



Pima Community College
Upward Bound –2016 Evaluation Report
April 2016



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ASSOCIATES, INC.

Pima Community College Upward Bound 2015 Evaluation Report April 2016

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About LeCroy & Milligan Associates:

Founded in 1991, LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. is a consulting firm specializing in social services and education program evaluation and training that is comprehensive, research-driven and useful. Our goal is to provide effective program evaluation and training that enables stakeholders to document outcomes, provide accountability, and engage in continuous program improvement. With central offices located in Tucson, Arizona, LeCroy & Milligan Associates has worked at the local, state and national level with a broad spectrum of social services, criminal justice, education and behavioral health programs.

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the Pima Community College Desert Vista Campus, *Upward Bound Program (PCC-DV Upward Bound)*. The *Upward Bound (UB)* program is a federal Department of Education program designed to support low income students preparation for, and entry to post-secondary education. The program was created under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and has continued to function since then as one of the longest running Federal programs in the U.S. (Department of Education, 2014).

“I am a big believer in the transformative power of education.”

– Stakeholder Interview (2016)

The Pima Community College Desert Vista Campus currently implements *Upward Bound (UB)* within two Tucson area high schools: Desert View High School and Sunnyside High School. The program provides educational support and services to students residing in areas of low

secondary completion rates and low post-secondary achievement rates, and requires at least two-thirds of those participating be low-income and first generation college seeking. There are three *PCC-DV UB* staff: a program manager, program coordinator, and a support technician. Currently the program has 59 high school participants, and served 63 students for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. *PCC-DV Upward Bound* had a 98.4% secondary graduation rate for the 2014-2015 school year. Students from that school year also had a 95.5% post-secondary enrollment rate.

Evaluation Methodology

LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. designed a process evaluation for this program guided by the following primary research questions: (1) *What are the strengths of the PCC-DV UB?* (2) *What opportunities for change exist for the PCC-DV UB program?* LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. also performed a capacity assessment of the *PCC-DV Upward Bound MIS*. This review and evaluation provides information on what student outcome data is collected and how it is currently being used. The primary question for the assessment was: *What capacity for outcome evaluation exists?* Data was collected through document review, stakeholder interviews, and a focus group with past and current students. Thematic content analysis was used to evaluate qualitative data.

Findings

Overall, interviewees and focus group participants provided positive feedback highlighting the components of Upward Bound that are particularly effective. The program’s strengths include the program design, level of communication with program participants and family



members, program staff, student support, and engagement. Areas of opportunity that exist for the program include expanding community and college knowledge and appreciation of the program and expand staff training.

Recommendations

The evaluation team of LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. developed recommendations for *PCC-DV Upward Bound* for program development and growth. Key recommendations include:

- Strengthen partnerships with community members by sharing successes and best practices with other local organizations that have similar goals to UB.
- Increase awareness of the program among high schools so they understand the purpose and function of UB.
- Create an advisory group that includes community members, teachers and staff to provide the program with more input for decision-making.
- Consider opportunities to expand the knowledge base of best practices in program administration through research partnerships, conference presentations, and/or opportunities for publication.

“None of us really grew up as the privileged people. We’ve always been kind of *fighting an uphill battle in a rainstorm* and because of them [Carlos and Danny] I want to be able to give back and help students who are maybe in a similar situation to let them to know to not let not knowing something hold them back from all their potential.”
– Student Interview (2016)



Introduction

This report presents the findings from the evaluation of the Pima Community College's Desert Vista Campus, *Upward Bound* program for the 2014/2015 academic year. The process evaluation is designed to give information to *PCC-DV Upward Bound* on areas in which they are performing well as well as areas where change may be necessary to improve. The assessment of capacity for outcome evaluation will describe possible opportunities for further study of program outcomes.

Description of Upward Bound

The Upward Bound (*UB*) program is a federal program designed to support low income students preparation for, and entry to post-secondary education. The program was created under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and has continued to function since then as one of the longest running federal programs in the U.S. (Department of Education, 2014). Participants generally enroll in the program in their first or second year of secondary education and remain in the program through the summer following their senior year of high school. In Fiscal Year 2014 (the most current data available at time of reporting) there were 61,458 *UB* participants nation-wide, with an average cost per participant estimated at \$4,305 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). All federal *UB* programs are required to provide academic instruction in the following areas; math, laboratory science, composition, literature, and foreign language as well as information of Federal Student Financial Aid programs, and post-secondary exploration and attainment assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The program provides educational support and services to students residing in areas of low secondary completion

PCC Desert Vista Upward Bound Program Components at a Glance

The following represent a selection of the services provided by PCC Desert Vista Campus Upward Bound for the 2014-2015 program year:

- Intensive math/science tutoring
- Afternoon and weekend educational support
- Summer classes
- One-on-one mentoring services
- Educational travel
- Community service opportunities
- Peer support
- College application support
- College financial grant/scholarship application support
- Ongoing mentoring throughout post-secondary experience



rates and low post-secondary achievement rates, and requires at least two-thirds of the participating be low-income and first generation college seeking.

Pima Community College – Desert Vista Campus

The Pima Community College Desert Vista Campus (PCC-DV) currently implements *Upward Bound (UB)* at within two high schools in the city of Tucson: Desert View High School and Sunnyside High School. These high schools belong to the Sunnyside Unified School District. This district reports a high proportion of marginalized populations including Hispanic/Latino (81.6%) and living in poverty (76.7%), with traditionally low rates of post-secondary attainment (Sunnyside Unified School District, 2014).

Program Summary PCC-DV UB– Desert Vista Campus 2014/2015 Fiscal Year	
Program enrollment	63 students
Graduation rate	98.4%
Post-secondary enrollment rate	95.5%
Average cost per participant	\$4,167
Total cost of program	\$262,500

Evidence of Effectiveness of Upward Bound Program

The *UB* program framework and theory of change have been studied since the program’s inception in 1964. In the past two decades, rigorous examination of its outcomes has taken place with significant outcomes found. Longitudinal studies find significant increases in post-secondary attendance and credential attainment for First Generation College Seeking populations (Myers, Olsen, Seftor, Young, & Tuttle, 2004). More recent data shows positive

“We are not a program to get you to college, we are a program to get you graduated from college”
– Stakeholder Interview (2016)

outcomes from programs provided by the TRIO grant, including UB, such as a 12.2% increase in college enrollment (Cahalan & Goodwin, 2014; Harris, Nathan, & Marksteiner, 2014). UB specifically had positive effects on postsecondary enrollment and on student completions of a post-secondary four-year college credential in the fields of math and science.

Longitudinal follow-up analysis of study participant outcomes from a 2004 study found that the *UB* program increased the number of students attending four-year post-secondary programs (Myers, Olsen, Seftor, Young, & Tuttle, 2004). In addition, there were large increases in post-secondary enrollment for *UB* study participants identified as having low educational expectations at their enrollment in the program, indicating the program increased their expectations of entering college. These same *UB* students identified as having low education expectations also earned twice as many college credits than a



comparison group. Students with low education expectations increased credits earned by 2 credits and increased participation in honors or advanced placement classes. These increases in participation and engagement in rigorous academic programs and post-secondary attendance are attributed, in part to exposing students to post-secondary options they may not have been aware of as First Generation College seeking individuals. In addition, the intensive support and dropout prevention activities of the *UB* program components may be more effective for low income students with limited exposure to these activities at home.

Role of Program Evaluation

PCC-DV Upward Bound has the following federal reporting requirements: high school GPA, standardized test scores, secondary school retention rates, secondary school completion rates, secondary rigorous program graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment rates, and postsecondary education completion. In addition, *PCC-DV Upward Bound* reports on the following key performance indicators as a part of Pima Community College's Strategic Action Plan: recruitment rate of new student participants, retention rate of existing student participants, high school graduation rate of student participants, rate of participating students entering post-secondary education, rates of completed Compass testing, and rates of participating student use of Pima Community College's Student Services. These outcomes are traditionally assumed as indicators of program performance.

"I was very shy and I didn't know how to get involved in community events or anything like that and I saw it [joining Upward Bound] as an opportunity to get more involved as well as find out what the steps were to go to college."

– Student Interview (2016)

Evaluating *PCC-DV Upward Bound* at a programmatic level will provide information about program function that may affect student outcomes. The program's current reporting of metrics show the *PCC-DV Upward Bound* program exceeds its federal expectations. This evaluation will complement the existing reporting of program outputs and outcomes and contribute to a holistic description of programmatic functioning.



Methods

Evaluation Questions – Purpose of the Study

The primary questions of this process evaluation are:

What are the strengths of the PCC-DV UB?

What opportunities for change exist for the PCC-DV UB program?

The primary questions for the MIS capacity assessment is:

What capacity for outcome evaluation exists?

Approach to Data Collection

This study used stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and review of program data to gather data regarding the *PCC – Desert Vista Campus Upward Bound (PCC-DV UB)* program. These methods were carefully chosen to provide the program with findings they can use for program understanding and improvement. Conducting stakeholder interviews is useful for a program that has already been successfully implemented because it allows a respondent to provide unrestrictive opinions (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2006). Semi-structured interviewing allows an individual to be thorough and accurate in their response to a set of pre-designed questions.

Focus groups provide insights from participant interaction that may not arise in a one-on-one interview setting. Using a focus group with the high school participants has an added benefit of allowing the evaluators to examine consensus on a theme or area of interest. The focus group method can be useful in evaluation where stakeholders have a large power differential (e.g., teacher/student) because it allow the “low” power-holding individual to express their feelings in a safe environment with peer support (Morgan & Kreuger, 1993).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders identified by *PCC-DV UB* staff. These interviews asked the following questions designed to gather information in the areas of role, experience, program strengths, program needs, and program population.

- What is your role in Pima Community College Upward Bound?
- What has been your experience with the program?

Stakeholders Interviewed

Program Manager
Program Technician
Program Coordinator
Parent of enrolled student
College administrator



- What do you think works well in this program? Why?
- What suggestions do you have to improve the program? Why?
- Does this program serve the population that needs it most?
- Do you have any additional comments about Pima Community College Upward Bound?

Each interview was designed to take 15-30 minutes. Interviews were conducted by a member of the evaluation team individually in-person or over the telephone. Notes were taken based off of interviewee’s responses. We then performed a “member check” by emailing the informant’s interview data to them with a review request to ensure the content accurately reflected their interviews.

Focus Groups

The evaluation team held a focus group of past and current students of the *PCC-DV UB* program in February 2016 during a Saturday UB class time. The participants of the focus group were approached by the program manager about the possibility of participation and volunteered to participate. The focus group questions centered on students’ perceptions of the *PCC-DV UB* program and areas of strength as well as opportunities for additional improvements. The following questions were asked at the focus group to determine what is working well for the students enrolled in Upward Bound, and how the program could improve:

- Why did you join PCC Upward Bound?
- In your own words, describe the goal/s of PCC Upward Bound?
- What would you say is *PCC-DV UB*’s greatest accomplishment so far?
- What would make it easier for you to accomplish your current goal/s?
- What kind of activities would you like to see *PCC-DV UB* do in the future?
- Is there anything else that you would like to mention?

Student Focus Group

- 1 past student (current university student)
- 2 seniors in high school
- 3 juniors in high school
- 2 sophomores in high school

Data Review

A review of data collection procedures, forms and types of data took place in February 2016 to examine the breadth and completeness of student-level data and to examine possible further opportunities for evaluation of student outcomes as a result of participation in PCC Upward Bound. Documents reviewed include:

- Academic progress plan template
- Individual success plan template



- Program application template
- Parent & student handbook
- Verification of eligibility & selection form template
- Student update & annual needs assessment template
- Program summary report (2015)
- Grant program narrative
- Group contact log
- MOU- data sharing agreement with Sunnyside Unified School District

Data Analysis

Qualitative data from the stakeholder interviews and focus group were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a common technique associated with qualitative research (Glesne, 2010; Patton, 2005). Key concepts were coded based on the framework of the interview questions, themes from relevant literature, and patterns that emerge from the data. Analysis was performed using QDA Miner. Verification of codes was achieved through investigator triangulation and repeated review of field notes. The researcher coded qualitative data and determined the common themes based on compiled responses for each question asked.

A thorough review of the program's data included: types and frequency of data collection, program document review, and data organization and cleanliness. In addition, the program director was interviewed about programmatic data collection procedures, reporting practices, and current program-level uses of data.



Findings

The findings section connects the results of the evaluation with the research questions proposed. The findings of this evaluation are organized by the three research questions:

- What are the strengths of the *PCC-DV UB* program?
- What areas of improvement exist for the *PCC-DV UB* program?
- What capacity for outcome evaluation exists?

What are the Strengths of the *PCC-DV UB* Program?

All individuals interviewed for this evaluation were positive in regards to the work of the *PCC-DV UB* program. There was consensus the program provided net benefits to the low-income and/or first generation college student population. Exhibit #1 demonstrates reported strengths of the *PCC-DV UB* program found in the interviews.

Overall, interviewees reported five areas that were particularly strong for the *PCC-DV UB* program: program design, communication with program participants and family members, student support, staff and engagement. All individuals who participated in the focus group for this evaluation were positive in regards to the work of the *PCC-DV UB* program and reported having difficulty when asked to identify ways in which Upward Bound could improve their programming.

Exhibit 1. Areas of Strength

Area of Strength	Description
Program Design	<p>Program is designed to create more equity for students so they have more opportunities available, and includes students of all races and backgrounds.</p> <p>Upward Bound is well-designed and well-organized.</p> <p>The program provides students with a “second counselor” to assist them in completing their goals.</p> <p>The program provides students with free fieldtrips and college courses.</p> <p>The program bridges the educational gap in Arizona, especially for minority students.</p> <p>The application process is intensive to ensure students are really committed to going to college.</p> <p>Program has strong focus on math, applied sciences, preparation for college, and preparation for ACT/SAT and UB students are expected to take ACT/SAT at least once.</p> <p>The design of the program teaches the students about resilience.</p> <p>The program uses alumni as role models to current students, for example UB often hires former UB students as tutors</p>



Area of Strength	Description
Communication with Students	<p>UB Program Coordinators meet with the students at least once a week.</p> <p>UB keep relationships with their alumni.</p>
Communication with Family Members	<p>Staff go out of their way to answer all of a parent's questions.</p> <p>Program includes the family in the program as a way to increase student retention and engagement.</p> <p>Making families aware of UB's expectations of the student allows the program to challenge the students.</p> <p>Staff is great at communicating with parents about child's success and experience.</p> <p>Some parents and siblings of participants have been motivated by UB students, and have enrolled in college themselves.</p>
Student Support	<p>Staff is very generous with their time and is well-organized to ensure programs and activities run smoothly for students.</p> <p>Participants have role models and people encouraging them on a regular basis.</p> <p>UB students are able to trust and depend on program staff.</p> <p>UB support staff work with students to ensure tasks are being completed and students are getting the answers they need.</p> <p>Staff has a personal connection with the program and students.</p>
Staff	<p>There is a particularly strong team at the Desert Vista Upward Bound.</p> <p>Program staff and students come from similar socio-economic backgrounds, and this is helpful for building rapport.</p> <p>UB staff genuinely care about the work they are doing, the participants, and their futures.</p> <p>UB works to retain quality teachers that connect with students.</p>
Engagement	<p>The program plays into participants lives, both academically and personally.</p> <p>UB solicits students' feedback about teachers and program activities.</p> <p>Continuing relationships with alumni is important to keep a strong connection.</p> <p>UB tracks students all the way through college (for 10 years).</p> <p>Students can easily communicate with UB staff.</p>
Reasons for Joining Upward Bound	<p>To learn processes for going to college.</p> <p>Wanted to learn about the process for going to college or how to obtain financial resources.</p> <p>Wanted to improve grades.</p> <p>Wanted to get involved in community service.</p> <p>Attracted to tutoring, social interactions and community service components of UB.</p> <p>Opportunity to socialize and get more involved with peers.</p> <p>Joined for summer programs.</p>
Participant Perceived Purpose of Upward Bound	<p>Helps students attend college, and also graduate from college.</p> <p>Brings ambitious students together.</p> <p>Encourages and motivate students to attend college.</p> <p>Provides everything needed for students to be successful in both college and life.</p> <p>Encourage students to do things that might be difficult or uncomfortable.</p>



Area of Strength	Description
Participant Reported Best Parts of the Program	<p>Teaches students how to network.</p> <p>Provides opportunities for students to meet new people.</p> <p>Provides an ongoing network of assistance to students, help with applications and answer questions.</p> <p>Seeks student input to improve the program.</p>
	<p>Staff support students' decisions.</p> <p>Support system is always there, even after graduation.</p> <p>Program Coordinators are just a call or text away.</p> <p>Allows students to network and connect with people they normally would not connect with.</p> <p>UB helps students gain confidence and believe in themselves.</p>

What Areas of Improvement Exist for PCC-DV UB Program?

Opportunities for improvement varied often based on the interviewees experience and interaction with the program. Generally, responses could be categorized in the following areas: external communication, internal communication, program resources, and organization. Exhibit 2 describes reported areas in need of improvement.

Exhibit 2. Areas of Opportunity for Improvement

Area of Opportunity	Description of Areas for Improvement
External Communication	<p>Open access to students who are not first generation college students.</p> <p>UB could work on strengthening partnerships with community members.</p> <p>UB could reach out to more non-profits.</p> <p>UB could do a better job of communicating successes to the community and to the media.</p>
	<p>Increase high school awareness and support so they can better understand the purpose and function of UB.</p> <p>Continue to adjust High School's perceptions of UB.</p> <p>Increase support from Pima Community College.</p> <p>UB should be expanded across the country so more people can go to college.</p>
Internal Communication	<p>Expose students to other UB programs in Tucson so students feel a part of something bigger.</p> <p>Continue to build a "college-going culture" in the program.</p>
Class Structure and Functioning	<p>More variety of presenters in workshops.</p> <p>UB staff could be less cautious about program activities to not hold students back from trying new things.</p> <p>Expand the range of courses for students.</p> <p>Offer additional college courses for high school students.</p>
Program Resources	<p>Increased funding for more fieldtrips and team building activities.</p>



Area of Opportunity	Description of Areas for Improvement
Organization	<p>UB could benefit from bringing in outside resources. Consider writing in a part-time position at the next grant cycle as the program works well with a part-time position.</p> <p>College could streamline processes of requesting advances and travel requests. Improve ability to find necessary student information on databases. Provide staff with more immediate training on record keeping and the evaluation process to support staff.</p> <p>UB could benefit from an advisory group that includes community members, teachers and staff to provide the program with more input for decision-making.</p>
Participant Reported Ways Upward Bound Can Improve	<p>More funding so more students can benefit Add another theatre class</p>



What Capacity for Outcome Level Measurement Exists?

A review of *PCC-DV Upward Bound* databases found data is currently being collected on program outputs. These outputs include:

- Attendance for all activities, classes, and tutoring
- Compass exam levels in reading, writing, and math
- Completion rates of Compass exam
- Completion rates for Algebra I
- Contact logs which collect information such as date of contact, type of service, and duration of service.

Additionally, *PCC-DV UB* collects the following outcome level data:

- Post-secondary acceptance rates of participating students
- Rates of participating senior students planning to attend post-secondary education
- Scholarship rates of graduating high school students

PCC -DV Upward Bound's MIS and archived files are detailed and complete. Program staff are trained to value data collection processes and adhere to data collection protocols and guidance. In addition, regular data cleanliness checks take place to ensure quality of data and fidelity of collection. Redundancies (including supervisor signatures on some documentation) are in place to ensure accuracy and completeness.

The program ensures data collected is meaningful to the program and student success and that it is use for monitoring purposes such as tracking student's movement through the program. Individual student files are well organized and provide a clear and full picture of each student's current progress and goals.

“None of us really grew up as the privileged people. We’ve always been kind of *fighting an uphill battle in a rainstorm* and because of them [Carlos and Danny] I want to be able to give back and help students who are maybe in a similar situation to let them to know to not let not knowing something hold them back from all their potential.”

– Student Interview (2016)



Summary and Recommendations

Areas of Success

Overall, PCC Upward Bound’s design and structure provide educational, networking, and community engagement opportunities for its participants. The program provides students with resources and information to be able to attend college and graduate from college. Vital to the program’s success is the high level of dedication from Upward Bound students and staff. There was agreement among individuals who took part in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups that staff genuinely care about student’s success in Upward Bound, and work in tandem with students to ensure their needs are being met and their questions are being answered. Upward Bound works closely with both program participants and their family members to assist them in understanding the college enrollment process, and ultimately strengthen the student’s support network. Upward Bound works to support participant’s decisions and interests, while encouraging them to take risks and build resilience.

“Honestly I didn’t know what to do prior to this program. I didn’t know the steps to take, but I’ve learned a lot from this program on how to go to college.”

– Student Focus Group (2016)

Current programmatic data collection and storage practices support a high capacity for attributional analyses of student achievement due to program participation. Program dosage can be extrapolated from the detailed contact logs which track individual student’s contact with program components and other student level data (such as test scores and grades) are captured at regular intervals.

“Staff care so much. They genuinely 100% care about these kids and their futures.”

– Stakeholder Interview (2016)

Opportunities for Improvement

Respondents identified several areas of need for change within the program that can be implemented to improve program outcomes. Both students and program staff agreed that increased funding would allow for students to engage in additional program activities. Respondents noted that Upward Bound could improve by accepting more students who might not be first-generation college students, but could still benefit from additional support navigating the college enrollment process. Upward Bound could benefit from strengthening ties with Pima Community College, local high schools, non-profits and other



community organizations to increase awareness and support of the program. UB can also ensure programmatic quality by continuously expanding or adjusting its range of courses for activities based on student needs and interests.

Overall, the *PCC-DV UB* program excels in program administration, service delivery, and data management. Given their high level of performance, the program may consider opportunities to expand the knowledge base of best practices in program administration. This may look like exploring research partnerships, conference presentations, and/or opportunities for publication.

Opportunities for further exploration:

- Longitudinal study of impact of program on student post-secondary outcomes including causal characteristics
- Relationship between program staff support and student achievement
- Impact of program on enrolled students family's education achievements
- Description of motivating factors and characteristics of high-achieving UB students
- Best practices or "what works" when working with this population



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