

Increasing access to post-secondary education: *lifeafterhighschool*

Philip Oreopoulos, Univ of Toronto

Reuben Ford, SRDC

Canadian Economics Association, Ottawa, June 3rd 2011



SOCIAL RESEARCH
AND DEMONSTRATION
CORPORATION

SOCIÉTÉ
DE RECHERCHE
SOCIALE APPLIQUÉE

Approaches to increase access to PSE

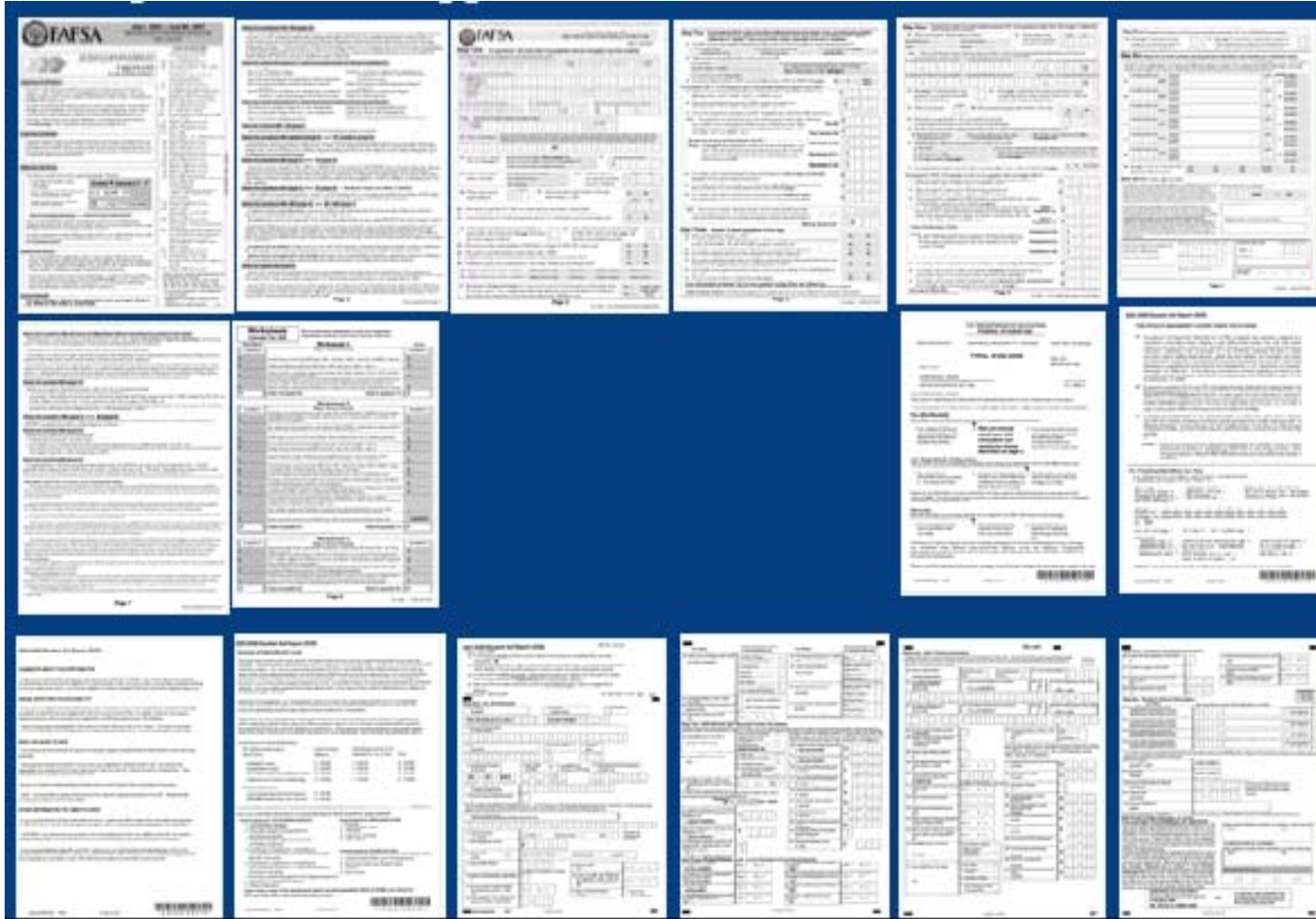
Some rigorously evaluated: often don't (yet) know what works.

- High school retention: social, cultural, financial, legal
- Improved/earlier financial aid (e.g. Learning Accounts)
- Improved/earlier career education (e.g. Explore Your Horizons/Future to Discover)
- Integration of secondary/post-secondary curricula (e.g. dual credit, dual enrollment)
- Learning to learn/academic upgrading/college preparation (e.g. AVID)
- Improved/earlier information about costs and benefits of PSE
- Remove barriers in/automate the application processes for programs and/or aid (e.g. FAFSA/Tax form integration, *lifeafterhighschool*)

Applications in Behavioral Economics to increase program participation

- Benefit programs are often constructed as though mere existence ensures take-up
- Research in Psychology and economics demonstrates effectiveness of nudges (seemingly small-differences in signup procedures and marketing that lead to large differences in participation)
- Changing defaults (Beshears et al. 2006a)
- Simplifying options (Beshears et al. 2006b)
- Information (Hastings and Weinstein, 2008)
- Marketing (Bertrand et al. 2006)
- Incentives or disincentives (Vollp et al)

What about assistance helping complete application forms (e.g. PSE financial aid)



Why might offering form completion assistance help?

- Low visibility, especially among low income families
- Complexity: many steps to the process
- Inconvenience: In US, 850,000 college students eligible for federal financial grants in 2000 did not apply (King, 2004). The Task Force on Financial Literacy reports a similar position in Canada (2011)
- Reassurance: guidance from trusted partner/agent
- Empowerment: support leads to encouragement, interest, and desire
- Social Norms

The H&R Block FAFSA Experiment (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, and Sambumatsu, 2009)

- Integrated tax-interview process at H&R Block with FAFSA application process
- ~30,000 low income families in 156 offices in Ohio and North Carolina

What the treated group received

- On-the spot aid estimate, relative to costs
- Tax info automatically transferred into FAFSA cells
- Tax-pro walks client through remaining questions
- For dependents, sent completed paper FAFSA (as much as possible) to household to be signed and mailed using pre-paid envelope

You appear eligible for \$3,400.00

in college grants based on the information we have from helping you complete your taxes and the formula the Department of Education uses.

Even better, this financial aid would not need to be repaid.

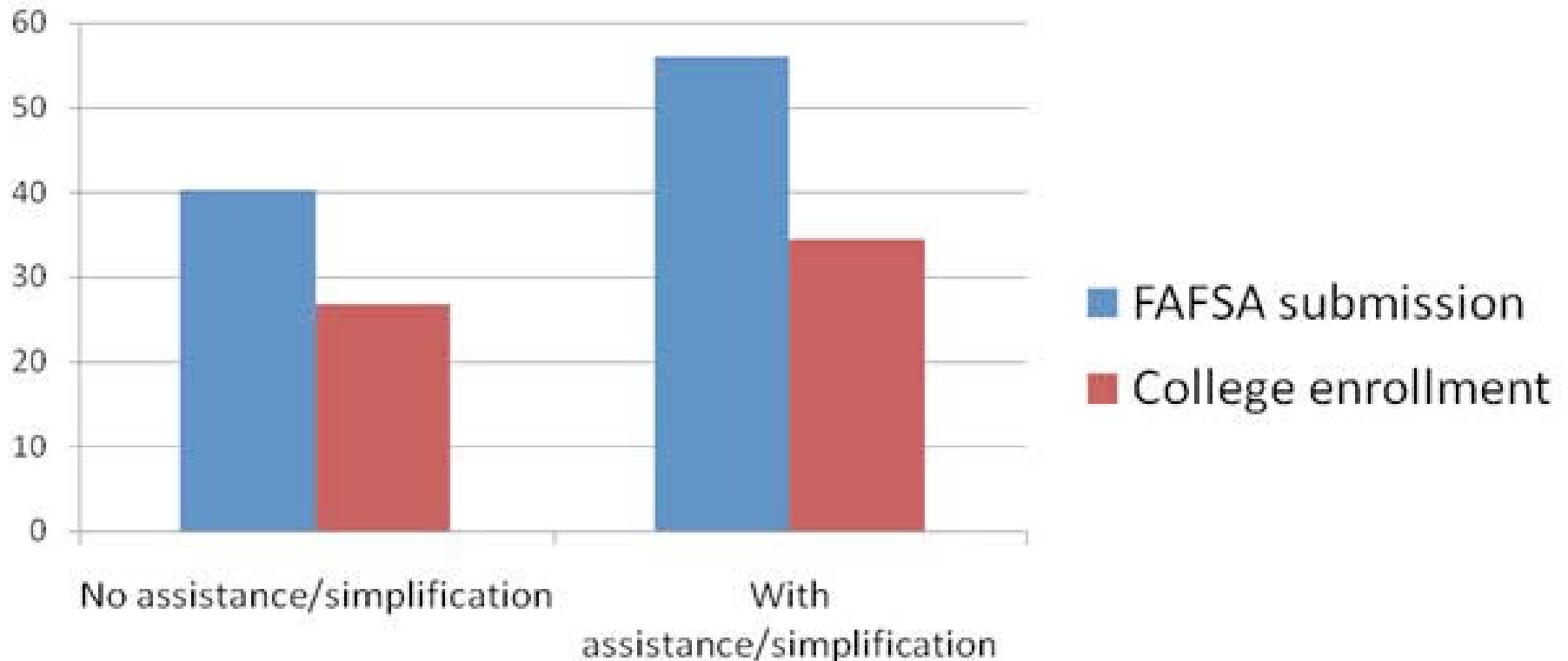
The following is a list of local colleges, the full and part-time tuition expenses, and estimates of the financial assistance you could get from your state or the federal government.

College	Full-Time		Part-Time	
	Tuition	Estimated State and Federal Aid*	Tuition	Estimated State and Federal Aid*
Central Piedmont Community College	1434	3400	717	1700
Mitchell Community College	1334	3400	667	1700
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	3895	2500	1948	1250
Davidson County Community College	1050	3400	525	1700

Main results for Grade 12 sample (from White House Blog by Peter Orszag)

- Participation took 8 minutes, on average

**Increases in FAFSA Submission and College Enrollment
Resulting From the H& R Block FAFSA Experiment**



As impressive as the FAFSA experiment results are, *lifeafterhighschool* aims to do better

The FAFSA experiment:

- Only helped with financial aid application
- Lost people when sending application home requiring mailing and signature
- Sample dependent on going to H&R Block

The British Columbia *lifeafterhighschool* project

- HRSDC funded with private foundation contribution
- Goal: As much as possible, test an approach that makes going to PSE the default for high school students

- At low transition high schools, incorporate into curriculum program to:
 - Guide every grade 12 student to apply (for free) to at least one PSE program that they can get into and in which they might be interested
 - Start every student on financial aid application process and follow-up with parent(s) to complete process
 - Offer easily accessible information and guidance along the way

Current test in BC high schools

- BC high schools with low G12-PSE transition rates, within commuting distance of a comprehensive PSE campus
- 50 agreed to participate in research project, willing to run 3 workshops for all Grade 12 students
- Computer lab with internet access
- Randomly assigned to program or comparison school status
- Program implementation began Fall 2010 for PSE entry 2011

The Program

- 3 classes, in front of a computer
- Create account on web site



- Aims not to come across as paternalistic

Class 1

LIFE afterhighschool

where would you go?

Enter your grades beside all listed grade 10 and 11 courses you have taken, and enter the grades you expect to receive in all your grade 12 courses to help determine what college and university programs are available. Be realistic to get a good prediction of what programs you can get accepted into.

Then select which courses or subjects you actually like to help create a list of programs that match your interests.

Click 'Find My Programs' at the bottom of the page, when finished.

My School: **Aldergrove Community Secondary**

grade 10

[hide grade 10 grades](#)

Subject	Grade received (%)	Liked this subject
English	not taken	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math	not taken	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	not taken	<input type="checkbox"/>

grade 11

[hide grade 11 grades](#)

Subject	Grade received (%)	Liked this subject
Biology	not taken	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemistry	not taken	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Facilitator introduction
- Video about what program is about, why students might want to consider a PSE program, costs, and financial aid

Class 1

	GRANT	LOAN
AT HOME	0	5,694

The budget below provides a guideline for how to attend your first choice program, given your estimated financial aid eligibility. You can modify some of the projected costs and resources below, either on a monthly or annual basis.

If you are uncertain about your living expenses, the default amounts listed below are averages for students living at home.

Click 'Finished!' when done.

Costs	Each Month	Each School Year (Monthly \$ x 8)
Tuition and Ancillary Fees	\$ 209	\$ 1,674
Rent	\$ 0 <input type="text"/>	\$ 0 <input type="text"/>
Food	\$ 181 <input type="text"/>	\$ 1,448 <input type="text"/>
Miscellaneous	\$ 199 <input type="text"/>	\$ 1,592 <input type="text"/>
Transportation	\$ 77 <input type="text"/>	\$ 616 <input type="text"/>
Books	\$ 125	\$ 1,000
Total Costs	\$ 791	\$ 6,330

Resources	Each Month	Each School Year (Monthly \$ x 8)
Loans	\$ 712	\$ 5,694
Grants	\$ 0	\$ 0
Money from your parents	\$ 79 <input type="text"/>	\$ 628 <input type="text"/>
Summer Income (July 1, 2010 - Aug 31, 2010)	\$ 0	\$ 0
Expected Work Income During program school year	\$ 0 <input type="text"/>	\$ 0 <input type="text"/>
Money from your savings	\$ 0	\$ 0
Total Resources	\$ 791	\$ 6,322

[Go Back](#)
[Print page](#)
[E-mail page](#)
[Finished!](#)

- TRUE STORIES
- NEWS AND NOTES
- MY DOCUMENTS
- MY LIST

- Class finished after choosing at least one program of interest and going through aid calculator

Class 2

- Everyone applies to at least one program
- Video and instructions how to apply
- Link to central application site and individual institution application pages
- Application fees waived – payment by SRDC corporate card
- Class complete after applying to at least one program



Steps to Apply

- 1 Pick a School**
- 2 Personal Info
- 3 Citizenship
- 4 Contact Info
- 5 Academic
- 6 Review

1. First time application? Complete the form below. You can return to the application before submitting it at any time. Be sure to take note of your account information once you complete the first page.

2. Been here before? [Login Now](#) to complete your application information OR apply to another school through PASBC.

Need more information? Visit the [Find Answers](#) page and select "Apply for Admission" from the Categories drop-down menu.

Institution Selection

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> BC Institute of Technology | <input type="radio"/> Okanagan College |
| <input type="radio"/> Camosun College | <input type="radio"/> Royal Roads University |
| <input type="radio"/> Capilano University | <input type="radio"/> Selkirk College |
| <input type="radio"/> College of New Caledonia | <input type="radio"/> Simon Fraser University |
| <input type="radio"/> College of the Rockies | <input type="radio"/> Thompson Rivers University |
| <input type="radio"/> Douglas College | <input type="radio"/> Thompson Rivers University - Open Learning |
| <input type="radio"/> Justice Institute of B.C. | <input type="radio"/> University Canada West |
| <input type="radio"/> Kwantlen Polytechnic University | <input type="radio"/> University of British Columbia |
| <input type="radio"/> Langara College | <input type="radio"/> University of Northern British Columbia |
| <input type="radio"/> Nicola Valley Institute of Technology | <input type="radio"/> University of the Fraser Valley |

Home

Apply for Admission

Find Online Courses

Access ABT/AECE/NCIT Courses

Login

Create an Account

Recover Username/Password

Help

Class 3

- Everyone begins financial aid application process
- Video and instructions about PSE affordability and how to apply for aid
- Forms sent to home and issued in class
- Class complete form taking application to point requiring parental input
- Links to additional funding sources and scholarships
- Follow-up with parents

The Program

- Other assistance
 - Reminder emails and announcements
 - Posters and mailings

From theory to application:

- Free and convenient (low opportunity cost perceived by students)
- Everyone in school goes through program (so that no one feels singled out. Also possibility for peer effects)
- Leaves options open:
 - On the way out of high school, in trying to decide what to do next, decision to go to PSE only involves deciding to show up

From administrative perspective: cheap and scalable

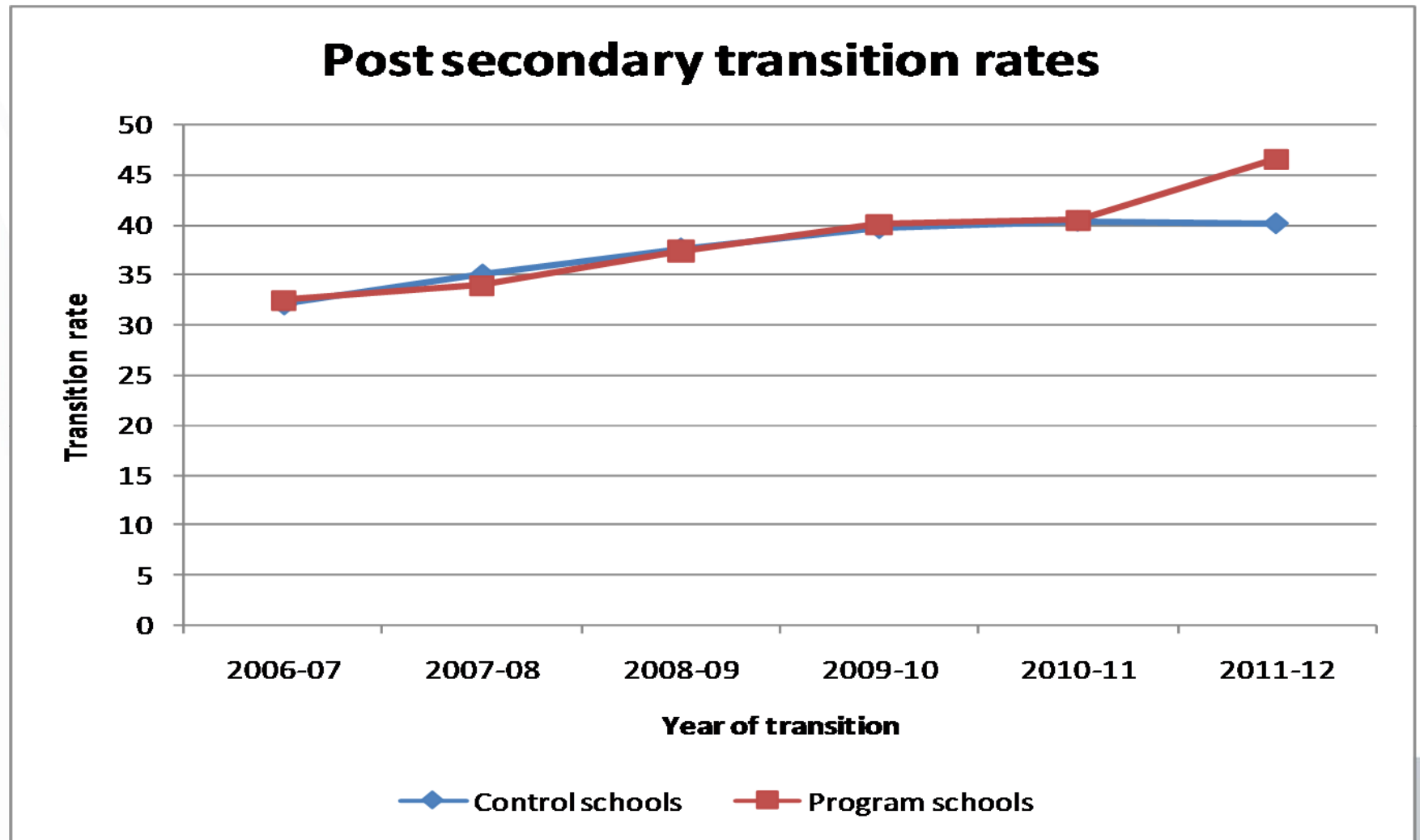
Outcomes of interest

- Increased rate of application to PSE
- Increased rate of application for SFA
- Increased rate of initial transition to PSE

- Increased rate of post-secondary participation
- Increased rate of post-secondary persistence

- Ease of PSE application process

Research design for estimation of impacts: difference in difference of PSE transition rates



Stage of the research project

- Since May 9 2011, **delivering the third session** (still underway)
- **Research activities** including: survey design and implementation (for both program and control schools' counsellors), student focus groups, data collection, using linked data at BC Ministry of Advanced Education Student Transitions Project to use as longitudinal outcome data, cleaning, drafting reports to include data on design, monitoring, program delivery and impacts.
- **Presentation of findings in 2012**