treatment group members. We interviewed 21 students during our October 2000 site visit, including 6 current students, 3 dropouts, and 12 graduates (4 of whom had worked as program recruiters). We re-interviewed 7 of these students the following year (in November 2001), as well as an additional 4 current students and 4 recent graduates. Interviews lasted about an hour and explored students' personal and family backgrounds, reasons for volunteering for New Visions, and experiences during and after the program.

Results from these qualitative interviews capture the experiences of a fairly wide range of students. Although we sampled randomly from lists of current students, dropouts, and graduates, it must be borne in mind that these interviews do not represent the entire treatment group very accurately, due to small sample sizes and under-representation of no-shows and drop-outs. It also is possible that students willing to visit the New Visions offices for interviews were not typical of all students.

3.1 Volunteering for New Visions

As recounted in Chapter 2, recruitment proved to be the single greatest challenge in implementing New Visions. In this section, we look at recruitment from the perspective of potential recruits and explore the characteristics and motives of welfare recipients who volunteered for the program.

One reason it was difficult to meet the program's recruitment targets was that eligible recipients were a relatively small fraction of the county's total caseload of adult welfare recipients. Countywide, only 15 percent of the caseload met the weekly work-hours threshold and had either a high school diploma or equivalent degree, and only about half of this small fraction lived in the catchment area served by

RCC's main campus (where New Visions was located).[27] Numerically, the upshot was that only about 1,000 adults were eligible for New Visions in a typical month.

Who Volunteered for New Visions?

In any voluntary program, an understanding of who participates and why is fundamental to gauging the program's appeal. Compared with past education and training programs for welfare recipients, New Visions may be more demanding due to the requirement that participants work at least 20 hours per week while attending school. It also is one of the county's longer Phase 2 education and training programs. In addition, New Visions' goals may be more ambitious than other programs, since the initial six-month phase is only the first step in what is hoped will be longer-term educational involvement. One possibility is that these hurdles will result in a selective group of students that is relatively highly motivated to go to school. On the other hand, New Visions' reputation for providing a supportive climate for less well-prepared students may encourage volunteers with limited prior academic attainment.

Early in 2002, Abt Associates and DPSS surveyed 919 New Visions-eligible clients to assess factors associated with volunteering. The survey achieved a 74 percent response rate (684 completes)—an extraordinary result for a mailout-mailback survey of low-income persons. As mentioned in Chapter 2, just over one quarter (27 percent) of all survey respondents reported having volunteered for New Visions.

Volunteer rates were higher for some subgroups than for others, as summarized in Exhibit 3.1. Most notably, respondents who worked fewer hours per week were more likely to volunteer for New Visions. The first set of bars in the exhibit shows that 30 to 33 percent of clients working less than 32 hours a week, but only 22 percent of clients working 32 hours or more, volunteered. This result suggests that additional work hours leave less time for school, although it also is possible that those less interested in school choose to work more.[28]

Most of the remaining differences in volunteer rates shown in Exhibit 3.1 are not statistically significant. The only exception is the lower rate for women with children under age three (20 percent), compared with those with older children (29 to 31 percent). This finding may indicate that women with infants and toddlers are more reluctant than women with older children to sacrifice parenting time for school.

Comparisons with other welfare recipients at RCC show that New Visions volunteers were much less well-prepared academically (Exhibit 3.2). Not surprisingly, both New Visions volunteers and other welfare recipients at RCC performed more poorly on the college's standard placement tests than RCC students who were not receiving welfare.[29] For example, the percentages falling into the lowest test

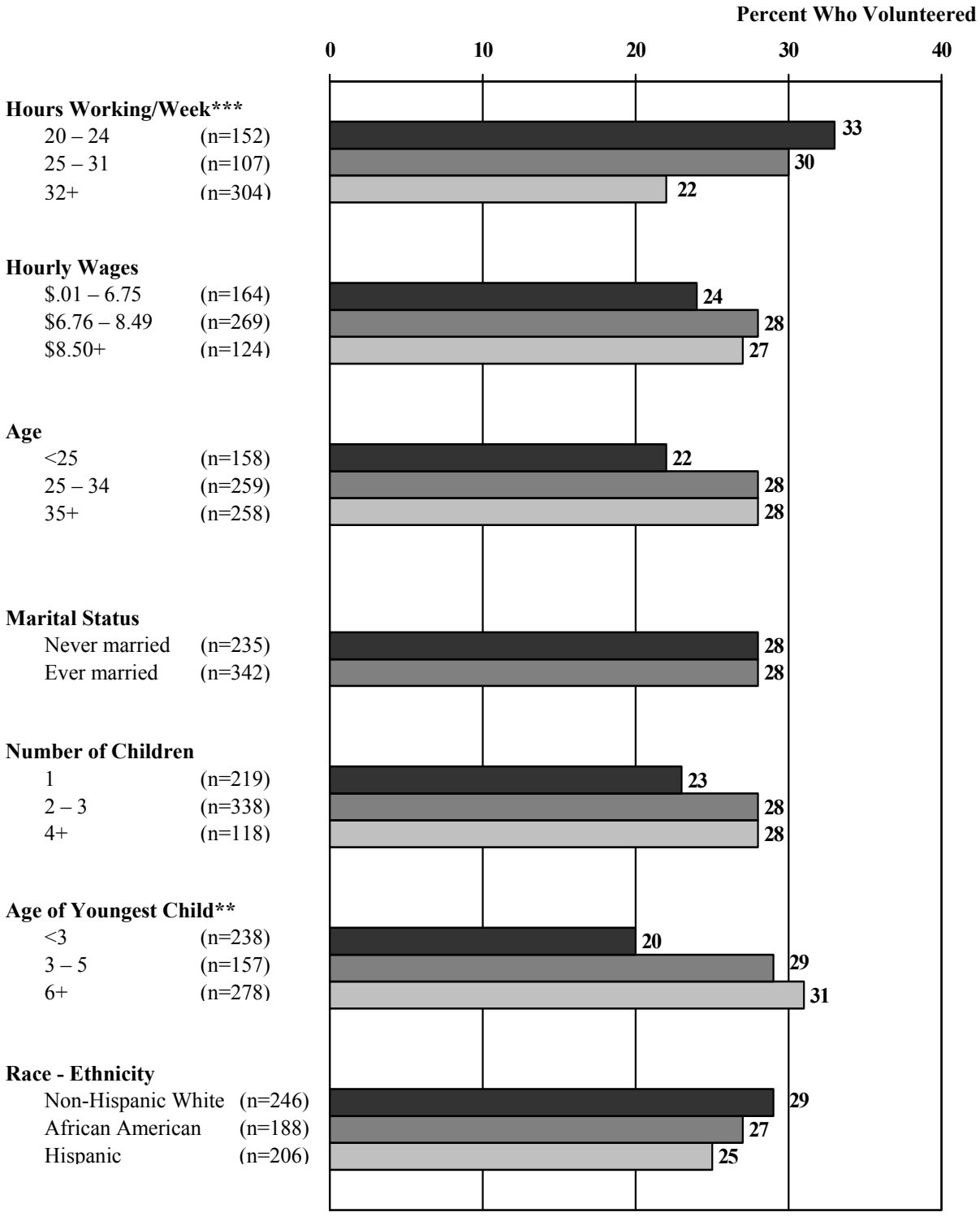
---

[27] See Fein *et al.* (2000), Exhibit 1.

[28] To the degree that the former applies, the statistics probably *understate* any effects of work hours on volunteering, because they relate ever volunteering to current work hours rather than to work hours at the time respondents decided whether or not to volunteer.

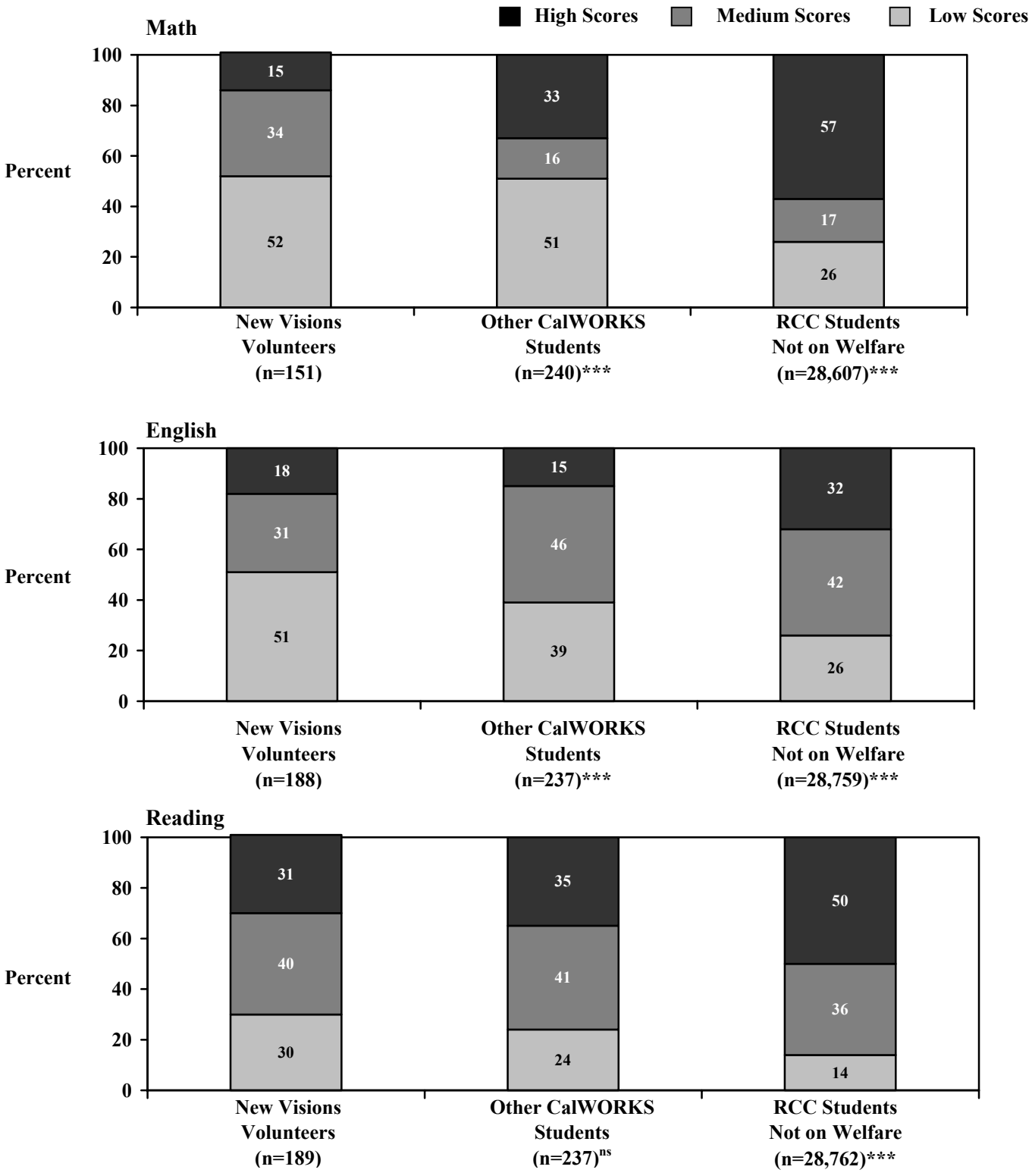
[29] Statistics for New Visions volunteers represent the subset of all volunteers (treatments and control) who took RCC assessments in the year preceding or period immediately following random assignment. Because assessed volunteers were more likely to have had prior college experience than non-assessed volunteers, the skill levels in Exhibit 3.2 may overstate average skill levels for the full sample of New Visions volunteers.

Exhibit 3.1
Percent of Currently Eligible Welfare Recipients
Who Ever Volunteered for New Vision



*** Differences in percent volunteering significant at the 99-percent level; ** at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level.
Source: Special mail survey of 684 current eligibles conducted in Spring 2002.

Exhibit 3.2
Initial Math, English, and Reading Scores of New Visions Volunteers Compared with Other CalWORKS Students and RCC Students not on Welfare



Source: Analyses of assessment test score data provided by RCC.
***Differences in test score distribution compared to New Visions participants is significant at the 99-percent level; ** at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level; ns not significant.

score categories for math were 52 for New Visions volunteers, 51 for other CalWORKS students, and only 26 for other RCC students (see top panel of Exhibit 3.2).[30] Furthermore, fewer New Visions volunteers than other CalWORKS students received high math scores, and more New Visions than other CalWORKS students received low English scores. The lower test scores for New Visions students suggest that the program has a strong appeal for less well-prepared welfare recipients, whereas better-prepared recipients may feel less need for a program whose core courses are low level.

The profile of New Visions volunteers changed over time, due to changes in the pool of eligible candidates and to shifting recruiting methods. The pool shrank over time as the program went through the initial stock of ongoing recipients, the overall caseload declined, and competition with other Phase 2 providers increased. Two key shifts in recruitment methods discussed in Chapter 2 also may have affected the types of clients volunteering for New Visions. One was a trial period in the spring 1999-2000 cycle, during which New Visions recruited clients directly from Phase 1 who were below the 20-hour work threshold and offered them work-study jobs. The second was a change in the message, from lifelong learning through college to more immediate benefits for job advancement. Exhibit 3.3 compares characteristics of volunteers across successive annual cohorts and the Phase 1 cohort.[31]

The comparisons evidence some changes in volunteers' characteristics over time. Compared with the earliest (pilot) cohort, later volunteers were somewhat more likely to be: non-white (African American or Hispanic), never married, without previous college experience, and working more hours. Excluding Phase 1 recruits, test scores also suggest a trend toward lower-quality academic skills: the proportions of volunteers testing high in math and reading fell across the three years.

In general, these statistics show that the mix of incoming students shifted toward volunteers with greater academic remediation needs over time. Several program staff mentioned that more vigorous outreach spurred by increasing difficulty of recruitment over time required digging deeper into initially more resistant—and less prepared—segments of the caseload. A robust economy also may have left a relatively less employable caseload as more employable recipients found jobs and left the rolls. Motives for volunteering also changed somewhat, as we will see shortly.

Why People Volunteered and What They Expected

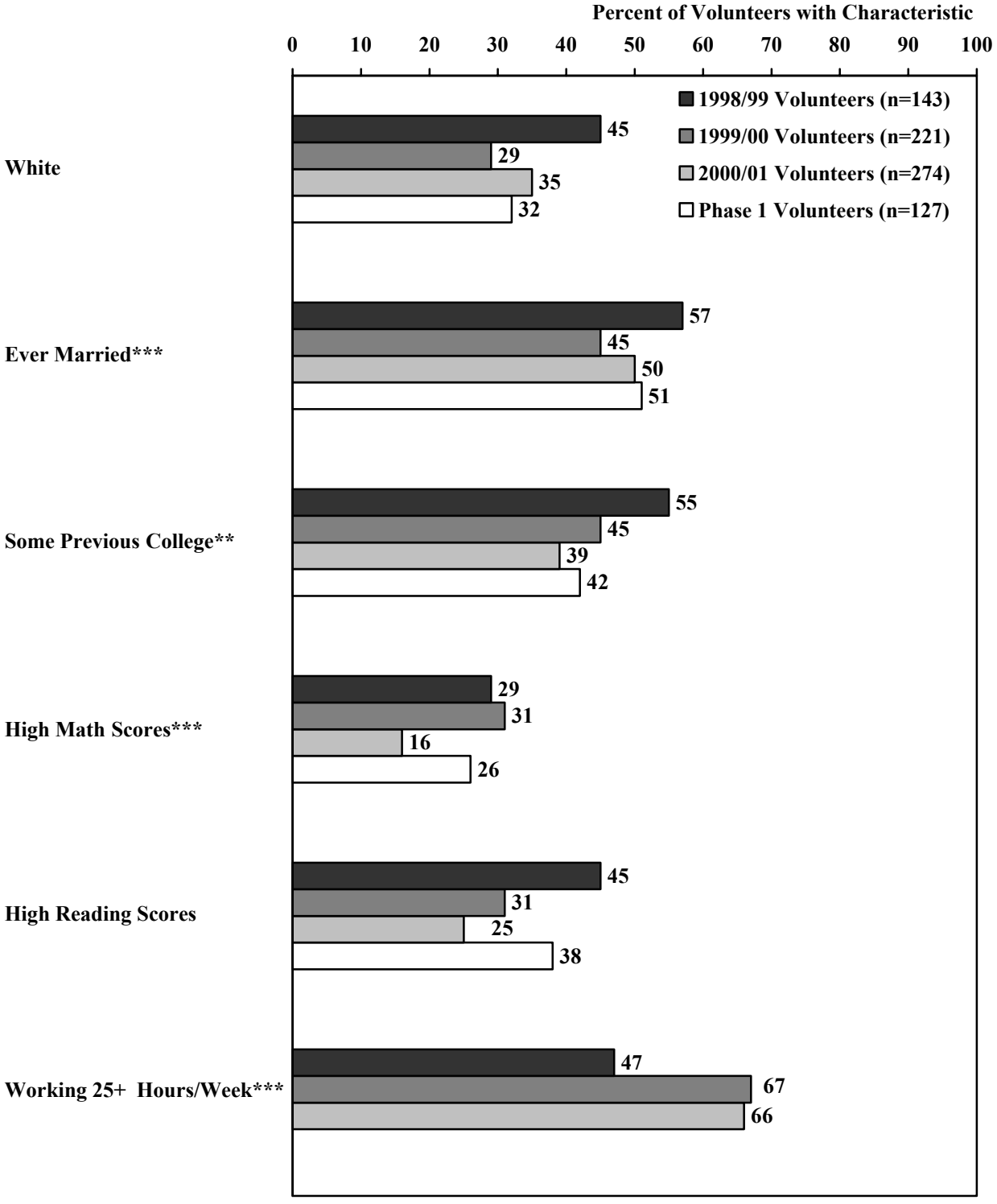
New Visions requires volunteers, largely single mothers, to add school on top of the already challenging demands of work and parenting. In this section, we explore what eligible recipients initially heard about the program and what convinced them to volunteer.

---

[30] Score boundaries for "low," "medium," and "high" were selected to highlight differences in and around the bottom, middle, and top thirds of the score distributions.

[31] These statistics apply to all volunteers, including members of the treatment and control groups and treatment group members who never showed up for orientation. Tests for statistical significance refer to chi square statistics summarizing the deviation between observed and expected distributions across all categories of each characteristic; hence, differences between particular pairs of cohorts may or may not be statistically significant.

Exhibit 3.3
Key Characteristics Differing Across Successive Cohorts of New Visions Volunteers



*** Differences across cohorts for detailed versions of these characteristics are statistically significant at the 99-percent level; **at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level.
Sources: Background Information Form administered to all New Visions volunteers at random assignment, RCC assessment data.

Delivering the Message. Students in the small in-depth interview sample felt quite positive about the initial New Visions message. Nearly all said that they first heard of New Visions at the welfare office—sometimes from their DPSS GAIN case managers and sometimes from presentations by New Visions' staff and student recruiters. Respondents told us that the messages they heard were strong and positive. Although many indicated they had hoped to return to school at some point, most of them felt that they would not have actually done so without encouragement. It is important to stress that the small in-depth interview sample included few dropouts and is likely to be biased in favor of students who had the most positive program experiences.

Chapter 2 described how RCC gave some New Visions students work-study jobs as program recruiters. Interviews with these student recruiters were helpful for identifying barriers to participating in the program. According to this small sample of student recruiters, principal reasons welfare recipients did not volunteer for New Visions were a perceived lack of time for school and the related difficulty of balancing the demands of work, family, and school. Some welfare recipients told recruiters that they preferred training programs that were shorter and more pointed towards a specific job. Student recruiters felt that the most effective recruitment strategy was to share their own experiences in New Visions, including the benefits they gained from the program and how they were able to manage its extra demands. One volunteer told us how she felt after hearing a recruiter speak: "If she [the recruiter] could do it, so can I."

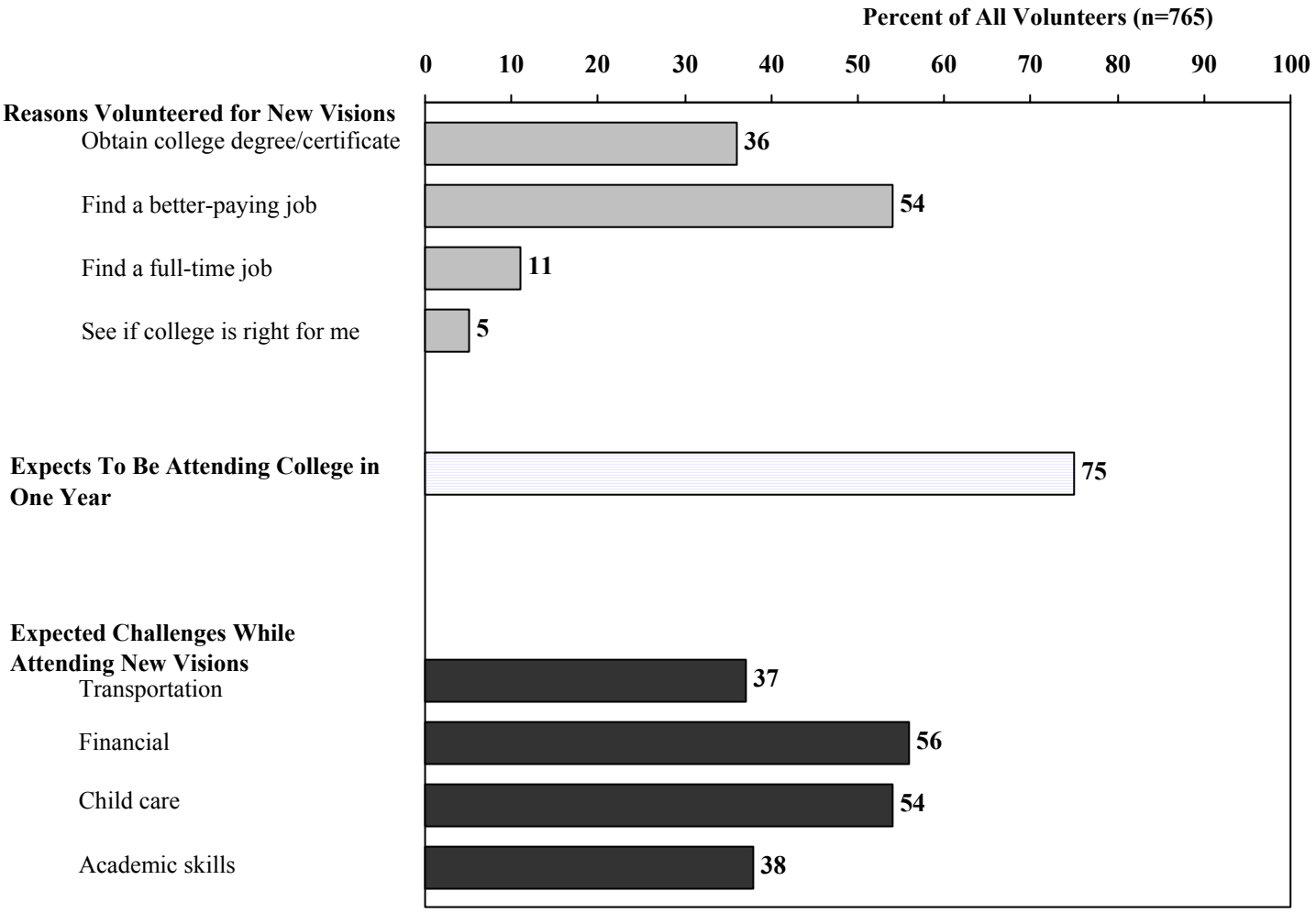
Students who worked as recruiters also found the experience useful. One student said, "I love it. I love helping people. It feels good to help someone in the situation I've been in." The recruiters reported that making presentations about New Visions helped improve their speaking skills and gave them more self-confidence. Some also said the experience had influenced their thoughts about the kind of work they would like to do, including at least one who mentioned sales. For two recruiters, the most difficult part of the job was explaining random assignment to potential volunteers. Some DPSS case managers also found it difficult to promote New Visions enthusiastically while having to tell volunteers that there was a good chance they might not be chosen for the program. On the positive side, receiving a treatment group assignment could be quite exciting. One New Visions student said that she felt she had "won the lottery" when she learned that she had been assigned to the treatment group.

Volunteers' Initial Expectations. In any new venture, initial motives and impressions can have an important effect on later experiences. Exhibit 3.4 reports reasons for volunteering given by the full sample of 765 treatment and control group members on the Background Information Form (BIF). More volunteers checked "to help me find a better-paying job" (54 percent) than checked "to help me obtain a college degree or certificate" (36 percent). Although improved earnings were a top reason for volunteering, a substantial majority of volunteers (75 percent) nonetheless expected to be attending college a year after enrolling in New Visions (see Exhibit 3.4)

Child care and financial issues were volunteers' most common concerns when asked about expected challenges in New Visions, with over half identifying these as likely difficulties. Slightly more than one-third of the 765 volunteers cited transportation and academic skills as likely challenges. Several students in the small in-depth interview sample also mentioned that child care problems had led them to postpone enrolling or miss classes after starting New Visions.

Analysis of BIF data also shows that initial expectations differed markedly for the most recent volunteers, compared with earlier cohorts (not shown in exhibit). Welfare recipients recruited in

Exhibit 3.4
Motives and Expectations of New Visions Volunteers at the Time of Random Assignment



Source: Background Information Form administered to all New Visions volunteers at random assignment.

2000-01 were substantially *more* likely than earlier recruits to cite a better paying job and *less* likely to mention a college degree or certificate as motives for volunteering. Fewer of the later volunteers expected to be in college after leaving New Visions. The most recent cohort also was less likely than earlier cohorts to cite financial difficulties as an expected challenge in school.

These differences track with changes in the recruitment message implemented in the middle of the 2000-01 recruitment cycle. As explained in Chapter 2, the new message—fashioned with guidance from an outside consultant—emphasized more immediate job benefits from New Visions. The message also placed more emphasis on resources and supports, potentially contributing to reduced apprehensions concerning financial difficulties.

The small sample of students we interviewed in 2001 also put more emphasis on employment benefits as an initial attraction, whereas those we spoke to in 2000 focused on educational goals. Students interviewed in 2000 described New Visions as providing an opportunity "to brush up on basic skills," "to get our brains back," and "to get education and skills I didn't have." In 2001, students stressed the program's job-related goals, describing it as "a workforce prep program" and saying its purpose is "to get you certified in a field, to get you a career."

In-depth interviews also explored volunteers' views of New Visions' most attractive features. The aspects students mentioned most often were small classes, a flexible schedule, the chance to be on a college campus with people in similar life situations, and the opportunity to learn computer and study skills.

When asked about anticipated challenges, students in the in-depth sample often expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities to handle the academic work. Some expressed specific anxieties about math and computers. One said "I've never been good at tests," and another said "I don't want to read in front of a class." A number of students also were concerned about how they would balance the demands of work, family, and school. They worried about whether they would have enough time to spend with their children once they added New Visions classes and homework to their already full schedules. Several students also mentioned a variety of other concerns, including financial issues, transportation, and child care. These difficulties should be taken as illustrative, rather than exactly representative, of the kinds of concerns some students had given the nature of the in-depth sample.

Reasons for Not Volunteering. In our 2002 mail survey, we asked the subset of respondents who were eligible but had not volunteered for New Visions (73 percent of the total sample of 684 respondents) whether they had heard about the program. Nearly three quarters (73 percent) said that they had heard about New Visions (not shown in exhibit). Of these, exactly half said that they were interested in New Visions, and the other half said that they were not interested in the program.

Non-volunteers who *were interested* in New Visions cited work schedules (52 percent), a lack of time to apply (51 percent), and a need to learn more about New Visions (46 percent) most frequently as reasons they had not applied (not shown in an exhibit). A fairly substantial group (32 percent) also identified affordability concerns.[32]

[32] Other possible response categories for this question included: transportation (18 percent) and child care (19 percent) issues, and concerns about academic readiness (11 percent) and English skills (4 percent).

Among non-volunteers who *were not interested* in New Visions, the most often-cited factor was already being in, or waiting to get into, another education program (41 percent). Other top reasons included feeling they already had enough education (35 percent) and not wanting to give up time to be with their children (30 percent).[33]

The level of exposure to New Visions was related to two specific reasons for lack of interest in the program.[34] Among those who had heard just a little about the program, nearly a quarter (23 percent) cited the program's length as a discouraging factor, compared with only 13 percent of those with higher exposure.

On the other hand, only 15 percent of respondents with low exposure, but 33 percent of those with high exposure, said that New Visions did not offer the training they wanted. These statistics seem to imply that marketing helped some respondents understand the need for a relatively long program, but led others to opt for programs providing more immediate occupational training.

Students' Recommendations on Recruitment

Encouraging welfare recipients to volunteer for New Visions is challenging for several reasons, including the program's relatively long time frame and indirect connection to improved employment opportunities. The students we interviewed, especially the student recruiters, had several suggestions for how to convey the strengths of New Visions to welfare recipients and so improve recruitment:

- *Make substantial use of New Visions student recruiters.* Recruiters emphasized that low-income parents were much more likely to believe that the program was doable and beneficial if they heard about successful experiences directly from other people in their situations.

- *Give potential volunteers a better sense of RCC by arranging campus visits or showing videos about the school.* Since one of the unique strengths of New Visions is its location on the RCC campus, the recruiters felt that the campus and its resources should be emphasized. Because potential volunteers are not likely to be familiar with the campus or what being on a campus would mean, it would be important to give them that experience through either a visit or video.

- *Emphasize the importance of New Visions' counseling component by presenting a mock counseling session in which a counselor helps a student solve a problem.* As described in detail in Chapter 2, the counseling component of New Visions is one of its most significant elements and one that distinguishes it from many other education

[33] Other possible response categories for this question included feeling that New Visions: won't help me make more money (28 percent), takes too long (16 percent), and doesn't offer the training I want (27 percent).

[34] Based on answers to survey questions, we classified respondents who had heard of New Visions as having high exposure if they either (1) had heard about the program from more than one of a list of three sources (welfare office, New Visions staff or students, announcement by mail/TV/radio) or (2) had heard about the program four or more times. Just over two-thirds scored as "high" and the remainder as "low" using this definition. Overall, percentages of non-volunteers who were interested in New Visions were nearly identical (51 and 50 percent, respectively) for respondents with high and low exposure.

and training programs. However, the counseling component is probably not stressed enough in outreach efforts. It is especially important to make sure that potential volunteers understand the extent to which New Visions will provide them with concrete support and encouragement and so help them meet the program's demands.

Another factor that seems important in increasing the number of volunteers for New Visions is the clarity and consistency with which recruiters articulate program goals to potential volunteers. As described in Chapter 2, over time RCC and DPSS came to describe the purpose of New Visions in increasingly similar ways. The consistency of this message most likely led to a clearer image of New Visions among prospective volunteers.

3.2 Experiences in the Core Program

This section looks at treatment group members' experiences in New Visions. We start with an analysis of the extent to which volunteers actually showed up for classes and, after starting classes, made it through the six months to graduation. We then assess students' experiences with different aspects of the core program, including its classes, counseling services, and social environment.

Who Made it to the Program?

As noted in Chapter 2, the challenge of promoting participation only begins when the program convinces welfare recipients to volunteer. The next challenge is to engage volunteers in the program—a process that initially entails ensuring that participants appear for the program's orientation. New Visions program records show that at least 67 percent of volunteers enrolled in the program.[35] Although data are not available for highly comparable programs, two-thirds seems a fairly high show rate for a voluntary program for working low-income single mothers.[36]

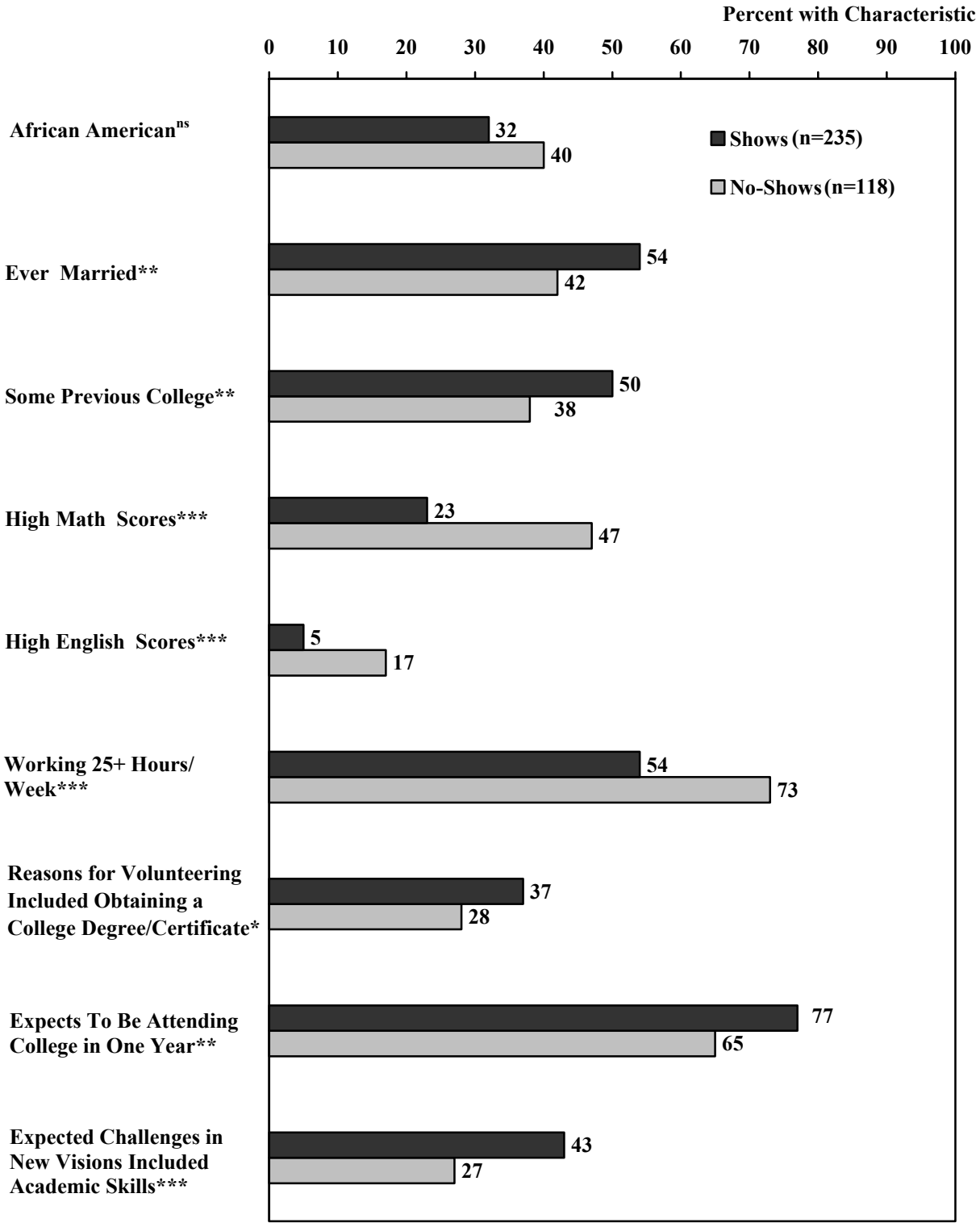
Reasons for not showing up likely involve a mix of unforeseen events and having second thoughts about the program. Comparisons of baseline characteristics for shows and no-shows hint at both types of reasons (see Exhibit 3.5). Volunteers who made it to orientation were more likely to be ever married than those who did not show (54 compared with 42 percent, a statistically significant difference), possibly indicating improved social support systems. Shows were less likely to be African Americans than no-shows (32 compared with 40 percent), although this difference is not statistically significant. Shows also were substantially less likely than no-shows to be working 25 hours or more a week (54 compared with 73 percent). The effects of working longer hours on showing up after volunteering thus are quite similar to its effects on the decision to volunteer in the first place (see Section 3.1).

---

[35] The exact show rate may be slightly higher, since outreach to no-shows may have led a small number to enroll in New Visions since the cut-off period for RCC records used in this analysis. GAIN program data show that 75 percent of treatment group members participated in New Visions within two years, but it is possible that case managers counted some randomly assigned clients as participants who never made it to orientation.

[36] Hamilton and Scrivener (1999, p. 36) report that typically two-thirds to three-quarters of welfare recipients in mandatory welfare-to-work programs eventually show up for orientation.

Exhibit 3.5
Key Characteristics Differing for Treatment Group Members
Who Did and Did Not Show up for the New Visions Orientation



***T-test shows difference between shows and no-shows is significant at the 99-percent level; ** at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level.

[ns] Not significant.

Source: Background Information Form administered to all New Visions volunteers at random assignment, RCC assessment and outcome data.

Volunteers who showed up for orientation also evidenced greater commitment to college than no-shows, with substantially more of the former having attended college in the past (50 compared with 38 percent) and expecting to be attending college after finishing New Visions (77 compared with 65 percent).

Shows were substantially less likely than no-shows to score high on skill assessments for math (23 compared with 47 percent) and English (5 compared with 17 percent). These statistically significant differences support comments from program staff that better-prepared students sometimes felt that the program was too remedial for them. Consistent with this interpretation, those who showed also were more likely than no-shows to cite academic skills as an expected challenge in the program (43 compared with 27 percent).

Views of Program Orientation

The New Visions orientation week provided volunteers with their first impressions of the program and an opportunity to decide whether it was a good fit for them. Because orientation provides students their first up-close look at New Visions' academic program, supports, and social environment, it can have a strong impact on their assessment of whether or not the program is right for them. Some of the students we interviewed in depth said they initially worried about being overwhelmed by classes that were challenging, whereas others thought the program might be too simple and boring, "like a step back." One student for whom New Visions seemed to be a good match thought, "So, wow, it's not just high school stuff; it's really going to help me get to where I want to go!"

Students stressed how warmly the entire New Visions staff welcomed them. One student especially liked having everyone (including clerical staff) introduce themselves to the new students. She said, "Everybody was themselves. I felt encouraged and welcome." Student comments in 2000 and 2001 also indicate that later orientations presented the goals of the program and described the classes more clearly. The tenor of their comments suggests that program staff succeeded in strengthening the emphasis on connecting students to New Visions socially.

Who Made it through the Program?

Retention poses a serious challenge for programs serving welfare recipients, most of whom are single mothers, particularly programs where participants are expected also to be working. Just over half (55 percent) of the volunteers who showed up for orientation completed the core New Visions program. Completion statistics for comparable programs were not available to put the New Visions rate in perspective. Given the challenges of working in addition to attending school, however, we would guess that the result is a relatively good one.

Comparing characteristics of dropouts and graduates can help us to understand the factors associated with dropping out and possible program changes that might improve retention. The following analyses compare New Visions dropouts and graduates based on data from the background information form and summarize what students, program staff, and administrators told us about reasons for dropping out.

It is important to bear in mind that dropouts are not necessarily program failures. They may derive some benefit from the classes they do attend, and participation may give them a clearer sense of alternative career paths.

Characteristics of Dropouts and Graduates. Comparisons between dropouts and graduates show a number of differences, as seen in Exhibit 3.6. Demographically, we see that graduates are less likely than dropouts to be African American (27 and 37 percent, respectively), more likely to have ever been married (59 and 52 percent), and less likely to have children under age 10 (76 and 85 percent). Consistent with the notion that young children create child care challenges, fewer graduates than dropouts initially said they expected to find it difficult to handle child care issues while in New Visions (48 compared to 58 percent). Of these differences, only those by race and age of youngest child are statistically significant, however.

Resembling differences seen earlier for volunteering and showing up for New Visions, graduates were somewhat less likely than dropouts to have been working 25 hours or more at random assignment (52 and 57 percent, respectively). Although not statistically significant, this difference may understate the effects of work hours, since hours could have changed since random assignment.

Graduates were somewhat more likely than dropouts to have received low scores on their initial math and English assessments, and more likely to have expected the program to be academically challenging. These differences, though not statistically significant, also fit with indications from show-up rates that the program had more appeal for more poorly-prepared welfare recipients than for better-prepared ones.[37]

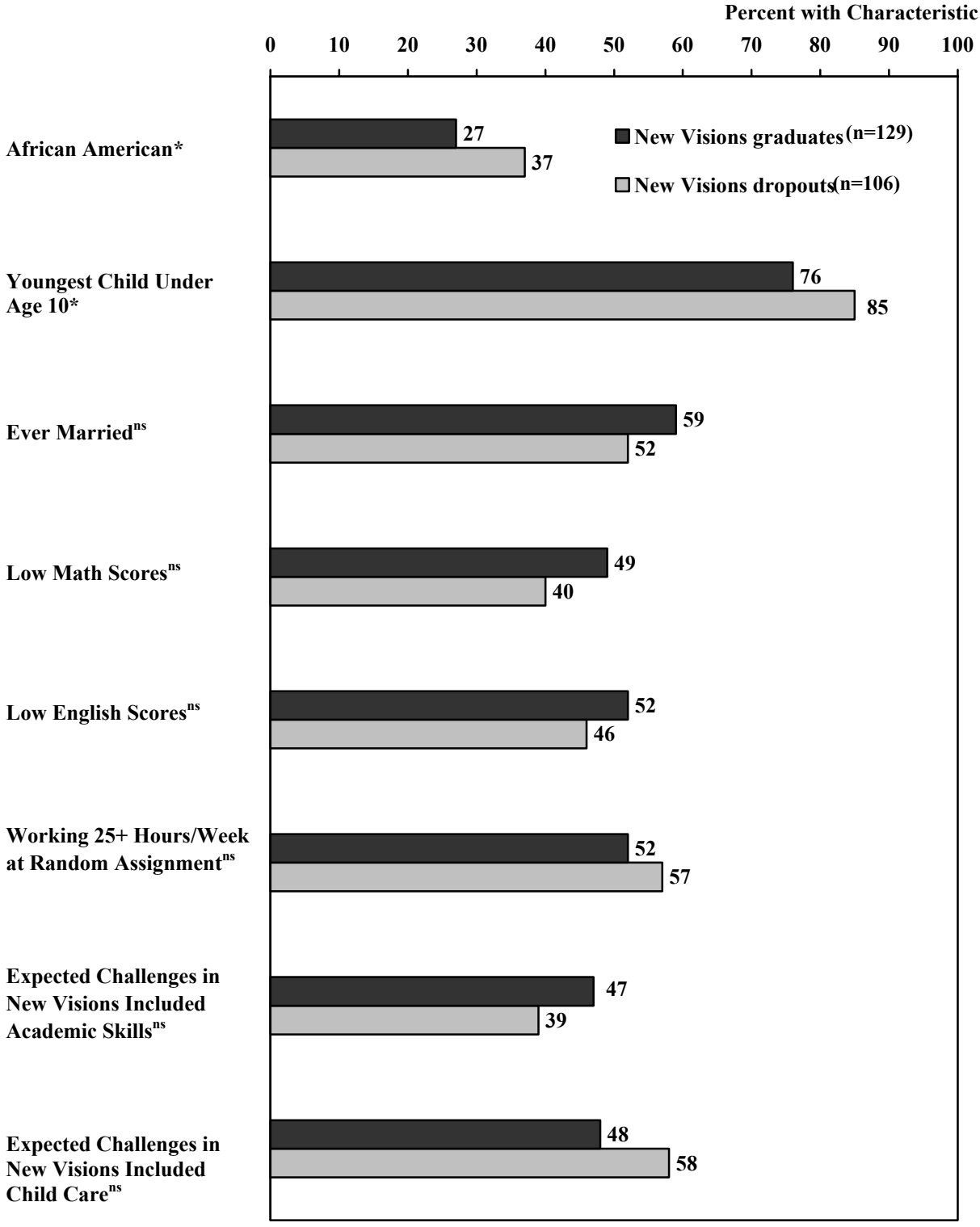
Reasons for Dropping Out. We obtained more detailed information on factors associated with dropping out from interviews with New Visions counselors, administrators, and office staff. These respondents identified a wide variety of reasons for dropping out.

Program staff felt that students who did not find the program right for them were a minority of dropouts and tended to drop out in the early part of the program. One of the more common mismatches is students feeling that New Visions was not challenging enough for them. Some dropouts enrolled in regular RCC courses after leaving New Visions. It is possible that some of these dropouts' New Visions experiences encouraged them to leave the program for other courses. By attending any part of New Visions, a student is introduced to the RCC campus and to counseling services available to workforce development students. Attending New Visions also may boost some students' confidence when they find that they are among the strongest New Visions students.

RCC staff also told us that some early dropouts involved participants who were not ready to handle the program. Most often the issues involved personal organization and schedules, rather than not being able to handle the program's academics. An administrator quoted one student who asked in surprise, "You mean I have to come here every day?" A faculty member felt that some students appeared to have been talked into New Visions by their DPSS GAIN case manager, but in fact were more interested in a shorter-term occupational training program. Another administrator described

[37] We show percentages with low math and English scores rather than with high scores as in previous exhibits, because differences between graduates and dropouts were concentrated at the low end of test score distributions.

Exhibit 3.6
Key Characteristics Differing for New Visions Participants
Who Did and Did Not Graduate from the Core Program



***T-test shows difference between shows and no-shows is significant at the 99-percent level; ** at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level.

[ns] Not significant.

Source: Background Information Form administered to all New Visions volunteers at random assignment, RCC assessment and outcome data.

students as wanting immediate gratification and dropping out of New Visions because it takes too long.

In contrast, staff felt that students dropping out later in the program (after completing the first month or so) tended to be more committed to New Visions and left mainly in response to pressures from outside life circumstances. According to the New Visions faculty and staff, the most common issues involved competing demands at work. Students dropped out because they lost their job, had changes in work hours or schedule, started working more hours, or took a full-time job. Other personal issues—some also related to work—were difficulties with child care and transportation, personal and family health problems, financial emergencies, and relationship troubles. We were able to interview only three dropouts directly, but the variety in their precipitating factors was nonetheless striking: one had a parent who was seriously ill, another became homeless, and a third moved out of the area.

A counselor shared his findings based on follow-up calls to about 50 dropouts. Only two of these students had complaints about New Visions, and nearly all the others mentioned personal issues as reasons for dropping out. The two complaints about New Visions were that the academic program was not challenging enough and that "nobody helped me" (from a student the counselor described as not happy about anything). Of course, students might not be expected to be completely honest about New Visions in a conversation with a New Visions counselor. It is nonetheless noteworthy that changes in work situations were a predominating factor, and that many former students expressed interest in learning how they could return to the program.

Challenges Faced during the Core Program. In-depth interviews with a small sample of current students and graduates also explored difficulties they encountered in trying to make it through the New Visions core program. The single most common challenge—mentioned by nearly half of the students we spoke with—was the difficulty coordinating work schedules with New Visions classes. With help from New Visions counselors, several students handled inflexible or overly-long work hours by changing jobs or cutting back to part-time work. Some students' work supervisors were supportive and flexible, whereas others were not.

Students mentioned a variety of challenges, including child care, transportation, financial issues, and a general sense of fatigue and lack of time to do all the things they needed to do. One recent graduate summed up this feeling, saying,

> *I'm tired, so tired! After school from 12:00 to 3:00 p.m., I work from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. Then I pick up my kids. The kitchen is the only thing that stays clean. Friday is my only day off. It's not balancing. I'm glad [New Visions] is over.*

New Visions Classes

The two main components of the New Visions core program are its classes and its counseling services and supports. All students are expected to take five core courses. These courses (described in Chapter 2) are math, English, reading, Office Administration, and Guidance. All save the Guidance class can be waived if placement test scores indicate commensurate skills.

To learn about students' experiences in the academic program, we asked the 29 students in the in-depth interview sample about each of the five New Visions classes. We asked about the level of difficulty of each class, what students enjoyed and found useful about the class, any skills acquired

that have been useful at work, and ways the class might be improved. In interpreting the responses, it is important to recall that the sample under-represents dropouts and may over-represent current students and graduates who were relatively satisfied with the program.

Assessing the Level of Difficulty. Students enter New Visions with a wide range of skill levels. In Chapter 2, we described how instructors tried to meet the needs of their diverse students. Here, we summarize students' comments about the level of material.

We asked students whether they found each class to be "too easy, too challenging or about right." A substantial majority indicated that the classes were "about right" for them. Some students said that they found the classes—especially math and Office Administration—too difficult at first, but most of these students said that the class became less difficult and they felt more comfortable over time. Students like this were especially likely to report positive overall experiences with these classes, reflecting their happiness at overcoming their fears and achieving basic mastery of math and computers. As one student said, "[Because of New Visions], I'm loosening up about computers."

A number of students also found the English class difficult, but most said it was nonetheless manageable due to the skill of the instructor. Several students we interviewed entered New Visions with above average English skills and waived this class to take a regular RCC English class instead. Program data on 128 graduates show that 19 (15 percent) enrolled in at least one RCC course that was not a core New Visions class within 180 days of enrolling in New Visions. (This figure may overstate slightly the fraction of students who waived core classes, since a few students enrolled in these courses toward the end of the 180 days preparatory to moving on after graduating from New Visions.)

Experiences across the Five Core Courses. For each New Visions class, we asked the in-depth sample members what they found useful and what they thought could be improved. Students generally were positive about what they had learned in all of their classes. Students mentioned increased self-esteem and confidence at least as often as the specific knowledge acquired as benefits from their New Visions classroom experiences.

Math Class. Students generally were pleased with this class. Most students said they liked working at their own pace on the PLATO educational software. One student said she would have liked more traditional homework in the form of worksheets and problem sets. Several students expressed their pride in acquiring a sense of mastery of a topic they previously had found intimidating.

Almost half the students interviewed reported that skills learned in math class were useful in their jobs, most of which were in fast food or retail settings. Students specifically mentioned using the following skills: figuring percentages, going from decimals to fractions, doing spreadsheets, and adding more quickly than before. One student said she was now better able to help her children with their math homework.

English Class. Students were highly enthusiastic about this class and could not think of a way to improve it. One described it as "wonderful and well-taught" and another said it probably was the best New Visions class. Students especially liked the class's clear structure and the instructor's engaging manner and high expectations. The class content was useful in teaching them how to do resumes and cover letters as well as in improving their speaking and writing. One student whose first language

was not English complained that the class did not help her with her special needs. She wished New Visions staff had identified her needs for English as a Second Language classes earlier.

Students were able to cite a number of ways English had been helpful at work through gains in speaking and writing skills, grammar usage, and vocabulary skills. One student said the class "helped me out a lot to write and speak better. When I write notes [to her children's school] now I write more like a grown-up and not a child." Another said that people at her job had noticed an improvement and said, "You're a lot better, you're speaking your words." Another student said that she had learned to "use proper language. I used a lot of slang, but I have to deal with people at work. I have to watch what I say. I catch myself…I think to myself that [the instructor] wouldn't like that."

Students also told us how English gave them more self-confidence. One student said that she had been very isolated but that this class "helped her to get back into society, to communicate with customers better." Another said that "I was really, really insecure before—[I] didn't want to sit in a classroom or be feeling stupid." She said that the English class had helped build her confidence, as well as prepare her academically for college classes.

Reading Class. Students especially liked the use of the Internet as an instructional strategy in the reading class. They also said they enjoyed assigned readings drawn from biographies of famous people who had overcome adversity, such as Helen Keller and Malcolm X. One student said that the reading class had helped her help her children with their homework. Another felt the course was important enough that it should meet twice instead of once weekly. Although students liked many aspects of this course, they also communicated a desire for more classroom discussion and individualized instruction.

Office Administration Class. The Office Administration class was especially important to the students we spoke with, many of whom had little experience with, or self-confidence in using, computers. Nearly all students felt that they had succeeded in this course and thereby enjoyed a boost in self-confidence. Most students felt that the class was fine as it was, but several expressed desires for instruction to be either less or more advanced. Some students also said they would have liked the classes to be longer or meet more times each week.

Students' enthusiasm for this class came through in comments such as the following: "I loved that class. I love computers. [The class] helped me to be familiar with computers" and "If I hadn't started here [New Visions], I never would have been involved with or used computers." Although a number of students did not feel their new computer skills were useful in their current jobs, nearly all respondents believed these skills would be useful in the future.

Guidance Class. The Guidance class was unique among the New Visions classes in being explicitly directed towards learning skills needed for success at work, school, and other areas of life. One of the New Visions counselors taught the course. In addition to providing instruction, the class helped to create a support group for students in which the instructor/counselor provided encouragement and taught various life skills and in which students were able to discuss a range of issues that concerned them. One administrator characterized this class as the "glue" that holds the program together.

Students were most enthusiastic about life skills and support group aspects of the Guidance class. Comments like the following are illustrative: "[Guidance was] helpful, useful, [it] changed people." "Great class!" "It was like a support group, just great." "The [instructor] kept telling us, 'You can do

it!'" Students credited the class with teaching valuable skills in time management, budgeting, learning to set limits, listening, and understanding personal learning styles. "It helped me to manage money, especially credit cards." One student summed it up as follows: "This was the Life class."

Several students were less positive about Guidance. These students told us that they did not want or need the social interaction for its own sake. As one student put it "[I] liked the practical, job search parts, not the self-esteem parts." Several students said that they would have liked more concrete help finding jobs.

For many other students, the most important part of the Guidance class was the encouragement they received from instructors and classmates. They credited this aspect with giving them more hope, confidence, and determination. One student said the class helped increase her self-esteem "through discussion of everyday life problems, helping me to realize that it all depends on what you want and how [you go about getting it]." Another student said the class helped her to think, "Don't be afraid—you can do it," and another said, "I found myself in that class: who I was and what I wanted." Other comments credited Guidance with helping them to sharpen their goals: "Guidance class helped me to organize my goals and learn how to work toward them."

Students also felt they had learned useful job search skills in the class. Examples included writing resumes and cover letters, making portfolios, filling out job applications, and preparing for job interviews (through mock interviews). Students also said that they had learned useful study skills, such as techniques for improving concentration, note taking, memorization, and studying for tests.

Just about every student interviewed described something about the Guidance class that was helpful at home and work. In general, they reported increased self-confidence, better social skills and manners. At work, examples included improved listening skills, better communication and people management skills, and techniques for handling stress and anger more effectively. One student gave an example of how she had used stress management techniques to deal calmly with an irate customer. Another said that learning when and how to ask for help at work had made a big difference in her job.

Assessment of Instructors. Teaching low-income parents requires a very special set of skills. Not only do instructors need to be able to use non-traditional teaching methods and individualize their curricula for a diverse student group, but to some extent they also need to be motivators and counselors. They need to be able to help people with negative prior school experiences to see education in a new and more positive light. Based on the comments of the students we interviewed, nearly all the New Visions instructors were strong exemplars of these qualities.

Students described nearly all the instructors as being available, approachable, respectful of students, and serious about their jobs. The students interviewed repeatedly commented on how their teachers' encouragement had led to increased self-esteem and greater willingness to try new things. In one student's words, "[This teacher] helped me realize that I'm just as good as anybody else. [Another person] may have a better job, but they need to go through stages just like everybody else."

The qualities students valued most in their New Visions instructors were that they were:

- **Patient**

  [This teacher] took a lot of time to explain. She didn't make you feel rushed or stupid.
  It looks hard, but he puts it in a way you can understand it. He goes over and over it.

- **Personal**

  I liked that she was able to help me one-on-one. In a regular college class I couldn't interrupt the class if I needed extra help.

- **Enthusiastic**

  An excellent teacher –he motivated you – helped you get beyond fears. Made me feel I could do whatever I put my mind to – helped me get back on track.

  This teacher often says, "Don't say you can't learn, say you don't know it yet."

- **Respectful**

  [This instructor] is serious. We don't miss this class. She makes us feel like we're going to college. She doesn't make us feel like babies… is a college-oriented teacher.

  [This instructor] talks to you as a person.

- **Supportive**

  [S/he] does a great job, [is] a very concerned person, a compassionate person.

  So helpful….would help you at the drop of a hat.

In general, comments about New Visions instructors were overwhelmingly positive. An exception was one instructor who students felt had talked down to them. Students also mentioned one or two instructors who they would have liked to have had more engaged in the classroom.

Counseling and Other Support Services

Nearly all of the 29 students we interviewed in 2000 and 2001 described their New Visions counselors as readily available, helpful, and supportive. Counselors were helpful in three areas: academic guidance, career guidance, and personal support and advice. Students variously described New Visions counselors as: "a great problem solver," "very helpful," "good listener—responsive," and "like an angel sent from Heaven." Students said that they talked with counselors about their New Visions classes, current job, personal problems, welfare benefit issues, and future academic and career plans.

In our fall 2001 in-depth interviews, students seemed especially pleased with their counselors' accessibility. Several mentioned that their New Visions counselors went out of their way to encourage students to come see them. Students also noted that their counselors were much more helpful than counselors they had seen in other programs.

Students told us that, in addition to counselors, regular New Visions instructors and support staff helped with an array of personal and administrative issues. New Visions' practice of hiring current and former welfare recipients as office staff helped to create a climate where students easily could find help and moral support from people who understood their situations. Students also spoke favorably about the on-site Phase 2 case manager. They felt that this person not only was helpful in answering questions about welfare rules and services and cutting through the bureaucracy, but also was encouraging and supportive in the process.

New Visions as a Learning Community

The New Visions model seeks to create a supportive learning environment. Emerging research on learning communities suggests that they can foster greater student engagement, program retention, and academic performance (Levine 1999). A strong social environment is likely to be especially helpful for populations like New Visions students, whose lives otherwise may be deficient in social supports.

New Visions places a substantial emphasis on fostering relationships among students and between students, instructors, and administrative staff. Several aspects of New Visions support the development of social networks among students. These include the physical location of all classrooms and offices in a separate building on campus, the emphasis on peer interaction and support in the Guidance class, and the opportunity to attend school with other students whose life situations are generally similar. The fact that New Visions has stayed a relatively small program may have helped to strengthen social networks among students.

Students told us that they valued highly the opportunity to go to school with others in similar life situations. The following are representative comments about the New Visions social environment:

> *That was good. [We] weren't judged about being on aid, [we] made friends and [it] was comfortable.*
>
> *This was very helpful, to know I wasn't alone.*
>
> *[It was] definitely a big plus to go to school with others in similar situations, because everyone's on aid and alone with [their] kids. They all understand [you], and you don't feel alone.*
>
> *A common bond is the first step to becoming a family. It's the low income that is worst, not the lack of a man. This common situation gives a basis for friendship. [She credited the Guidance class with helping to forge bonds among students.]*

Students cited various examples of how New Visions students helped, advised, and encouraged one another. One student described how her peers had found a hairdresser, a new babysitting job, and a ride to school through the New Visions student network.

Another way programs can foster learning communities is through integration and overlap in the content and objectives of instruction across courses. In New Visions, one common theme contributing to integration was the emphasis on real-life skills needed for success at work, home, and school. Nearly all of the New Visions classes focused in some way on skills useful in job searches, including skills such as writing resumes and cover letters, using the Internet for job searches, practicing speaking clearly in mock job interviews, and discussing norms and expectations for behavior in work settings.

Most of the students we spoke with really liked being on the RCC campus. They said it was "wonderful," gave them "a good feeling," made you feel "like you are already in college" and gave them a sense of accomplishment and direction. One said that being on campus "is very cool" and a big deal to her because it is a step up. She said it mattered a lot to her that New Visions was on a college campus. She could see that it was possible to move up to the main campus. Another student said, "It's one of the best things, to have New Visions on campus. If New Visions was in a building downtown, I don't think you would be as excited." Seeing people of all ages and all walks of life on the campus helped her to realize that "If they can go to school, I can go to school."

Another student said she liked joining campus activities and events and valued the opportunity to use the library and bookstore. Only one student said she felt uncomfortable about being on the RCC campus. She said that it was hard to explain New Visions to other people she met on campus in a way that did not make them "think it's special ed."

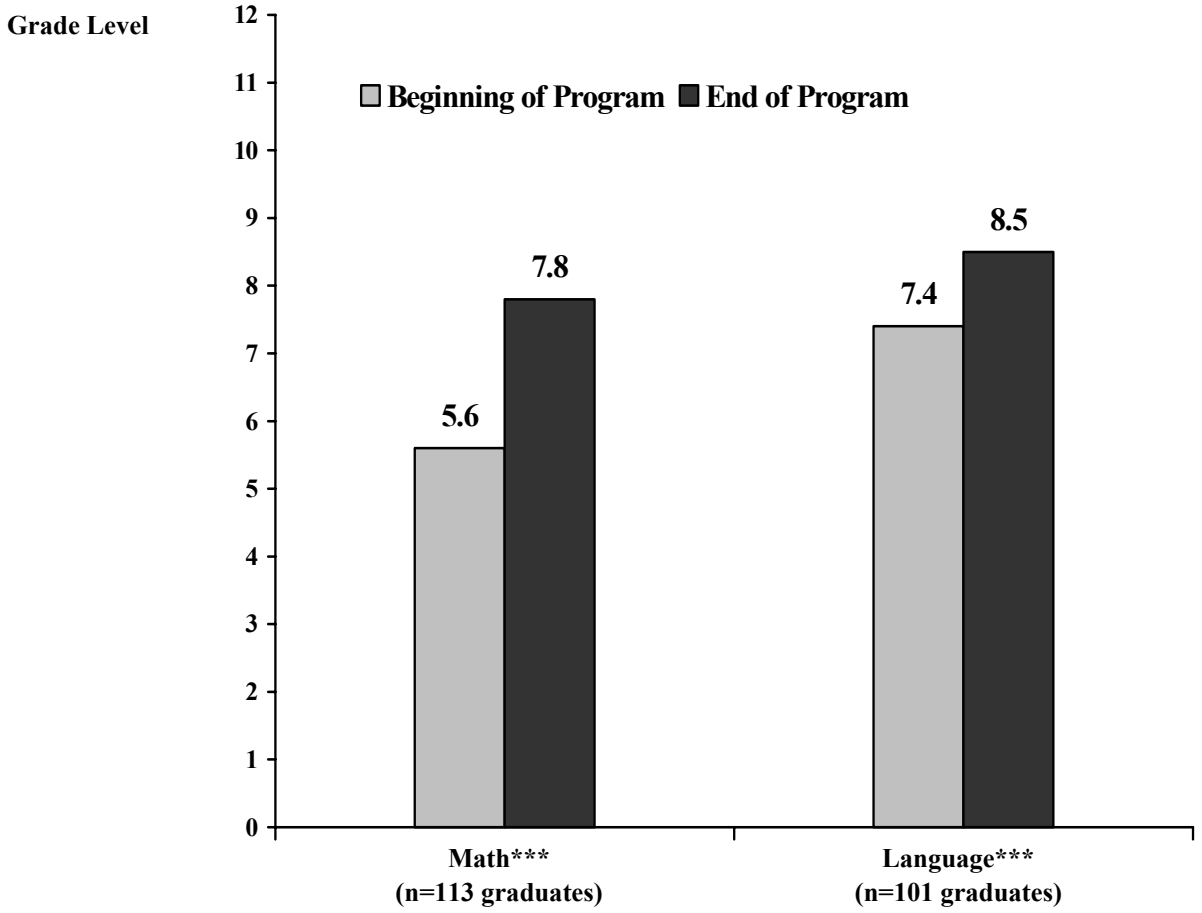
Overall, students described the atmosphere of New Visions as accepting, comfortable, and pleasant. To many, New Visions represented an opportunity to take a break from stressful, chaotic, sometimes oppressive work and home situations in a place where they could relax and focus on learning. One student said, "It's calm, not so judgmental. I can get onto the computer and just work. People here know my situation, they understand me and my life." Another student offered that "It's a sisterhood thing—not judging each other. [The] atmosphere here is calm. [There is] no tension, no stress, no criticism."

Academic Skills of New Visions Graduates at the Start and End of the Program

Raising participants' basic academic skills is one of New Visions' chief goals. In Section 3.1, we saw that incoming New Visions students had substantially lower math and English skills than regular RCC students. In this section, we compare measured skills for New Visions students at the beginning and end of the program. As the second test was administered just before New Visions graduation, we can measure changes for graduates (but not for students who dropped out). Assessments used the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), a widely-used assessment tool. Exhibit 3.7 summarizes mean scores for math and language in grade equivalents at intake and program completion for just over 100 New Visions graduates.

At the start of the program, the average student tested at the sixth-grade level in math and at the seventh-grade level in language. By graduation, the averages had increased by about two grade levels for math and by about one grade level for language. These changes, which are statistically significant, compare favorably with standards developed for federally funded Adult Basic Literacy programs, which expect participants to increase at least one literacy level after participating in a program for a year (U.S. Department of Education 2001). Each ABE literacy level represents two-to-three TABE grade levels, but New Visions is only a half-year program.

Exhibit 3.7
Mean Grade Equivalent Scores in Math and Language for New Visions Graduates at the Beginning and End of the Program (Test of Adult Basic Education)



*** Paired t-test on the pre-post difference is statistically significant at the 99-percent level; **at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level.
Sources: Abt Associates calculations based on test scores data provided by RCC

As mentioned in Chapter 1, New Visions' designers hoped to boost the academic skills of at least 80 percent of core program graduates by at least two grade levels on the TABE. Pre-post analyses show that 52 percent of students' math scores increased by two or more grades and 70 percent increased by one or more grades (not shown in exhibit). In language, 32 percent increased by two or more grades and 51 percent increased by one or more grades. On completing the core program, 42 percent of students tested at or above the 9th grade level in math (compared with only 9 percent at intake), and 57 percent tested at this level in language (compared with 34 percent at intake). These students would be classified at the "Low Adult Secondary Education" under the U.S. Department of Education standards (TABE scores in the grade 9-10.9 range).

In sum, New Visions participation was associated with substantial improvements in tested academic skills. Although falling short of the goal of boosting 80 percent by two grade levels, the gains nonetheless are impressive for a six-month program (especially in math, where low initial scores may have offered the most room for improvement). On the other hand, the distance to college readiness remained large for many students.

New Visions Students' Career Plans

As we saw earlier, 36 percent of all New Visions volunteers indicated at random assignment that they had volunteered at least in part to obtain a college degree or certificate. A much larger proportion—54 percent—said they volunteered primarily to get a better job. Although economic motives were clearly predominant, a follow-up question on the BIF established that New Visions volunteers had a fairly strong academic orientation: 75 percent said that they expected to be attending college one year later (after graduating from the core program).

Most of the students we interviewed said that at the time they volunteered for New Visions, they already had some general career interests but had only a vague sense of how education might further these interests. They told us that New Visions helped them to both clarify and be more realistic about their academic and career goals. One student said that New Visions had not changed her goal, but "just the way I am going to do it," and another described the impact of the program by saying, "I wasn't sure what I wanted to do before. New Visions helped me to organize my feelings, set goals and inspired me to do it."

New Visions also helped students see the link between education and career advancement and to realize that reaching their career goals would require intermediate steps. Several students commented that counselors' descriptions of career ladders were very helpful. One student said she had wanted to be a nurse and that "New Visions showed her how to start" on that career ladder. Many students named specific classes and/or certificates they would need to reach their goals. A number of students said they hoped to work for certificates in child care, commercial art, culinary arts, retail management, and business administration. Among the more interesting career ladders, one student's short-term goal was to become a tattoo artist, en route to eventually becoming a cartoonist.

Several students reported that experiences in New Visions directly affected their career goals. For example, several noted that the clerical and computer work they did in New Visions classes and as student recruiters made them realize they liked office work. Others described Guidance class exercises designed to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses as useful in shaping career plans.

Many students interviewed commented on how New Visions' counselors and instructors helped them set higher goals for themselves. One said the program "gave me some knowledge of school and supported me to move ahead," and another that "going to classes made me think I could have a degree, make money and get off aid."

Lessons from Students' Experiences in the Core Program

From what we have learned from New Visions students, the following appear to be the most salient insights for other colleges and agencies contemplating the creation of similar programs:

- Students emphasized the importance of instructors treating them with respect and concern, and also the importance of instructors being available both in and outside of class.

- Given the heterogeneous skill levels of students in a program such as New Visions, it is important to find ways to serve students' diverse needs. One way New Visions does this is by using educational software that allows students to work at their own level and at their own pace.

- It is important to have a class such as Guidance that can serve as a support group while also teaching functional skills.

- A computer class seems to be especially important, not only because of the utility of computer skills in the workplace, but also because learning basic computer skills seems to do so much for students' self-confidence.

- A career ladder model seems particularly effective in helping welfare recipients plan and progress along a series of small steps and understand the link between additional education and progress up the ladder.

- New Visions' learning community environment (e.g., social support network, integration across classes) is especially valued by students and appears to promote program retention.

3.3 Education Experiences after the Core Program

New Visions seeks to put welfare recipients on a career path that includes further education wherever possible. The program is especially interested in promoting continuing occupational training in regular RCC academic programs. However, New Visions staff recognize that some students may prefer other types of schools and that others may need a break before continuing in school. In this section, we look at what students did after graduating from New Visions and compare their experiences with those of dropouts and no-shows.

Enrolling in Regular College Classes at RCC

Analyses in this section look at enrollment in regular classes at RCC.[38] We compare enrollments in regular RCC classes for core program graduates, no-shows, and dropouts. Among graduates, we look also at personal and family characteristics related to continuing at RCC. A following section looks at enrollments in the wider array of post-New Visions education and training activities available through the GAIN Phase 2 program.

RCC Enrollment after Leaving New Visions. Exhibit 3.8 displays the cumulative proportions of students ever enrolling in non-New Visions RCC courses. The lines distinguish experiences for graduates, dropouts, and no-shows in the months leading up to, and then following, the month each group left the program (month zero in the exhibit).[39]

For graduates, month zero represents the month they completed New Visions, which ordinarily occurred six-to-eight months after random assignment. We see some regular RCC class enrollment before graduation, mostly reflecting courses students took while they were still in the New Visions core program. In the months following graduation, regular RCC class enrollment builds rapidly, with nearly 60 percent enrolling in at least one class within 12 months of graduation.

Compared with graduates, far fewer dropouts and no-shows eventually enrolled in a regular RCC course. Dropouts were more likely than no-shows to take another RCC course within 12 months of leaving New Visions (20 and 11 percent, respectively). The difference could reflect the fact that dropouts were somewhat more committed to college than were no-shows, as well as any encouragement and help they received from New Visions instructors and counselors in transitioning to other RCC courses.

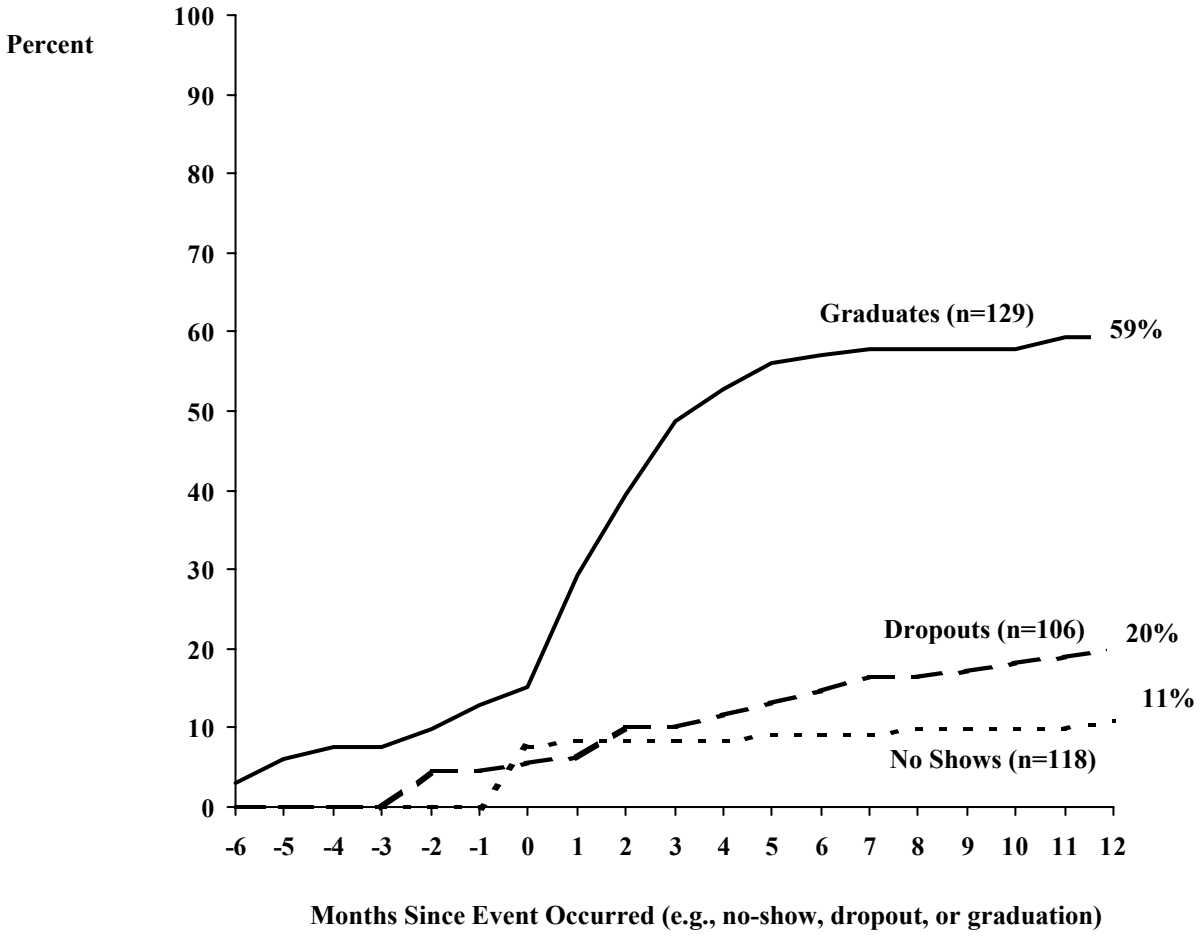
More Detail on Courses Taken after Students Left New Visions. Exhibit 3.9 provides additional detail on the three groups' experiences in regular RCC classes. (Rates of ever taking regular courses are slightly higher than in Exhibit 3.8, because these statistics include enrollments occurring after 12 months for students who could be observed for longer periods.)

New Visions graduates were substantially more likely to complete, as well as to enroll in, at least one regular RCC course. Among those who did enroll in courses, 70 percent of graduates completed at least one course, compared with 55 and 57 percent of dropouts and no-shows, respectively (seen by dividing the second row into the first row of Exhibit 3.9). Among students who completed at least

[38] Analyses of data on enrollments at all California community colleges showed that RCC accounted for 98 percent of all subsequent community college enrollment among New Visions graduates.

[39] For no-shows, the month they left New Visions is the month they normally would have attended orientation had they shown up. The cumulative proportions shown in Exhibit 3.8 are based on a life table analysis that takes account of the fact that we are able to observe earlier client cohorts longer than later ones. The technique includes sample members in the denominator up to the month in which we observe them to either enroll in a non-New Visions RCC course or reach the end of the observation period (December 2001 for the analyses in this chapter). The latter cases are "censored," or eliminated from the risk pool for longer follow-up durations.

Exhibit 3.8
Percent of Treatment Group Members Ever Enrolled in a Regular (non-New Visions) Course at RCC after Random Assignment



Sources: Abt Associates tabulations of RCC enrollment data.

Exhibit 3.9
Regular RCC Courses Ever Taken by Treatment Group Members after Random Assignment

Statistic	New Visions Completion Status			All
	Completer	Drop-Out	No-Show	
Percent Enrolling in at Least One Course	59.4	22.3	11.8	31.3
Percent Completing at Least One Course	41.4	12.2	6.7	20.2
Average Number of Non-New Visions Courses Completed (of Students Completing 1+ Course)	4.0	2.0	3.4	3.5
Overall Sample Size for Group	128	139	119	387[a]

[a] Includes one student with missing completion status
Source: Abt Associates tabulations of RCC course data.

Exhibit 3.10
Regular Courses Taken by New Visions Graduates by Subject

Area	Distribution		Detailed Course Subjects Represented
	Percent	Number	
Business	12.0	128	Accounting (21), Business Administration (39), Economics (2), Management (3), Marketing (2), Office Administration (61)
Computers, Electronics	25.2	268	Computer Information Systems (265), Graphics Technology (3)
Counseling	8.7	92	Guidance (55), Human Services (37)
Creative Arts	1.9	19	Art (13), Dance (2), Music (4)
Education	15.7	167	Early Childhood Studies (138), Reading (21), Speech Communication (8)
Engineering	0.5	5	Engineering (5)
Home	0.7	7	Home Economics (7)
Justice	3.2	34	Admin of Justice (34)
Language	6.3	67	American Sign Language (4), English (37), English as Second Language (16), Spanish (10)
Mathematics	3.8	40	Mathematics (40)
Mechanics	0.2	2	Automotive Technology (2)
Medical	9.3	99	Anatomy/Physiology (11), Emergency Medical Technician (1), Health Science (15), Healthcare Technician (32), Medical Assisting (13), Nursing (A.S.) (7), Nursing (cert.) (20)
Physical Education	2.5	26	Physical Education (26)
Professions	1.4	15	Architecture (1), Paralegal Studies (11), Real Estate (3)
Science	1.7	18	Biology (7), Chemistry (4), Geography (5), Microbiology (2)
Social Science	7.0	74	History (8), Humanities (1), Philosophy (7), Political Science (5), Psychology (25), Sociology (28)
Work Experience	0.2	2	Work Experience (2)
All Courses	100.0	1,063	

Source: Abt Associates tabulations of RCC course data.

one course, graduates completed an average of four courses, compared to two and three for dropouts and no-shows, respectively.[40]

New Visions graduates took classes in a wide range of subjects, as shown in Exhibit 3.10. The general fields of business and technology are most prominent, largely due to the great number of graduates taking courses in computer information systems (about one quarter of all courses taken).

The popularity of computer information systems classes probably reflects a combination of the perceived importance of these skills and the positive introduction to computers provided by the New Visions Office Administration class. The next three most popular subjects each account for approximately 10 percent of the courses taken: education (16 percent), which includes child development classes; various business courses (12 percent); and healthcare specialties (9 percent). New Visions students also took classes in a wide variety of other subjects.

During in-depth interviews, students clearly were able to link the courses they were taking, or planning to take, to specific academic goals. These goals included occupational mini-programs, regular certificate programs, and associate's degree programs.

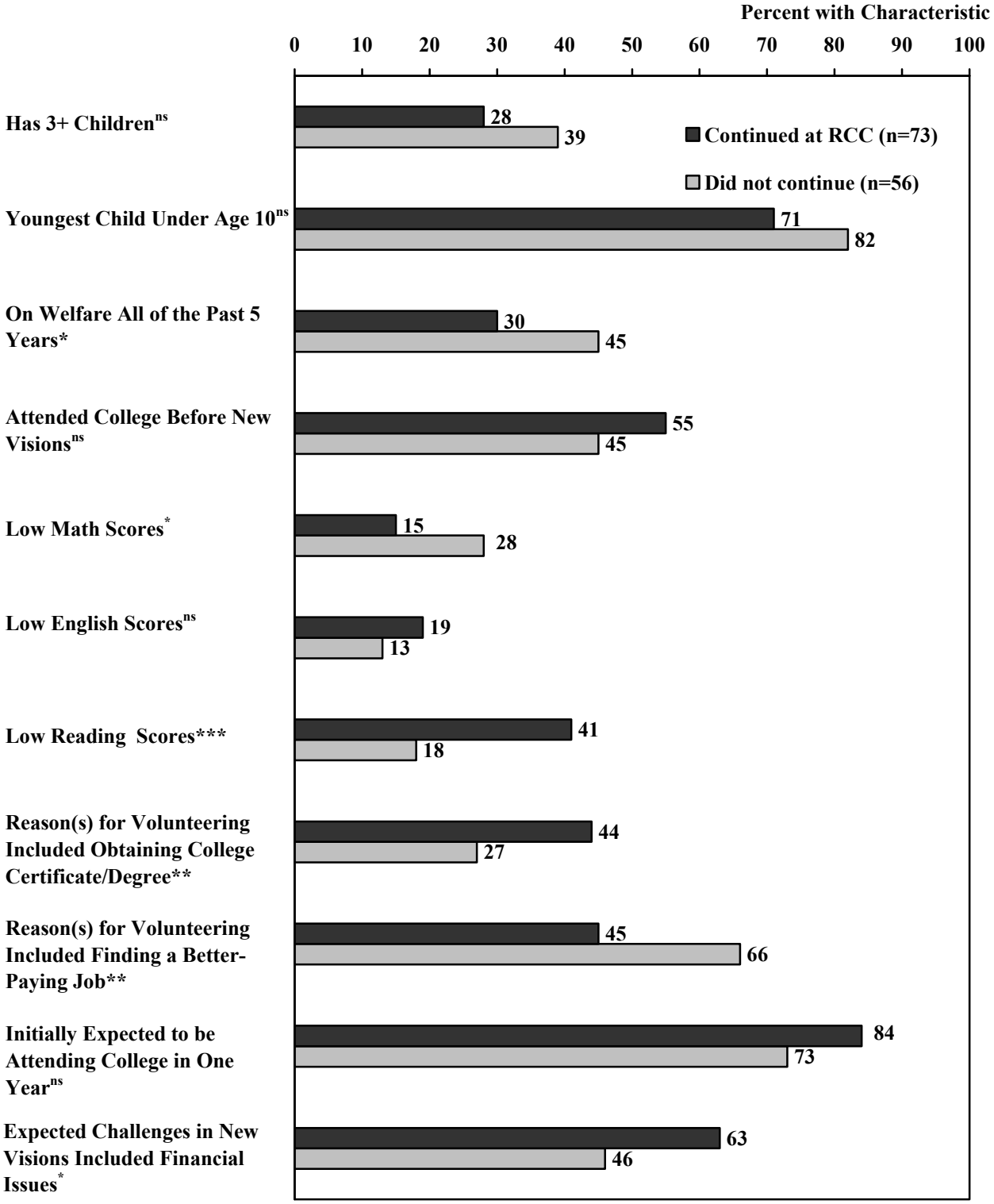
We also discussed reasons several students were not able to complete courses they had started after New Visions. One student said she left to help out a seriously-ill family member. A second student dropped out of a computer class after the first day because she found it much too difficult. A third student said that she dropped out because she was working two jobs and did not have enough time for school. Even in such a tiny sample, this diversity is remarkable. It reinforces our belief that efforts to promote post-secondary retention must anticipate the need to respond to a wide range of individual problems and circumstances.

Types of Graduates Most Likely To Enroll in Regular RCC Courses. Analyses of the personal and family characteristics associated with college continuation can help in understanding the personal situations that are and are not conducive to college, as well as additional supports from New Visions that might be helpful. We summarize differences in characteristics at random assignment for continuers and non-continuers in the full sample of core program graduates in Exhibit 3.11.

Not surprisingly, the percentage of students who had attended college before New Visions was higher for continuers than non-continuers (55 compared to 45 percent). More continuers than non-continuers initially (1) expected to be in college a year after starting New Visions (84 compared to 73 percent), and (2) cited wanting to "obtain a college degree or certificate" as a reason for volunteering (44 compared to 27 percent). In contrast, the percentage volunteering because they wanted to "find a better paying job" was lower for continuers than non-continuers (45 compared to 66 percent). Of these characteristics, however, only the differences involving reasons for volunteering are statistically significant.

[40] Were we to account for the fact that we could not observe graduates for as long as dropouts and no-shows after New Visions (since the dropouts and no-shows left the program earlier than graduates), graduates probably would compare even more favorably. Similarly, the reason no-shows completed more RCC courses than did dropouts may be that no-shows who did take regular classes probably started them sooner than did dropouts.

Exhibit 3.11
Key Characteristics Differing for New Visions Graduates
Who Did and Did Not Continue at RCC after Completing the Core Program



***T-test shows difference between continuers and non-continuers is significant at the 99-percent level;
** at the 95-percent level; * at the 90-percent level.
[ns] Not significant.

Source: Background Information Form administered to all New Visions volunteers at random assignment, RCC assessment and enrollment data.

Continuers were more likely than non-continuers at random assignment to have cited financial worries as an expected challenge in New Visions (63 compared to 46 percent, a statistically significant difference). To the degree that financial concerns mattered, subsequently learning that tuition and other school costs were negligible may have left these students favorably disposed towards continuation. Worrying about financial resources also may be an indication of active interest in going to college.

Pre-New Visions academic skills also appear to predict college continuation, albeit in different ways for math and language skills. Fewer continuers than non-continuers received low scores on the initial New Visions math assessment (15 compared to 28 percent)—a statistically significant difference. In contrast, continuers were more likely than non-continuers to receive low scores on the initial English and reading tests (only the difference for reading is statistically significant). The reasons for these differences—particularly why language skills would not be positively associated with college continuation—deserve further exploration.

Finally, a number of other demographic and economic characteristics were associated with college continuation. Continuers were less likely than non-continuers to have three or more children (28 compared with 39 percent) and less likely to have young children under age 10 (71 compared with 82 percent). Although relatively large, these demographic differences are not statistically significant. Also striking is that continuers were less likely than non-continuers to have received welfare throughout the prior five years (30 compared with 45 percent, a statistically significant difference). The family size differences may implicate childrearing responsibilities as competing with school, whereas welfare history provides a more diffused indication of a range of possible personal limitations.

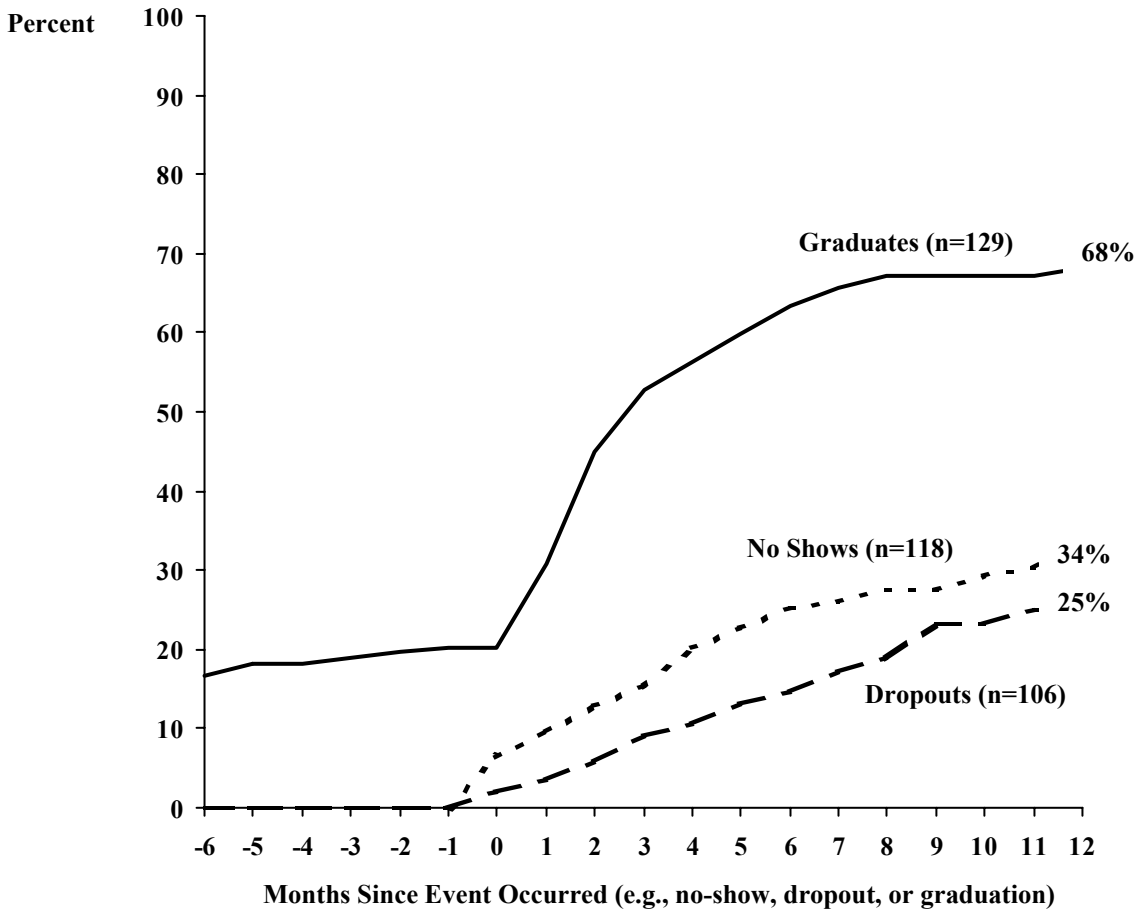
Enrolling in GAIN Education and Training Activities after New Visions

Although New Visions encourages participants to continue at RCC, the program also works closely with its students and GAIN counselors to engage students in other educational activities that may be appropriate to their interests and needs. It is important to consider these other activities to get a full picture of levels of educational activity following New Visions.

Substantial proportions enrolled in one or more non-New Visions GAIN activities after leaving New Visions. Exhibit 3.12 shows the cumulative proportions ever enrolled in non-New Visions GAIN activities separately for graduates, dropouts, and no-shows. As in Exhibit 3.8, the lines here show proportions in the months before and after each group left New Visions (month zero). Because these activities include regular RCC courses counted as GAIN activities, as well as vocational education programs at a wide range of other settings, we expect these proportions to be higher than the rates in Exhibit 3.8 for regular RCC courses alone.

The numbers in Exhibit 3.12 bear out this expectation. Twelve months after leaving New Visions, 68 percent of graduates, 25 percent of dropouts, and 34 percent of no-shows had enrolled in at least one non-New Visions education and training activity. In Exhibit 3.8, we saw that 59, 20, and 11 percent of these groups, respectively, ever enrolled in a regular RCC course 12 months after leaving the program. The implication is that roughly an additional 9, 5, and 23 percent, respectively, went to GAIN education and training activities outside RCC.

Exhibit 3.12
Percent of Treatment Group Members Ever Enrolling in a GAIN Education and Training Activity Other than New Visions after Random Assignment



Sources: Abt Associates tabulations of RCC enrollment data.

It makes sense that no-shows would be more likely than drop-outs and graduates to go to non-RCC activities, since the former spent virtually no time on the RCC campus in New Visions. The analysis suggests that some no-shows may have felt that they would do better in another setting.

Unlike the RCC enrollment figures in Exhibit 3.8, clients had to be on welfare and working at least 20 hours per week to be eligible for GAIN Phase 2 services. The percentages in Exhibit 3.12 are based on all treatment group members, rather than just those on welfare and eligible for Phase 2 services; hence, they understate the program participation rate for eligible clients.

We used life table methods to simulate participation rates for clients remaining eligible for GAIN by restricting the denominator to clients in each of the three groups in Exhibit 3.12 who were still on welfare and working in successive months. The results (not shown in an exhibit) show higher rates of ever having been assigned to non-New Visions GAIN activities. Six months after leaving New Visions, for example, we see rates of 78, 18, and 29 percent, respectively, for graduates, dropouts, and no-shows. Comparable statistics at six months for all eligible clients (shown in Exhibit 3.12) are 63, 15, and 25 percent, respectively. Altogether, the findings imply impressively high levels of engagement in education and training after treatment group members left New Visions.

Challenges Faced in Education and Training Activities after the Core Program

Statistical analyses identified a number of differences in the types of students who did and did not continue in school after graduating from the core program. Here, we summarize what students said during in-depth interviews about some of the challenges they faced in continuing in school.

Academic Challenges. New Visions graduates generally found their post-New Visions course work at RCC to be difficult: about half said that their courses were "too hard," and the other half said "not too hard." Most nonetheless credited New Visions for providing good preparation, even if it was not always enough to make their subsequent work easy. Several students noted that New Visions classes were substantially easier than their later RCC classes, and one student felt that the level of work in New Visions needed to be higher in order to prepare students sufficiently for college. Another student commented, "New Visions prepares you for the basic prerequisites like English and math, but not for additional classes like these [college science classes]."

Despite their difficulties, most students who were taking classes seemed determined to complete them. One student having trouble with a word processing class was working with a tutor. Another student said it "took a lot of will" to make it through her first regular college course on child development given the homework and tests every week. She credited New Visions with helping her to develop better work habits so that she was accustomed to coming to school regularly and finishing her schoolwork.

Other Challenges. Students mentioned challenges other than difficult classes, many of which were similar to issues faced in the core program. These challenges included problems with transportation, work schedules, child care, and financial struggles. One student's account underscores how low-income people often must cope with multiple stresses at once. When we spoke with her, her husband had just lost his job, the couple was behind on their rent, and they had just learned that one of their children had a chronic health problem. Some students reported relying on the support of family and close friends in order to complete their classes. None of the students interviewed mentioned turning to New Visions counselors or other staff when faced with challenges in their post-core classes.

Continuing Support after the Core Program

Although the foregoing clearly demonstrates the need for continuing counseling and social supports after graduation, the program did not address this need initially. As we saw in the last chapter, the need became evident over time, and a growing staff of New Visions counselors began actively reaching out to both graduates and dropouts. We asked graduates in our small in-depth interview sample to describe the nature of their contacts with New Visions staff and with other former students after leaving the program.

Support from New Visions Staff. Graduates' contacts with New Visions counselors were quite mixed. Some told us they were checking in with New Visions counselors when they needed advice or support. Others were relying on other sources, with GAIN case managers a favored resource. Among graduates who were in touch with New Visions counselors, the frequency of contact varied from "about every two months" to dropping in to the New Visions office and chatting with their counselor "all the time."

Students we interviewed in 2001 seemed to be having greater post-core contact with counselors than those we interviewed in 2000, possibly because the program had hired additional counselors in the interim. The larger staff also has made it possible for counselors to adopt a proactive approach rather than waiting for students to seek them out. Most of the graduates we spoke with in 2001 said that their counselors had made substantial efforts to talk with them.

Graduates described New Visions counselors as being concerned and helpful in these interactions. Topics discussed included academic and job plans, suggestions for finding better jobs, and advice and resources to cope with personal and family problems.

Support from Other Former New Visions Students. Most of the graduates we spoke with said that their interaction with former New Visions classmates had declined substantially since graduation. Thus, the post-program social supports available from this peer group were minimal in most cases. However, a few graduates said that they continued to enjoy active relationships with friends they had made in New Visions.

3.4 Welfare and Employment Experiences after Core Program Graduation

In the long run, New Visions seeks to decrease welfare dependence and increase income from earnings. Given the expectation that many graduates will continue in school, however, the model does not necessarily imply that either of these outcomes will occur immediately. In this section, we take a brief look at changes in welfare reliance and jobs in the period immediately following New Visions graduation. Statistics are based on administrative data for graduates.

Welfare and Work

Although most core program graduates continued to receive welfare in the months immediately following graduation, a significant number did leave the rolls. The proportion on welfare declined

from 90 percent two months before graduation to about 70 percent two months after graduation (not shown in an exhibit).

Employment in jobs covered by the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system also increased slightly over this time period. The UI employment rate increased from 67 percent two quarters before the quarter of graduation to 72 percent two quarters after graduation. Total employment rates are higher than these statistics indicate since some jobs—typically those with smaller employers and in the informal job sector—are not covered by the UI system.

In quarters where graduates did have UI-covered jobs, average total earnings in these jobs rose from $1,558 to $1,904 across the five quarters. The UI data do not allow us to determine whether increases in wages or hours worked underlie the rise in average total earnings. DPSS records for graduates remaining on welfare show some evidence of wage increases but little evidence of increased work hours. However, the story for graduates leaving welfare might well be different.

First Job after Graduation

After New Visions, program data on the full sample of graduates show that nearly all (87 percent) were employed in sales (including fast food), clerical, or service jobs (Exhibit 3.13). Clerical and sales jobs were the largest category, including 59 percent of the graduates, with service jobs the next largest at 28 percent.

During in-depth interviews we asked graduates to tell us about any changes in their jobs after core program graduation. Most of the small sample of students we interviewed said that they had not changed jobs since graduation. Typically, they also said that New Visions counselors and instruction had not had much effect on their employment situations. They said that they spent more time working with DPSS case managers on this subject.

Such reports fit with our finding in Chapter 2 that New Visions staff mostly left job-development-related work to DPSS staff. Given the relative lack of emphasis on job development in New Visions, we expect any effects on employment and earnings to arise primarily through increased skills and through educational credentials. As implied earlier in this section, such effects are unlikely to be very large in the short run.

When asked about direct impacts of knowledge and skills acquired in New Visions, most of the small student interview sample said that their jobs were easy and did not afford opportunities to apply what they had learned in New Visions. Several students mentioned that they did feel more confident and better able to communicate at work. Again, effects of improvement in so-called "soft skills" like these may not be as evident to either students or employers in the short run. Whether their effects will grow in the long term, especially as students gain more occupationally-relevant training after New Visions, will be an important subject in future analyses.

Ongoing Support from Welfare Staff

A number of students in the small in-depth interview sample told us that GAIN case managers continued to be important sources of encouragement and help with work and school after graduation. One said, "My GAIN counselor was wonderful." Another said her case manager made her "feel like somebody" when he made home visits to see how she was managing.

Exhibit 3.13
Occupations of New Visions Graduates: First Post-Graduation Job

Primary Occupational Category	Distribution		Detailed Job Titles Represented
	Percent	Number	
Clerical and Sales	58.9	53	Appointment Clerk (1), Assistant Manager (2), Cashier (21), Clerk (7), Cosmetics/Hairdresser/Manicure (1), Error Deputy (1), Housekeeper (1), Merchandise Stocking (1), New Visions Recruiter (1), Receptionist (3), Sales (6), Teacher's Aide (5), Telemarketer (2), Telephone Interviewer (1)
Service	27.8	25	Babysitter (1), Banquet Server (1), Cafeteria Worker (2), Caregiver (1), Cashier (1), Caterer/Food Server (1), Child Care Provider (2), Cosmetologist (1), Customer Service (3), Day Care Worker (1), Direct Care (1), Food Preparer (1), Hairdresser (1), Housekeeper (1), In Home Supportive Svcs (1), Janitor (2), Laundry Laborer (1), Maintenance (1), Recruiter (1), Waitress (1)
Professional, Technical and Managerial	8.9	8	Activity Asst. (1), Health Care (1), Instructional Assistant (1), Recruiter (3), Public Relations (1), Spiritual Guider (1)
Other	4.4	4	Assembly Packing (1), Carpenter (1), Farming (1), Packager (1)
All Jobs	100.0	90	

Source: DPSS case records.

3.5 Family and Other Life Issues

Students we interviewed told us that the New Visions core program offered an affirming environment, refuge from hectic work and home situations, and training in a host of life skills needed to successfully manage daily living. We asked students to describe any enduring benefits in their personal and home lives from New Visions.

Personal and Family Stresses

There was little apparent decline in the number and intensity of stressful events in the lives of the small sample of students we interviewed after New Visions graduation. The list of issues mentioned included: divorce and other changes in relationships; an unplanned pregnancy; drug and alcohol problems; health issues for self, children, and extended family; family conflict; mental health problems; housing problems; concerns about children's behavior and school performance; job loss; and increasing debt.

With varying degrees of success, graduates were attempting to apply skills acquired in New Visions to cope with these crises. Some appeared to be well-organized and have things under control. Others reported that difficulties in managing life challenges had disrupted their educational plans.

Needs for intensive counseling and services thus appear to be at least as great after as before New Visions graduation. Without such support, the incidence and severity of stressful situations will continue to make it very difficult for graduates to follow through on their career plans.

Graduates' Relationships with Their Children

We asked our small sample of graduates about whether and how New Visions had helped them in their relationships with their children. Responses were mixed. Some said New Visions had made little difference. Others said that New Visions had strengthened their parenting skills and made them better role models for their children—especially with regard to educational goals.

Several graduates mentioned that their children's respect for them had increased. They attributed this improvement to increases in their own self-esteem, as well as to the example they set in going back to school and taking steps to develop careers. Comments such as the following are illustrative:

> *My kids see me going back to school and not quitting. There's more respect. They see I care more about myself. This will convince them to want to go to school, not give up. Four years ago I was drinking, almost on the street. I had no place to go—either a shelter or home. I don't ever want to go back [to drinking]. I don't want to go back. Now the insanity is gone. I have a full-time job, going back to school, am totally communicating with my kids, and very comfortable.*

> *Yes, of course, everything affected my relationship with them. Before I was a lazy, alcoholic mom on welfare, and now I'm working and going to school and studying.*

Several respondents felt that their New Visions experience had encouraged their children to set higher educational goals. A few graduates with young children said that their children now want to go to

college like their mothers. A student with older children said that her success in school has encouraged her children to set career goals and to want to attend college.

Improved relationships with children were another consistent theme. For example, one current student said that New Visions "makes me get along with [my daughter] better" because the student's happiness in New Visions carries over into her relationship with her daughter. Graduates also reported that during and after New Visions, they would spend time doing schoolwork with their children. One 15-year-old child helps her mother with her New Visions computer homework. New Visions made it easier for one graduate to help her son with his math homework. Another student described several ways that New Visions had had an impact on her relationships with her children:

> *It made me have better relationships. [My children] see 'my mother's in school, so there's no reason [not go to school].' My daughter didn't want to go but now she's thinking in those terms. Now I can help her with school. [Although my daughter's math is challenging] we can at least try to figure it out together. We're both doing homework together at the table.*

In several cases, the benefits from New Visions extended to their entire family. One of the few married students in our sample explained how insights she gained in the Guidance class have helped at home:

> *Before we all went our own ways; we didn't do anything together. In Guidance I got ideas about things to bring to the table with my family . . . Now at night we share, talk about our homework. I'm becoming more of a role model for them as students. This has my husband thinking about learning to read and write. I've learned more about financial aid [which has encouraged him].*

Chapter 4
Early Impacts of New Visions

In this last chapter, we turn from students' experiences in the New Visions program to the program's early effects on key educational and economic outcomes. To measure program impacts, we bring the demonstration's randomly-assigned control group into the picture.

The experimental design randomly divided New Visions volunteers into two groups with highly similar initial characteristics. Both groups subsequently experienced the same local economic and social conditions. The only systematic difference between the two groups is that only the treatment group was allowed to participate in New Visions. Control group members were allowed—indeed, encouraged—to enroll in other education and training programs in the community. The impacts of New Visions, relative to these other programs, are estimated as the difference in average outcomes for the two groups over time. The outcomes we assess include involvement in education and training activities, college enrollment, employment and earnings, and TANF receipt.

Over the long run, New Visions seeks to increase educational attainment, increase wage rates and earnings, and decrease use of public assistance. Program designers also hoped to see positive short-run economic results, as employment-related (e.g., SCANS) skills acquired in the New Visions core program translated into more rapid job advancement. Alternatively, success in engaging participants in college might lead them to invest less time and energy in their jobs and rely more on TANF in the short run, compared with control group members enrolling in shorter-term occupational training programs or deciding to work full-time and not go to school.

Analyses in this chapter assess impacts over roughly the first two years after random assignment for the 658 sample members who could be observed this long. This period represents the "short term" given that it includes the 24-week core period and that it is likely to take at least another year or two to accumulate sufficient coursework and find employment in a new career.

Results in this chapter show that the treatment group had higher overall rates of education and training activity and, of special significance, higher rates of enrollment in regular courses at RCC. The program had no significant impacts on employment and earnings and was associated with increased TANF reliance in the short-term. Further follow-up is needed to determine whether the increase in education and training pays off in terms of higher wage rates and earnings and lower welfare receipt. The final evaluation report will extend analyses over a longer follow-up period and incorporate the full demonstration sample.

4.1 Research Methods

This section describes the research sample, data sources, and analytic approach underlying the findings presented in this chapter. Sections 4.2-4.4 provide impact findings for education and training, employment and earnings, and TANF payments, respectively.

Sample and Follow-Up

Intake for the experiment extended from September 1998 to May 2002 and eventually assigned a total of 1,076 volunteers to treatment (545 persons) and control (531 persons) groups. Treatment group members were allowed to enroll in New Visions, whereas control group members were not allowed to enroll in New Visions but could participate in other education and training activities available through the GAIN program. Although random assignment was continuous, volunteers were divided into 27 cohorts that began classes approximately every six weeks. As described in Chapter 2, the relatively frequent enrollment cycles were designed to minimize the wait to begin New Visions classes.

Analyses in this chapter are limited to a sub-sample of 658 volunteers who were randomly assigned by December 2000, including 336 treatment and 322 control group members.[41] This restriction provided a sample for which we had at least 24 months of follow-up assuming a December 2002 data collection cut-off point. Because actual end points varied somewhat across data sources, follow-up varies from 1½ to 2½ years.

The analysis sample includes a special group of 131 individuals who were randomly assigned between April and June 2000 while they were still in Phase 1 of GAIN and had not yet met the 20-hour per week employment requirement. Those assigned to the treatment group still had to meet the 20-hour rule as a condition for participation. However, to support New Visions' recruitment effort, for several months DPSS relaxed its unsubsidized employment requirement and allowed RCC to provide work study jobs to these students. Meanwhile, control group members in these cohorts remained in Phase 1 until they found unsubsidized jobs. The characteristics of so-called "Phase 1 volunteers" were generally similar to those of Phase 2 volunteers, and—as discussed in Chapter 2—DPSS rescinded the work study allowance for this cohort within a few months of random assignment. We retained this group in all analyses after tests showed that doing so generally had negligible effects on impact results.

Data Sources

The analyses in this chapter draw on data from a wide array of sources. These sources include administrative information systems maintained by DPSS, RCC, and state agencies, as well as a Background Information Form developed for the evaluation and administered at random assignment.

Participation in GAIN Employment and Education and Training (E&T) Activities. Impacts on E&T participation are measured using automated records from DPSS's GAIN Employment Activity Reporting System (GEARS). These data include all types of E&T activities recorded by DPSS case workers, as well as job search and job readiness activities. The data do not capture any activities in which New Visions sample members participated on their own (i.e., outside of the GAIN program). Data used in analyses in this report extend from the month of random assignment through December 2002.

[41] The research sample excludes the very first cohort of 33 persons, because its control group had an anomalously high rate of enrollment (42 percent) in non-New Visions classes compared with other cohorts (typically 5 percent). Analyses in Chapter 3, which do not involve treatment-control comparisons, include this cohort.

Community College Enrollment and Achievement. To estimate impacts on college enrollment and credits, RCC provided course-level data for every New Visions sample member who ever enrolled at RCC. The data extend from several years before random assignment through the Spring 2003 term. We also obtained data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) on enrollment at all public two-year colleges in California. These data, which capture enrollment in community colleges statewide only for the Fall 1994 through Spring 2001 terms, showed almost no enrollment at community colleges other than RCC. In contrast to the GEARS data, the RCC and CCCCO data cover demonstration participants' enrollment at any time, including periods after leaving welfare and, in the case of the CCCCO data, periods of residence in other California counties. In addition to enrollments, both RCC and CCCCO provided information on degrees, certificates, and academic credits earned by sample members.

Earnings and Employment. Measures for earnings and employment are based on quarterly wage data from California's Unemployment Insurance (UI) reporting system provided by the California Employment Development Department. These data cover the vast majority of jobs, but generally exclude self-employment, casual employment, and other jobs not covered by the UI system. The data cover employment anywhere in California. Data collected to date cover the period from at least one year before random assignment through the second calendar quarter of 2002. This follow-up period is shorter than that for other study outcomes due to standard reporting lags in the UI system.

TANF Payments and Receipt. DPSS provided monthly administrative records for the purpose of estimating impacts on TANF use. Data for this report pertain to the period extending from random assignment through December 2002. Because California's TANF program is county-administered and each county maintains a separate information system, our statistics reflect only TANF receipt in Riverside County. To the degree that treatment and control group members leave the county at similar rates, however, out-migration will have little affect on estimated differences in rates of receipt between the two groups.

Baseline Data. DPSS and RCC used a Background Information Form (BIF) to collect information on the status and characteristics of New Visions volunteers as of random assignment. DPSS and RCC collected BIF data for all but five individuals in the full sample of 1,076 volunteers. These data were used to create covariates for regression models used to estimate program impacts, as described below.

Approach to Estimating Impacts

Following standard practice, we calculate impacts as the (regression-adjusted) difference between average outcomes for treatment and control group members. Random assignment ensures that the only differences between the treatment and control groups, on average, are those resulting from the fact that group members were able to enroll in New Visions and control group members were not.

Regression adjustment involves estimating these differences while controlling for characteristics of sample members that are measured at the point of random assignment (sometimes called "baseline"). Specifically, the regression models used for this purpose represent the outcome variable of interest (e.g., the amount of welfare payments received in a quarter) as a function of a treatment-control indicator (with 1 representing a treatment group member and 0 a control group member) and a series

of baseline variables.[42] Adjusting for these chance differences usually produces more precise impact estimates.

Interpreting Impacts

In interpreting the impact estimates, it is important to recognize that DPSS case managers encouraged the control group, as well as the treatment group, to engage in education and training. The only difference was that the control group could not participate in New Visions. Hence, the comparison is not between New Visions and *no* education and training services, but rather between New Visions and *other* education and training services available in the community.

As shown in the next section, control group members did in fact participate in other education and training activities to a significant degree. The experiment thus represents a test of what a specific community college attachment model can contribute beyond a relatively high level of participation in other education and training services in the community.

A second important point is that impacts capture the effects of the *opportunity* to participate in New Visions for all those who volunteered for the program, rather than actual participation. Treatment group members were not required to participate in New Visions, and one-third of those who volunteered never showed up for the program. Nevertheless, the impacts presented in this chapter are based on the entire treatment group, including New Visions no-shows. An alternative would be to estimate impacts only on those who showed up. In the evaluation literature, these two types of impacts are often referred to as the impacts of the *intention to treat* and the impacts of *treatment on the treated.* If, as seems likely, New Visions' impacts are larger on participants than on treatment group members who did *not* participate, then impacts estimated for the entire treatment group will be smaller than those measured only for the treated.

Although both types of impacts may be of interest to policymakers, the usual practice—which we follow in this chapter—is to present only the impacts of the intention to treat. The main reason is that impacts that include no-shows provide a more realistic estimate of the overall effects were New Visions to be replicated elsewhere, given the likelihood of comparable no-show rates. Calculating impact point estimates for New Visions shows is straightforward, and readers interested in the adjusted estimates can obtain them simply by dividing the impact estimates presented by the show-up proportion of .67 estimated in Chapter 3.

For example, the unadjusted impact on the percent ever enrolling in non-New Visions courses at RCC is 15 percentage points (see Exhibit 4.4). Dividing 15 by .67 results in an estimated impact of 22 percentage points for volunteers who actually showed up for the program. An even more dramatic adjustment assumes no impact for the 45 percent of shows who dropped out of the core program. Dividing 15 by .37 (.67*.55) results in an estimated impact of 41 percentage points for program graduates. Because New Visions may have helped some dropouts to attend other RCC courses, the true impact for graduates probably is not this high.

[42] The coefficient on the treatment indicator gives the estimated impact, or difference in average outcomes between treatment and control groups. Our baseline covariates differed slightly across outcomes, but generally included: a measure for the outcome prior to random assignment, race/ethnicity, age of the youngest child, age of adult, work history, whether previously attended college, TANF receipt history, and marital status.

4.2 Impacts on Education and Training

This section presents findings on education and training impacts. After looking at rates in the control group, it turns to impacts on GAIN employment and training participation and community college enrollments and related outcomes.

Control Group Members' Participation in Education and Training

As noted earlier, GAIN encouraged all Phase 2 clients—including control group members—to participate in E&T. It is worth taking a brief look at control group experiences, since they provide the standard against which outcomes for treatment group members are assessed.

Over the first eight quarters after random assignment, just over half (51 percent) of control group members participated in at least one GAIN E&T activity, as shown in the top panel of Exhibit 4.1.[43] Most of this participation began in the first two quarters after random assignment. The bottom panel of Exhibit 4.1 shows that nearly all of this activity involved some form of vocational training and that only a small fraction was basic education.[44]

The E&T participation rate for the New Visions control group is higher than comparable rates in most other welfare-to-work evaluations. For example, the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (NEWWS) found two-year participation rates in vocational training or post-secondary education for control group members of 11 to 28 percent across 11 sites, with an average rate of 18 percent.[45] In fact, the participation rate for New Visions control group members is comparable to those for NEWWS treatment group members in sites testing intensive human capital models.

One reason for the high activity rates of New Visions control group members is that random assignment for New Visions occurred *after* they already had volunteered for New Visions. The sample consequently represents individuals who were fairly motivated to participate in at least one E&T activity. A second reason for high control group activity rates is that DPSS case managers made a substantial effort to engage clients in E&T in the new GAIN Phase 2 program. The intensity of this effort increased substantially over the New Visions enrollment period.[46] A third possibility is that, by stressing the value of education, New Visions recruitment efforts influenced control group members to be more likely to participate in other GAIN activities after learning they could not go to New Visions. The design does not allow us to measure the latter impact rigorously.

These relatively high rates of E&T activity for control group members are a reminder that this evaluation is assessing a particular program model (New Visions) against other programs in the

---

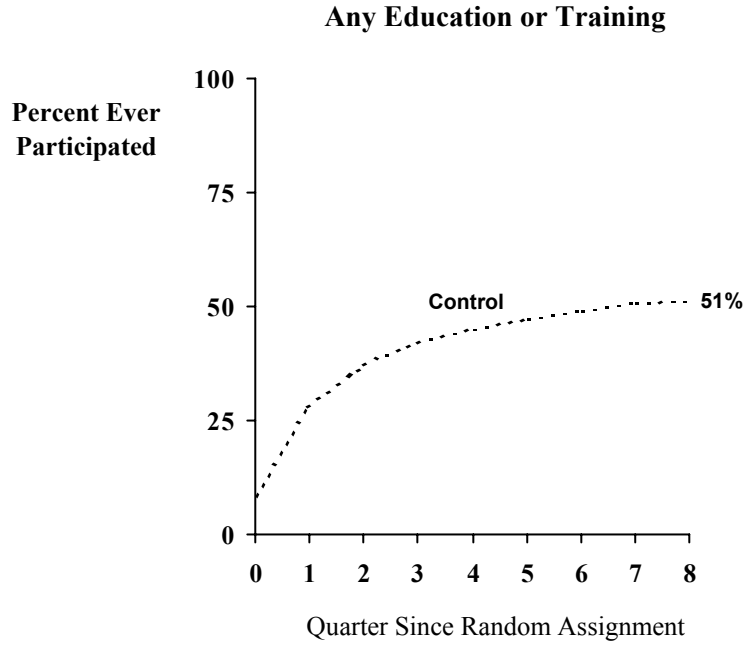
[43] The percentages shown include activities in which clients *participated* (whether or not activities were completed), and exclude activities to which clients were referred but did not participate.

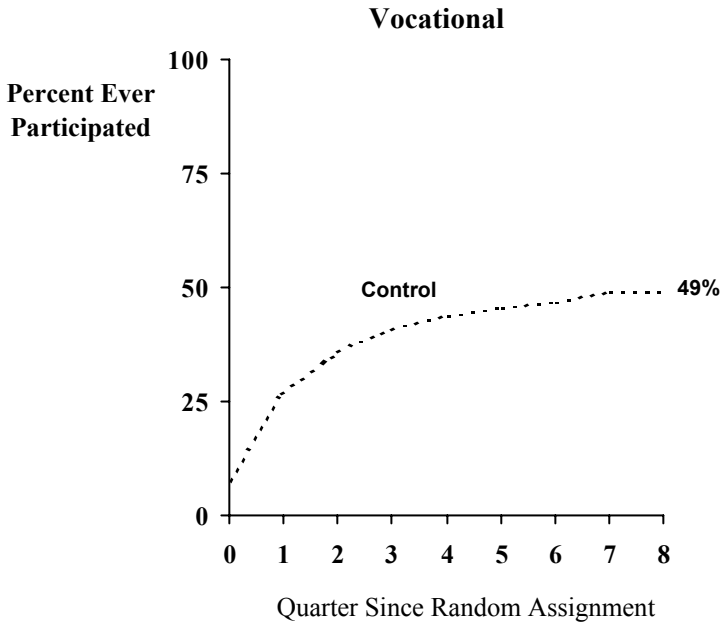
[44] Some control group members participated in both vocational training and basic education, which explains why the sum of the participation rates for these two activities (56 percent) is slightly higher than the overall participation rate (51 percent).

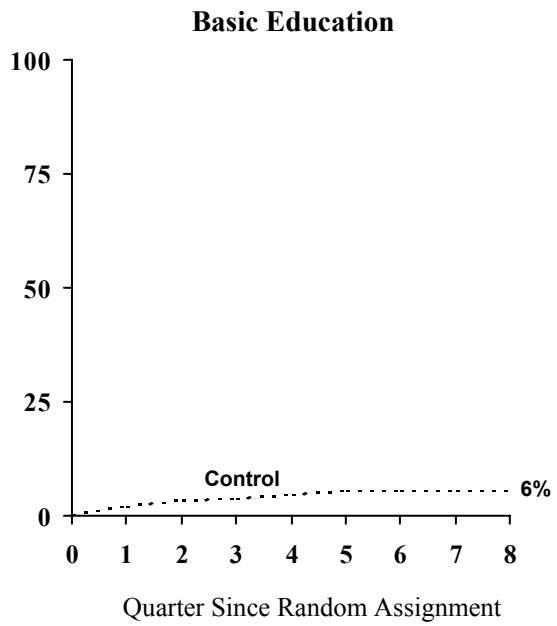
[45] Freedman *et al.* (2000; Appendix Table A-1).

[46] For example, 67 percent of control group members randomly assigned in the third year of the demonstration, but only 22 percent of those assigned in the first year, participated in E&T.

Exhibit 4.1
Cumulative Rates of Participation in Education and Training Activities for Control Group Members







Source: Riverside County DPSS GAIN administrative records
Note: Sample size is 322 control group members

community, rather than against a "no services" counterfactual. In particular, the demonstration assesses a program aiming to prepare students for, and then engage them in, college-level occupational training while providing skills useful at work against a variety of (generally shorter) training programs for specific occupations.

Impacts on Participation in GAIN Employment and Training Activities

The control group's E&T participation patterns show what would have happened to treatment group members absent New Visions. The *impact* of New Visions is calculated as the difference in E&T participation rates between the treatment and control groups. It represents the additional education and training generated by New Visions.

New Visions generated a sizeable increase in the overall rate of E&T engagement (Exhibit 4.2, top panel). Eighty-three (83) percent of treatment group members participated in an education or training activity, compared with 51 percent of control group members.[47] Nearly all of the treatment group's participation began within the first quarter after random assignment (seen by the initial steep slope of the treatment group line in the top panel), whereas the control group's participation rose more gradually.

New Visions participation accounted for the entire difference in rates of E&T participation (Exhibit 4.2, three bottom graphs). Nearly all of the treatment group members who took part in E&T (83 percent overall) participated in New Visions (75 percent).[48] For non-New Visions E&T activities—vocational training and basic education—treatment group participation initially was much *lower* than control group participation, but caught up somewhat over time. Eight quarters after random assignment, 38 percent of treatment group members and 49 percent of control group members had participated in a non-New Visions vocational training program. Treatment group members' engagement in vocational training increased most from quarters two to three, coincident with the time when many individuals completed the New Visions core phase. As we will see shortly (in Exhibit 4.4), much of this increase reflects continuation in regular RCC courses.

Impacts on Participation in Job Search and Job Readiness Activities

In addition to high rates of involvement in E&T activities, many treatment and control group members participated in GAIN labor force attachment activities such as job search and job readiness. Overall, about half of the sample members in both groups participated in one of these activities (Exhibit 4.3, top panel).

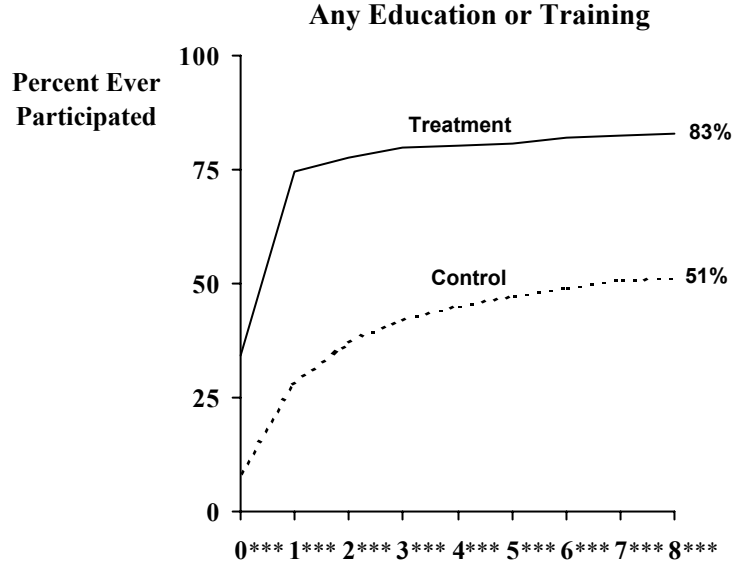
Treatment group members were somewhat less likely than control group members to participate in job search (especially during the first four follow-up quarters) and more likely to participate in job readiness, at least at the beginning of the follow-up period. Positive impacts on job readiness

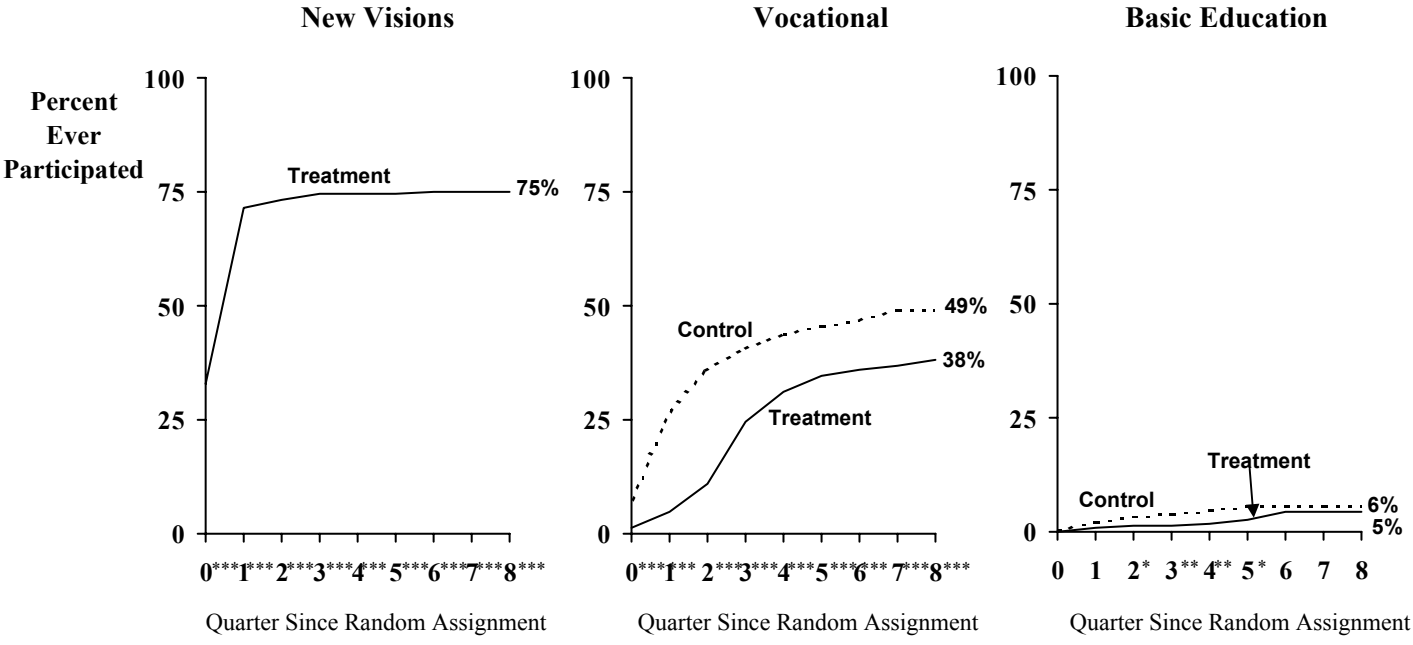
---

[47] In addition to estimating impacts on *participation*, we also estimated impacts on E&T activity *completion* rates. Although rates for the latter were lower than for the former, the patterns of impacts were substantially similar.

[48] The control group line cannot be seen in the New Visions graph in Exhibit 4.2 because it is zero in all quarters; control group members did not participate in New Visions.

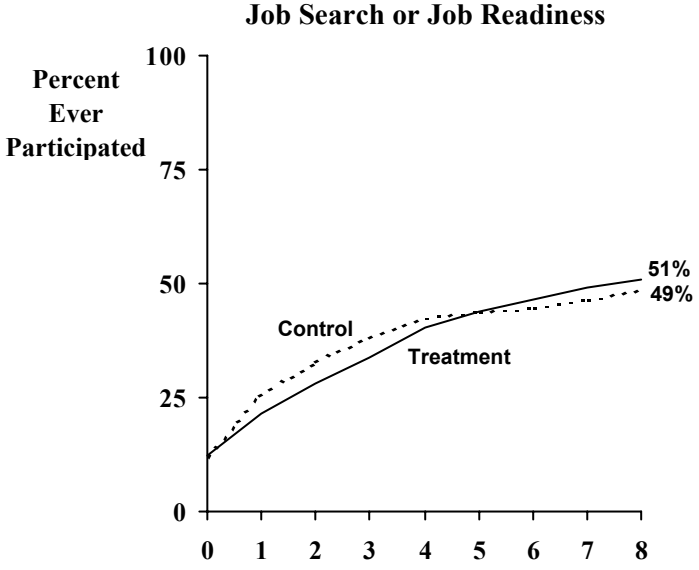
Exhibit 4.2
Cumulative Participation Rates in Education and Training Activities for Treatment and Control Group Members

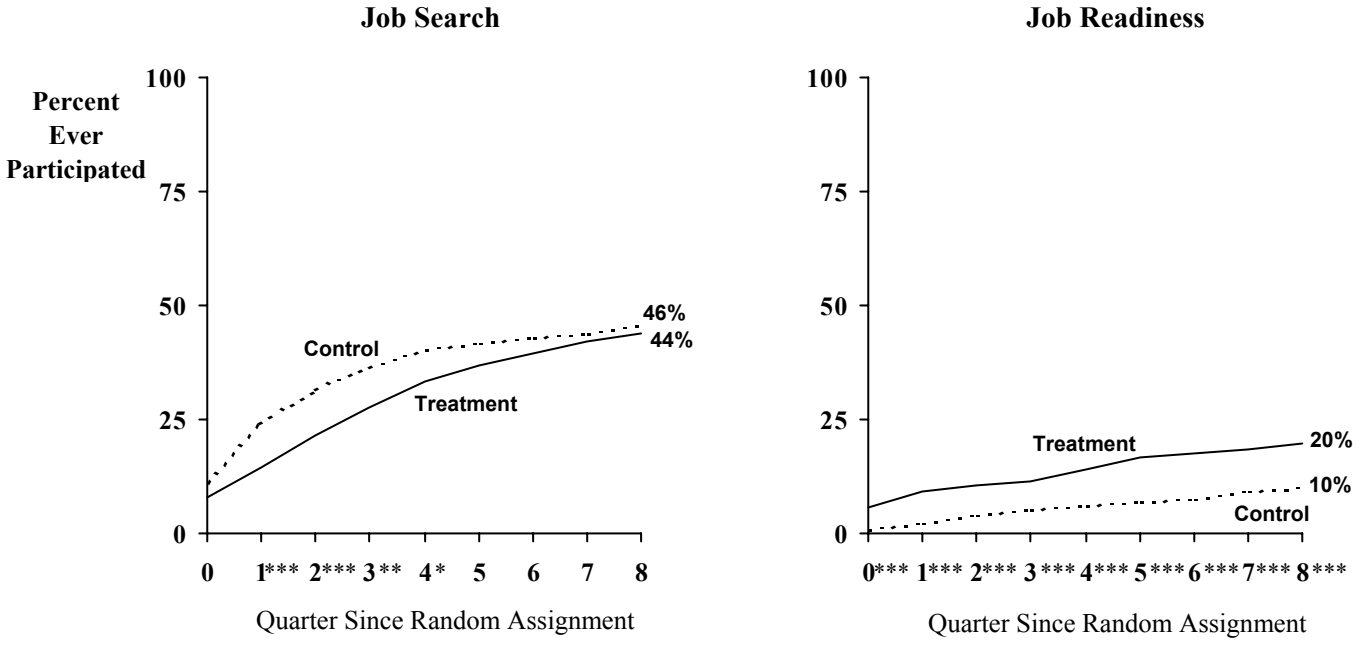




Source: Riverside County DPSS GAIN administrative records
Notes: a. Sample size is 658: 336 treatment and 322 control group members.
b. A 2-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the treatment and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: ***=1 percent; **=5 percent; and *=10 percent

Exhibit 4.3
Cumulative Participation Rates in Job Search and Job Readiness Activities for Treatment and Control Group Members





Source: Riverside County DPSS GAIN administrative records

Notes: a. Sample size is 658: 336 treatment and 322 control group members.

b. A 2-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the treatment and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: ***=1 percent; **=5 percent; and *=10 percent

partly reflect assignments to workshops during the up to six-week period between random assignment and New Visions orientation and partly the agency's efforts to find activities for the sub-sample of 131 clients allowed to volunteer for New Visions directly from Phase 1 before meeting the 20-hour work requirement.[49]

Many other treatment group members nonetheless did receive job search and job readiness assistance from DPSS at some point after random assignment, presumably to get help finding a better job or becoming re-employed after losing a job. Such services may have helped participants to stay employed so that they could continue in school during and after the New Visions core program.

Impacts on Enrollment at RCC and Other Community Colleges

There are several ways to analyze impacts on community college enrollment, depending on whether one includes or excludes New Visions course work. Given the program's goal of increasing lifelong learning, community college participation beyond New Visions is of particular interest.

Impacts on Cumulative Enrollment at RCC. As intended, the New Visions demonstration greatly increased sample members' enrollment at RCC. Nearly three of every four treatment group members enrolled at RCC at some point in the first ten quarters after random assignment, compared to fewer than one in three control group members (Exhibit 4.4, top left).[50] Most of this impact on RCC enrollment reflects participation in New Visions itself. Nearly all of the treatment group members who enrolled at RCC did so within the first quarter after random assignment, when they would have been participating in New Visions.

Enrollment at RCC by Quarter. Rates of RCC enrollment among treatment group members dropped sharply after the second follow-up quarter, when the New Visions' core program normally ended for program graduates (Exhibit 4.4, top right). Beyond this point, however, more treatment than control group members continued to be enrolled at RCC. Statistically significant, albeit smaller, differences persisted through the tenth follow-up quarter. In the tenth quarter, 14 percent of treatment group members and only 8 percent of control group members were enrolled at RCC.

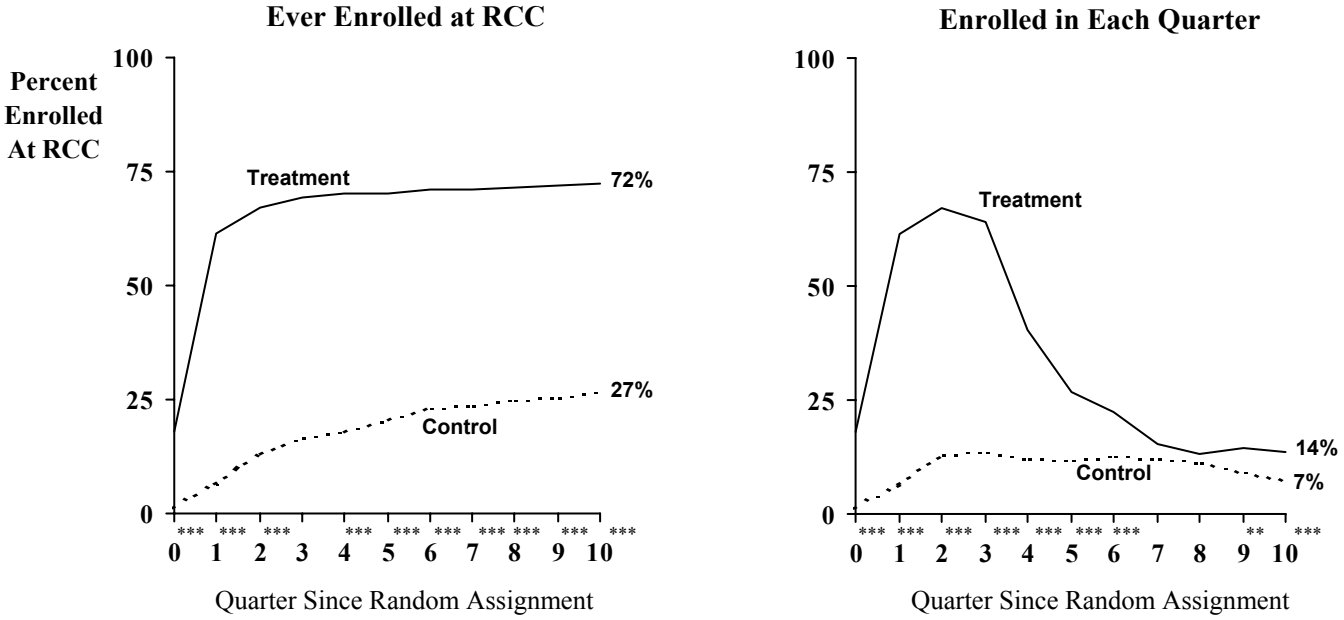
Enrollment in Non-New Visions RCC Courses. Impacts on enrollment in non-New Visions courses at RCC provide an indication of the degree to which the program boosted rates of enrollment in regular courses at RCC—a key program objective. In the last chapter, we saw that a relatively high fraction of graduates (59 percent) enrolled in a regular course within a year of graduation. The impact analyses summarized in Exhibit 4.4 (bottom chart) show that the fraction of all treatment group members (including core program graduates, no-shows, and dropouts) ever enrolling in regular courses after 10 quarters (41 percent) was substantially greater than the fraction of control group members (27 percent). The 15-percentage point difference (after rounding) is statistically significant and represents a substantial proportionate impact—roughly 50 percent more than the rate for the

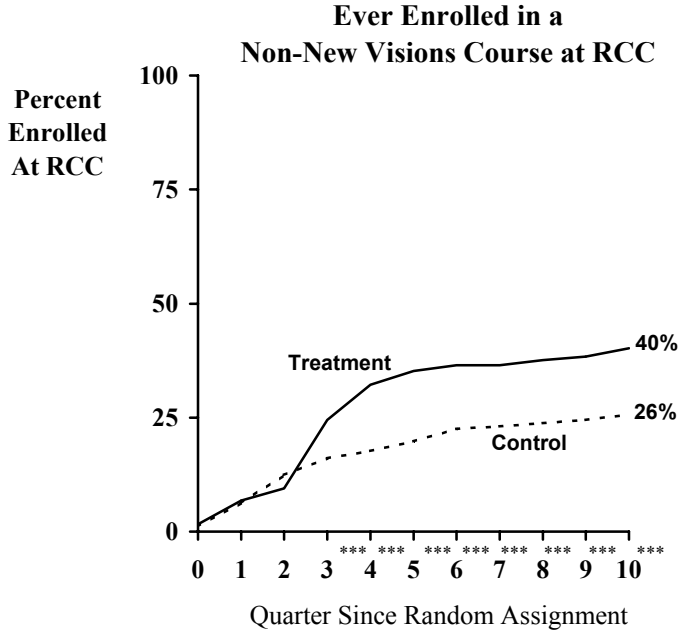
---

[49] Appendix Exhibit A.2 gives results including and excluding this subset of 131 volunteers. Impacts on job search and job readiness also were somewhat larger for this group, as evident by comparing the third and sixth columns of Exhibit A.2.

[50] The availability of recent RCC enrollment data allows us to extend analyses over a longer follow-up interval than other outcomes in this chapter.

Exhibit 4.4
RCC Enrollment Rates and Credits Earned
for Treatment and Control Group Members





Source: Riverside Community College administrative records

Notes: a. Sample size is 658: 336 treatment and 322 control group members.

b. A 2-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the treatment and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: ***=1 percent; **=5 percent; and *=10 percent

control group. The impact emerges after the second follow-up quarter, when participants normally finished the New Visions core program.

Impact on Degree-Applicable Credits Earned at RCC. The large impact on RCC enrollment was associated with a respectable impact on total degree-applicable credits earned. After ten follow-up quarters, the average treatment group member had earned 7.5 credits, compared to 2.0 credits for the average control group member (see Appendix Exhibit A.3). Although all New Visions core courses earn credit, only the three Guidance course credits count towards an associates degree or are transferable to other University of California institutions. Thus, the nearly eight-credit average for treatment group members suggests that many clients completed at least one non-New Visions course. This average includes many treatment group members who earned no credits, either because they did not graduate from the core program or enroll in a non-New Visions course. Among treatment group members earning at least one credit, the average is considerably higher (13.5 credits).

With ten credits overall (including pre-New Visions credits), the average treatment group member would be within striking distance of the 18-credit minimum required for many state certificate programs. Of course, the credits sample members earned may not all have been applicable to the same program.

Enrollment at Other California Community Colleges. Although New Visions is an RCC program, it is possible that it led some treatment group members to continue their educations at other colleges. Similarly, some control group members also may have gone to other community colleges. To determine the extent to which New Visions sample members enrolled in community colleges other than RCC, we analyzed CCCCO data for a portion of the research sample.[51] According to these data, only two percent of 457 sample members analyzed had enrolled in a community college other than RCC since random assignment. Further, this two percent was split nearly evenly between the treatment (five sample members) and (four sample members) control groups. The result means that RCC data suffice to convey impacts on overall community college enrollment, at least at this point in the demonstration.

Impacts on Certificate and Degree Attainment

Ultimately, an important New Visions objective is to increase participants' attainment of college certificates and degrees (two- and four-year degrees).[52] At this point, however, the available follow-up is too short to observe impacts on these longer-term outcomes. RCC data through early 2003 show that small and statistically identical fractions of treatment and control group members (two percent for both groups) received either a degree or certificate since random assignment. Of a total of 18 credentials awarded across both groups (some individuals received more than one), 13 were certificates and 5 were associates degrees. Sample members earning associates degrees had amassed a majority of their credits prior to random assignment.

---

[51] CCCCO data were analyzed only for demonstration participants randomly assigned by June 2000.

[52] Certificates require fewer credits than a two-year degree. The California community college system requires certificate programs to be at least 18 credits. RCC and other community colleges have established shorter programs, sometimes called occupational mini-programs, that issue certificates that are recorded at RCC but not formally recognized by the CCCCO. See Chapter 2 for further information on these programs.

4.3 Impacts on Employment and Earnings

Employment rates and average total earnings in the six quarters after random assignment were not statistically different for volunteers assigned to the New Visions treatment and control groups (Exhibit 4.5, top and bottom panels).[53] Nor did the total number of quarters worked or average total earning differ for the two groups when summed over the entire follow-up period (see Appendix Exhibit A.4). Thus, in the short run New Visions has not had a significant impact on employment and earnings.

It is possible that these crude measures (which are based on quarterly earnings from jobs covered by unemployment insurance) conceal more subtle effects. For example, if some participants secured raises and promotions while others curtailed their work hours to leave more time for school, impacts might cancel in the aggregate. We have not yet collected the data needed to investigate this hypothesis.

4.4 Impacts on TANF Receipt

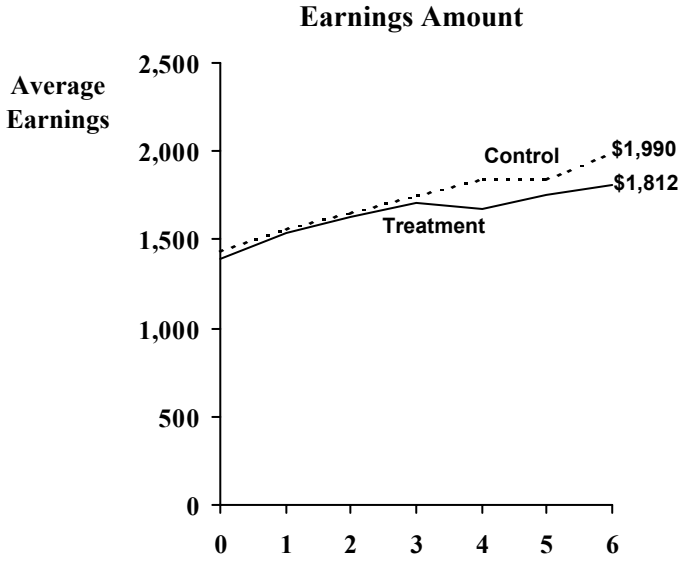
Data presented in Exhibit 4.6 (top and bottom panels) show that, compared with control group members, New Visions treatment group members had higher welfare reliance over the first eight quarters following the quarter of random assignment. Across all nine quarters (including the quarter of random assignment), the average treatment group member received welfare for an additional 4/10ths of a calendar quarter and received about $800 more in assistance than the average control group member (see Appendix Exhibit A.4). The differences are statistically significant.

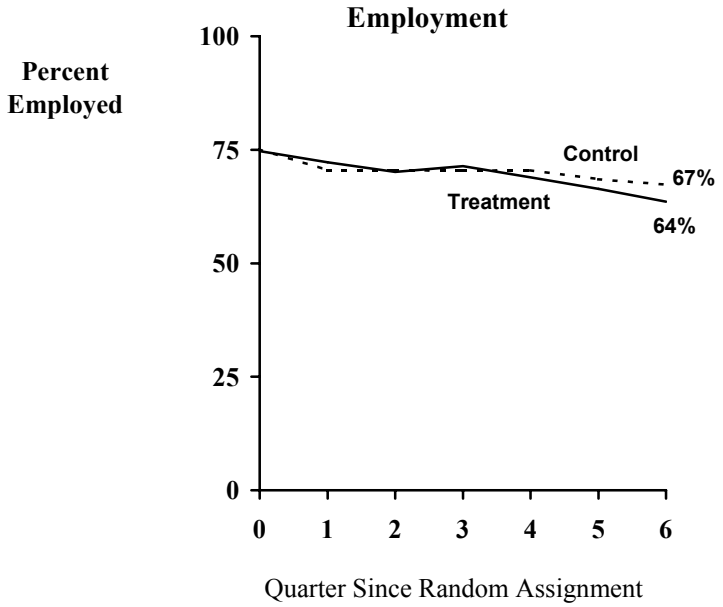
New Visions' impacts on TANF receipt are only about half as large as its impacts on average total payments (in proportionate terms), implying that the program led to higher average payments for those receiving welfare as well as higher fractions receiving assistance. Higher payments could arise, for example, if treatment group members worked less and had lower earnings than control group members while on TANF.

More generally, the reason that New Visions was associated with increased welfare receipt and higher average welfare payments may be because treatment group members restricted other activities—such as full-time employment or marriage—that might interfere with school. Another hint that this may be so is that negative impacts on earnings emerge around the beginning of the second follow-up year: although these impacts are not statistically significant, their timing roughly corresponds to the period of largest increases in welfare utilization. It is too early to tell whether New Visions will be associated with earnings *gains* and welfare receipt *reductions* over the longer run, as intended. Analyses in our final report will address this question.

[53] Due to lags in the availability of UI wage records, the follow-up period for employment and earnings (six quarters) is shorter than for other outcomes (eight to ten quarters).

Exhibit 4.5
Earnings and Employment
for Treatment and Control Group Members



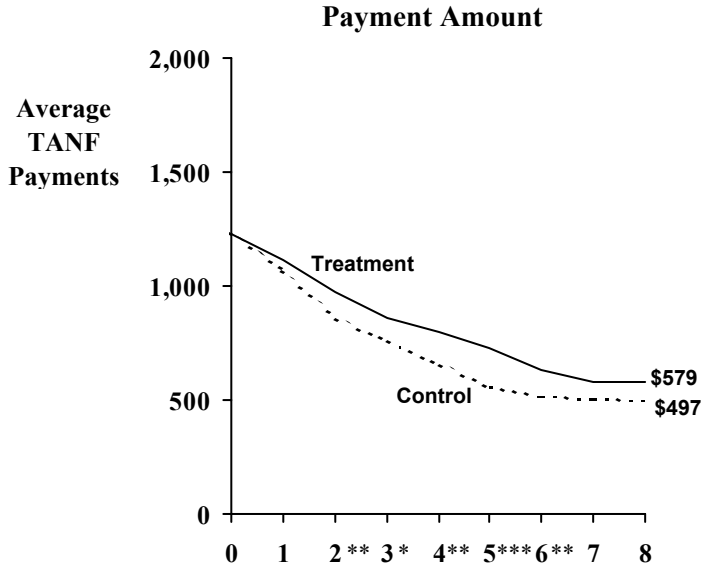


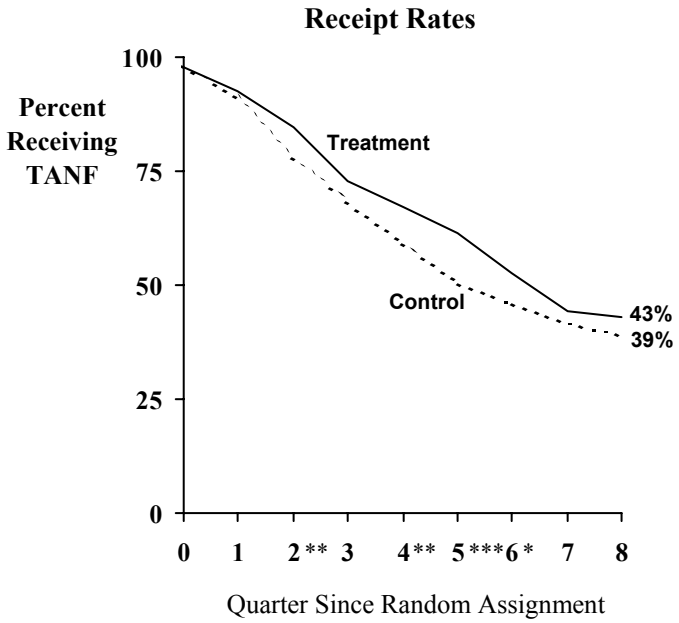
Source: Unemployment Insurance quarterly earnings records.

Notes: a. Sample size is 653: 334 treatment and 319 control group members.

b. A 2-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the treatment and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: ***=1 percent; **=5 percent; and *=10 percent

Exhibit 4.6
TANF Payments and Receipt for Treatment and Control Group Members





Source: Riverside County DPSS administrative records.

Notes: a. Sample size is 658: 336 treatment and 322 control group members.

b. A 2-tailed t-test was applied to differences between the treatment and control groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: ***=1 percent; **=5 percent; and *=10 percent

4.5 Summary

Although New Visions is a mixed employment and education model, its two-year impacts are more consistent with those normally seen in human capital investment approaches than in labor force attachment programs. The program generated a large increase in education and training participation among treatment group members. Of particular note, treatment group members were significantly more likely to enroll in non-New Visions courses at RCC, a key program objective. In contrast, there was no statistically significant effect on employment or earnings, and the program led to somewhat higher rates of TANF receipt and average payments. Signs suggest that, although not statistically significant, somewhat lower work effort may underlie higher welfare use. We can conclude that in the short-run the program has been more successful in engaging participants in college than in raising their earnings.

The fact that education and training participation rates were fairly high for both the treatment and control groups is noteworthy in light of the fact that sample members also were working. The county's policy of encouraging both work and school clearly has had a substantial effect on these outcomes, although it also is possible that clients who volunteered for New Visions volunteers—especially at the beginning of the program when there were fewer alternative Phase 2 options—initially were more motivated and had fewer barriers to work and school than those who did not. Further research is needed to evaluate the contributing factors properly.

Analyses in our final report will determine whether participants' short-term sacrifices pay off in terms of greater educational attainment, higher wages and earnings, and a reduced need for public assistance. The early results presented in this current report suggest some potential for, but do not guarantee, such positive long-term effects.

References

Boldt, N. 1999. "From Welfare, to College, to Work." Presentation at a September 1999 conference on Welfare Reform and the College Option, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, press release, November 21, 2001.

Carnevale, A. P. and Desrochers, D. M. 1999. *Getting Down to Business: Matching Welfare Recipients' Skills to Jobs that Train.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Danziger, S., Corcoran, M., Danziger, S., Heflin, C., Kalil, A., Levine, J., Rosen, D., Seefeldt, K., Siefert, K., and Tolman, R. 1999. *Barriers to the Employment of Welfare Recipients.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Poverty Research and Training Center.

Fein, D. J., Beecroft, E., Long, D. A., and Catalfamo, A. R. 2000. *The New Visions Evaluation: College as a Job Advancement Strategy—An Early Report on the New Visions Self-Sufficiency and Lifelong Learning Project.* Bethesda, MD: Abt Associates Inc.

Freedman, S., Friedlander, D., Hamilton, G., Rock, J., Mitchell, M., Nudelman, J., Sweder, A., and Storto, L. 2000. *National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies—Evaluating Alternative Welfare-to-Work Approaches: Two-Year Impacts for Eleven Programs.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education.

Gittell, M., Gross, J., and Holdaway, J. 1993. *Building Human Capital: The Impact of Post-Secondary Eduation on AFDC Recipients in Five States.* New York: Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center of the City University of New York.

Gittell, M., Vandersall, K., Holdaway, J., and Newman, K. 1996. *Creating Social Capital at CUNY: A Comparison of Higher Education Programs for AFDC Recipients.* New York: Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center of the City University of New York.

Golonka, S., and Matus-Grossman, L. 2001. *Opening Doors: Expanding Educational Opportunities for Low-Income Workers.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices.

Greenberg, D., Mandell, M., and Onstott, M. 2000. "The Dissemination and Utilization of Welfare-to-Work Experiments in State Policymaking." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management,* 19 (3): 368-382.

Greenberg, M., Strawn, J., and Plimpton, L. 1999. *State Opportunities to Provide Access to Postsecondary Education under TANF.* Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

Grogger, J., Karoly L. A., and Klerman, J. 2002. *Consequences of Welfare Reform: A Synthesis*. Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation.

Grubb, W., Badway, N., Bell, D., and Castellano, M. 1999. "Community Colleges and Welfare Reform: Emerging Practices, Enduring Problems." *Community College Journal.* June/July 1999: 31-39.

Gruber, A. 1998. "Promoting Long-Term Self-Sufficiency for Welfare Recipients: Post-Secondary Education and the Welfare Work Requirement." *Northwestern Law Review*, 93 (1).

Hamilton, G. and Scrivener, S. 1999. *Promoting Participation. How to Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities.* New York, NY: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Hamilton, G., Brock, T., Farrell, M., Friedlander, D., and Harknett, K. 1997. *Evaluating Two Welfare-to-Work Program Approaches: Two-Year Findings on the Labor Force Attachment and Human Capital Development Programs in Three Sites.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education.

Hollenbeck, K., Kimmel, J., and Eberts, R. 1997. *Using Administrative Data to Evaluate the Ohio JOBS Student Retention Program.* Kalamazoo, MI: The W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Kane, T. J, and Rouse, C. E. 1995. "Labor-Market Returns to Two- and Four-Year Colleges." *American Economic Review,* 85 (3): 600-614.

Kates, E. 1999. "Public Assistance and Workforce Development: The Growing Divide." *Connection, New England's Journal of Higher Education and Economic Development,* XIV (1): 52-57.

Kienzl, G. 1999. "Community College Involvement in Welfare-to-Work." *Research Brief 99-1.* Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.

Levine, J. H. (ed.), 1999. *Learning Communities: New Structures, New Partnerships for Learning.* The First-Year Experience Monograph Series, No. 26. Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina.

Loprest, P. 1999. *Families Who Left Welfare: Who Are They and How Are They Doing?* Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Mijanovich, T., and Long, D. 1995. *Creating an Alternative to Welfare: First-Year Findings on the Implementation, Welfare Impacts, and Costs of the Self-Sufficiency Project.* Vancouver, BC: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation.

Pascarella, E. 1999. "New Studies Track Community College Effects on Students." *Community College Journal*, June-July: 31-39.

Pavetti, L. 1995. "Who Is Affected by Time Limits?" *Welfare Reform Briefs*, no. 7. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

Pavetti, L., and Acs, G. 2001. "Moving Up, Moving Out or Going Nowhere? A Study of the Employment Patterns of Young Women." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management,* 20 (4): 721-736.

Price, C., and Greene, J. 1999. *State Politics and Coalition-Building: Confronting TANF Regulations.* New York, NY: Howard Samuels State Management and Policy Center of the City University of New York.

Riccio, J., Friedlander, D., and Friedman, S. 1994. *GAIN: Benefits, Costs, and Three-Year Impacts of a Welfare-to-Work Program.* New York, NY: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Rouse, C.E. 1998. "Do Two-Year Colleges Increase Overall Educational Attainment? Evidence from the States." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management,* 17 (4): 595-620.

Scrivener, S., Hamilton, G., Farrell, M., Freedman, S., Friedlander, D., Mitchell, M., Nudelman, J., and Schwartz, C. 1998. *Evaluating Two Welfare-to-Work Program Approaches: Implementation, Participation Patterns, Costs and Two-Year Impacts of the Portland (Oregon) Welfare to Work Program.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education.

Schmidt, P. 1998. "States Discourage Welfare Recipients from Pursuing Higher Education." *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* January 23, 1998.

Strawn, J., and Echols, R. 1999. *Welfare to Work Programs: The Critical Role of Skills.* Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education. 2001. *Measures and Methods for the National Reporting System: Implementation Guidelines.* Washington, DC: author.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2000. *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*, Third Annual Report to Congress, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Appendix
Detailed Impact Estimates for Chapter 4

Exhibit A.1
Impacts on Participation in GAIN Education and Training Activities

	Full Sample: Cohorts 2-16			Excluding Phase 1 Assignees		
Outcome	**Trt.**	**Cntl.**	**Impact**	**Trt.**	**Cntl.**	**Impact**
Percent with Any Education/Training through Quarter:						
0	34.3	8.3	26.0***	32.1	10.5	21.6***
1	74.7	28.2	46.5***	72.4	32.8	39.5***
2	77.7	37.5	40.2***	75.7	43.3	32.4***
3	79.9	42.1	37.8***	78.4	48.2	30.2***
4	80.4	45.3	35.1***	79.1	51.0	28.1***
5	80.7	47.2	33.5***	79.4	53.0	26.5***
6	81.9	49.0	33.0***	81.0	54.4	26.6***
7	82.6	50.8	31.8***	81.4	56.7	24.7***
8	82.9	51.1	31.9***	81.8	57.0	24.8***
Avg. no. quarters	3.0	1.7	1.3***	3.1	2.0	1.1***
Percent Participating in New Visions through Quarter:						
0	33.0	0.0	33.0***	31.0	0.0	31.0***
1	71.5	0.0	71.5***	68.5	0.0	68.5***
2	73.3	0.0	73.3***	70.3	0.0	70.3***
3	74.5	0.0	74.5***	71.8	0.0	71.8***
4	74.5	0.0	74.5***	71.8	0.0	71.8***
5	74.5	0.0	74.5***	71.8	0.0	71.8***
6	74.8	0.0	74.8***	72.2	0.0	72.2***
7	74.8	0.0	74.8***	72.2	0.0	72.2***
8	74.8	0.0	74.8***	72.2	0.0	72.2***
Avg. no. quarters	1.8	0.0	1.8***	1.8	0.0	1.8***
Percent Participating in Vocational Training through Quarter:						
0	1.5	7.4	-5.9***	1.4	9.3	-7.9***
1	4.8	26.7	-21.8***	5.2	30.9	-25.6***
2	10.8	35.9	-25.1***	12.6	41.4	-28.8***
3	24.6	40.7	-16.1***	26.9	47.1	-20.2***
4	31.3	43.7	-12.4***	33.7	50.1	-16.4***
5	34.5	45.6	-11.1***	37.3	52.1	-14.8***
6	36.1	47.1	-11.0***	39.3	53.5	-14.2***
7	37.0	49.0	-12.0***	39.7	55.9	-16.2***
8	38.3	49.2	-10.9***	41.3	56.1	-14.9
Avg. no. quarters	1.2	1.6	-0.4***	1.4	1.9	-0.5***
Percent Participating in Basic Education through Quarter:						
0	0.0	0.6	-0.6	0.0	0.8	-0.7
1	0.8	2.0	-1.2	0.9	2.5	-1.6
2	1.2	3.4	-2.3*	1.4	4.3	-2.9**
3	1.5	4.0	-2.5**	1.8	4.7	-2.9*
4	1.8	4.7	-2.9**	1.8	5.1	-3.3**
5	2.7	5.5	-2.8*	2.6	6.2	-3.6**
6	4.3	5.8	-1.6	4.1	6.1	-2.0
7	4.5	5.8	-1.3	4.5	6.2	-1.7
8	4.5	5.8	-1.3	4.5	6.2	-1.7
Avg. no. quarters	0.1	0.2	-0.0	0.1	0.2	-0.0**
Sample Size	336	322		268	259	

Notes:
Results of subtracting treatment and control columns may differ slightly from impact column due to rounding.
*** Impact is statistically significant at the 99-percent confidence level; **at the 90-percent confidence level; * at the 90-percent confidence level.

Exhibit A.2
Impacts on Participation in GAIN Employment Activities

	Full Sample: Cohorts 2-16			Excluding Phase I Assignees		
Outcome	**Trt.**	**Cntl.**	**Impact**	**Trt.**	**Cntl.**	**Impact**
Percent Participating in Job Search/Readiness through Quarter:						
0	12.5	11.8	0.7	4.4	2.8	1.7
1	21.4	25.5	-4.1	12.5	14.1	-1.6
2	28.2	33.0	-4.8	19.8	23.5	-3.7
3	33.7	38.2	-4.5	26.2	29.7	-3.5
4	40.4	42.6	-2.1	34.3	35.2	-0.9
5	43.9	43.9	0.0	37.5	36.9	0.6
6	46.3	44.9	1.4	40.4	37.7	2.7
7	49.0	46.4	2.6	43.3	39.6	3.8
8	50.7	48.7	2.0	45.5	42.5	2.9
Avg. no. quarters	1.1	1.1	0.1	1.0	0.9	0.1
Percent Participating in Job Search through Quarter:						
0	8.0	10.9	-3.0	1.0	1.7	-0.7
1	14.5	24.3	-9.8***	6.8	12.7	-5.9**
2	21.3	31.5	-10.3***	14.3	21.8	-7.5**
3	27.6	36.4	-8.8**	21.4	27.6	-6.2*
4	33.5	40.5	-7.0*	28.4	32.8	-4.4
5	36.7	41.5	-4.9	31.2	34.1	-2.8
6	39.3	42.8	-3.5	34.5	35.3	-0.8
7	42.0	43.7	-1.7	37.5	36.5	1.0
8	43.7	45.7	-2.0	39.6	39.0	0.6
Avg. no. quarters	0.9	1.0	-0.1	0.8	0.8	0.0
Percent Participating in Job Readiness through Quarter:						
0	5.7	0.9	4.8***	3.4	1.1	2.4*
1	9.3	2.1	7.3***	5.7	1.8	3.9**
2	10.5	3.9	6.6***	6.5	2.9	3.7**
3	11.6	5.3	6.4***	7.7	3.6	4.1**
4	14.0	6.2	7.9***	10.4	4.7	5.3**
5	16.8	7.0	9.8***	12.3	5.4	6.9**
6	17.4	7.6	9.8***	12.7	6.2	6.5**
7	18.3	9.2	9.1***	13.5	7.7	5.8**
8	19.9	10.3	9.6***	14.8	9.0	5.9**
Avg. no. quarters	0.3	0.2	0.1***	0.2	0.1	0.1**
Sample Size	336	322		268	259	

Notes:
Results of subtracting treatment and control columns may differ slightly from impact column due to rounding.
*** Impact is statistically significant at the 99-percent confidence level; **at the 90-percent confidence level; * at the 90-percent confidence level.

Exhibit A.3
Impacts on Community College Enrollment at RCC

Outcome	Full Sample: Cohorts 2-16 Trt.	Cntl.	Impact	Excluding Phase I Assignees Trt.	Cntl.	Impact
Percent Ever Enrolling at RCC through Quarter:						
0	17.8	1.3	16.6***	10.9	1.1	9.9***
1	61.6	6.6	55.0***	58.7	7.2	51.5***
2	67.3	13.0	54.3***	65.5	14.0	51.5***
3	69.5	16.6	52.9***	68.1	18.4	49.7***
4	70.1	18.2	51.9***	68.8	19.1	49.7***
5	70.3	20.4	49.9***	69.2	21.0	48.2***
6	71.0	23.1	47.9***	70.0	24.4	45.6***
7	71.0	23.8	47.2***	70.0	25.2	44.8***
8	71.5	24.8	46.7***	70.4	26.0	44.4***
9	71.8	25.4	46.3***	70.7	26.8	43.8***
10	72.4	26.7	45.7***	71.4	28.0	43.4***
Avg. no. quarters	3.6	1.1	2.4***	3.4	1.2	2.3***
Percent Enrolled at RCC in Quarter:						
0	17.8	1.3	16.6***	10.9	1.1	9.9***
1	61.6	6.6	55.0***	58.7	7.2	51.5***
2	67.0	13.0	54.0***	65.5	14.0	51.5***
3	63.9	13.8	50.1***	62.1	15.6	46.5***
4	40.3	12.3	27.9***	42.3	12.9	29.4***
5	26.6	12.0	14.7***	27.5	11.6	15.9***
6	22.4	12.6	9.8***	21.0	13.0	8.1**
7	15.5	12.4	3.0	15.5	13.0	2.5
8	13.0	11.6	1.5	12.9	11.7	1.2
9	14.3	9.3	5.1**	14.5	9.7	4.8*
10	13.7	7.4	6.4***	12.6	7.5	5.1*
Percent Ever Enrolling in Non-New Visions Course at RCC through Quarter:						
0	1.6	1.1	0.5	0.9	1.0	-0.2
1	6.8	6.3	0.5	7.1	6.9	0.1
2	9.5	12.4	-2.9	9.1	13.4	-4.3
3	24.5	16.1	8.4***	27.0	17.6	9.3***
4	32.2	17.7	14.5***	33.7	18.4	15.3***
5	35.2	19.8	15.4***	36.5	20.1	16.4***
6	36.5	22.5	14.0***	37.3	23.5	13.8***
7	36.5	23.1	13.3***	37.3	24.3	13.0***
8	37.6	23.8	13.8***	38.1	24.6	13.5***
9	38.4	24.5	14.0***	39.2	25.5	13.7***
10	40.2	25.7	14.5***	40.6	26.7	13.9***
Avg. no. quarters	1.7	1.1	0.6***	1.7	1.1	0.6***
Average Total RCC Credits Earned in Quarters 0-10[a]	7.5	2.0	5.6***	7.4	2.1	5.3***
Sample Size	336	322		268	259	

Notes:
Results of subtracting treatment and control columns may differ slightly from impact column due to rounding.
*** Impact is statistically significant at the 99-percent confidence level; **at the 90-percent confidence level; * at the 90-percent confidence level.
[a] Statistics for credits are not complete for quarters 9 and 10, since some sample members were still in semesters that had not ended.

Exhibit A.4
Impacts on Employment, Earnings and Welfare Reliance

	Full Sample: Cohorts 2-16			Excluding Phase I Assignees		
Outcome	**Trt.**	**Cntl.**	**Impact**	**Trt.**	**Cntl.**	**Impact**
Percent Employed in Quarter:						
0	74.7	75.1	-0.4	85.3	82.7	2.6
1	72.2	70.5	1.7	80.7	75.1	5.6*
2	70.1	70.5	-0.4	75.6	74.6	1.4
3	71.4	70.4	1.0	76.8	75.7	1.1
4	68.9	70.5	-1.6	73.6	74.3	-0.7
5	66.4	68.5	-2.1	69.6	73.0	-3.4
6	63.6	67.3	-3.7	67.4	71.8	-4.5
Avg. total quarters worked 0-6	4.9	4.9	-0.1	5.3	5.3	0.0
Avg. Earnings Amount ($) in Quarter:						
0	1,391	1,438	-47	1,695	1,706	-11
1	1,533	1,557	-24	1,749	1,702	47
2	1,634	1,654	-20	1,775	1,777	-2
3	1,703	1,755	-52	1,868	1,844	24
4	1,671	1,848	-177	1,832	1,940	-108
5	1,753	1,849	-95	1,914	2,014	-100
6	1,812	1,990	-178	1,928	2,139	-211
Avg. total earnings 0-6	11,499	12,092	-594	12,762	13,122	-360
Percent Receiving TANF in Quarter:						
0	97.8	98.1	-0.3	97.7	97.6	0. 1
1	92.5	91.4	1.1	92.6	89.9	2.7
2	84.7	78.1	6.5**	86.7	78.2	8.5**
3	72.8	68.4	4.4	75.3	69.6	5.7
4	67.3	59.2	8.1**	70.2	59.8	10.3**
5	61.2	50.4	10.8***	62.6	49.9	12.6***
6	52.7	46.0	6.7*	54.3	45.0	9.5**
7	44.3	41.7	2.6	44.7	41.8	2.9
8	43.1	38.9	4.2	44.4	37.8	6.6
Avg. total quarters receipt 0-8	6.1	5.7	0.4**	6.2	5.7	0.6**
Avg. TANF Payment ($) in Quarter:						
0	1,232	1,241	-9	1,139	1,121	18
1	1,112	1,068	45	1,041	968	72
2	978	861	117**	955	842	113
3	862	759	102*	848	740	107
4	796	660	136**	789	636	153**
5	727	564	163***	722	530	193***
6	632	516	116**	621	473	148**
7	575	512	63	561	477	84
8	579	497	82	564	469	94
Avg. total payments 0-8	7,455	6,647	808**	7,198	6,223	975**
Sample Size	336	322		268	259	

Notes:
Results of subtracting treatment and control columns may differ slightly from impact column due to rounding.
*** Impact is statistically significant at the 99-percent confidence level; **at the 90-percent confidence level; * at the 90-percent confidence level.