



POLICY AND PROGRAM STUDIES SERVICE

**Implementation of the Talent Search Program,
Past and Present**

**Final Report from Phase I of the National
Evaluation**

2004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY
Doc # 2004-4



Implementation of the Talent Search Program, Past and Present

Final Report from Phase I of the National Evaluation

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Under Secretary
Contract No. ED-98-CO-0073

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Washington, D.C.

2004

This report was prepared for the U.S. Department of Education under Contract Number ED-98-CO-0073 with Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. The project officer was Sandra Furey in the Policy and Program Studies Service. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

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January 2004

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every study depends on the cooperation and coordination of many people. First, we acknowledge with gratitude the Talent Search project staff who work each day to achieve the goals of the program. They took time from their busy schedules to provide the information upon which the report is based. Without their very extensive cooperation, the study could not have been conducted.

The National Evaluation of Talent Search is being conducted under the sponsorship and direction of the Policy and Program Studies Service (formerly the Planning and Evaluation Service) of the U.S. Department of Education. The study was fortunate to have the technical support of Sandra Furey, the Project Officer, who gave consistently helpful technical guidance, and provided encouraging review and oversight throughout the study. Alan Ginsburg, Director of the Policy and Program Studies Service, and David Goodwin, Director of the Postsecondary and Adult Vocational Education Division, provided on-going support for the study. Robert Belle, Frances Bergeron, and Peggy Whitehead of the Office of Federal TRIO Programs provided continuing encouragement and support for the study and critical access to Talent Search records. Arnold Mitchem, Maureen Hoyler, Julia Tower, Debra Henderson, and Andrea Reeve of the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) provided access to information, as well as strong interest and commitment to the study. Technical Review Panel members—Paul Beasley, Anne Coles, Paula Martin, and Gary Natriello—gave helpful review of the original study design and data collection instruments.

The study was performed under contract by Mathematica Policy Research Inc., and subcontract with Decision Information Resources, Inc., and Branch Associates. Maggie Cahalan of Mathematica served as project director through the submission of the first draft of this report. The rest of the Mathematica project team included Jacqueline Agufa, Kusuma Cunningham, Mark Dynarski, Justin Humphrey, Julia Kim, Myles Maxfield, Dan O' Connor, Tim Silva, Melissa Thomas, and Jessica Wilkins. Alvia Branch of Branch Associates; Russell Jackson, Consuelo Arbona, and Carol Pistorino of DIR; and Lana Muraskin participated in the design of the study, conducted site visits, and prepared case study reports. Alfreda Holmes was responsible for word processing, layout and graphics and Daryl Hall coordinated editing of the report. Mary Moore, David Myers, and Jill Constantine provided very helpful and constructive quality assurance review at Mathematica.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Talent Search, which began operating in 1967, is one of the oldest of the federal programs designed to complement and encourage participation in the federal aid program for postsecondary education. At the time this report was prepared, 360 Talent Search projects throughout the country served about 320,000 participants. This report presents descriptive information on program implementation from Phase I of the ongoing National Evaluation of Talent Search. It is the first national study of the program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) since the early 1970s and the first to include the possibility of a rigorous study of the program's effects on participants. Phase II, currently underway, will use project, state, and federal administrative records to compare outcomes for recent participants and a similar group of nonparticipants in up to five states. The National Evaluation is a response to congressional direction to evaluate the federal TRIO programs.¹

REPORT OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 provides a more detailed introduction to the Talent Search program and this report. Chapter 2 provides a historical review of Talent Search, including program growth and legislative and regulatory changes, to put the current program in the context of its initiation and development over time. Chapters 3 through 7 present a profile of Talent Search at the end of the 1990s, addressing the following questions:

- What types of institutions/organizations had Talent Search grants? What were the characteristics of the target schools served? What proportion of eligible students were being served by Talent Search? (chapter 3)
- How were projects staffed and organized? How did Talent Search staff members spend their time? What were the relationships between the Talent Search staff and target school staff? How were Talent Search staff perceived in comparison with regular school counselors? (chapter 4)

¹“TRIO programs” refers to several programs operated by ED to help disadvantaged students prepare for and succeed in postsecondary education. The first three programs (thus “TRIO”) were Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services. Other programs created later included Upward Bound Math/Science, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, and the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program. The evaluation also involved a survey of EOCs; see appendix D.

- Who was being served by Talent Search? What was the targeting and recruitment process? To what extent was Talent Search serving the intended population? (chapter 5)
- What services were Talent Search projects providing? How much service did participants receive? What issues arose in service provision? To what extent did services vary between and within projects? (chapter 6)
- What outcome objectives were projects trying to accomplish? To what extent were projects meeting their goals? What were projects' record-keeping and evaluation practices? (chapter 7)

To answer these research question, this report draws primarily on information from the following data sources:

- A survey sent to all Talent Search projects operating in the 1998–1999 program year, with a 93 percent response rate
- Case studies conducted in 14 sites (8 projects randomly selected and 6 selected because of their emphasis on one or more of three areas: middle school services, academic support services, and use of technology)
- Program performance reports submitted annually to ED's Office of Federal TRIO programs
- Data from major ED surveys such as the Common Core of Data (CCD) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

MAJOR FINDINGS

CHAPTER 2: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM, 1965–2000

Chapter 2 focuses primarily on how Talent Search has changed since its inception in terms of both its scope and operations.

More projects and participants. The program began with 45 experimental projects. By 1980, the program extended to about 170 projects, with just over 200 in 1990 and 360 today. Nationwide, the number of participants grew from about 50,000 to over 320,000. The average number served per project has ranged from a high of about 1,200 in 1970 to a low of about 890 in 2000.

More funding. The initial Talent Search appropriation was \$2 million; today, the program receives over \$100 million. In constant 2000 dollars, average funding per project started at about \$210,000, dropped to about \$167,000 in 1990, and increased to about \$279,000 in 2000.

Low-intensity program. Consideration of both numbers served and funding levels reveals that Talent Search has always been a relatively low-intensity program. In

constant 2000 dollars, average funds per participant totaled \$190 in 1967, dropped to \$173 in 1990, and rose to \$313 in 2000.² (In comparison, Upward Bound spent about \$4,400 per student in 2000 and Student Support Services about \$1,000.)

More specific eligibility requirements. Before 1980, Talent Search eligibility criteria were not very specific, and different projects defined “disadvantaged” in different ways. In 1981, the eligibility requirements were standardized. Two-thirds of participants in each project must be both low-income (defined as 150 percent of poverty) and potential first-generation college students (defined as neither parent holding a bachelor’s degree). However, unlike the other TRIO programs, the other one-third of participants need not meet the low-income or first-generation criterion.

Serving younger students. Originally, participants had to be at least 14 years of age. In 1980, the minimum age was lowered to 12 and subsequently to 11 in an effort to make middle school students eligible for the program. Thus, the program has increased its focus on early intervention.

Coordinating services and longer grants. Reauthorization legislation in 1992 aimed to improve coordination with other services, specifically by stating that grants should not be denied because organizations had similar programs and by allowing for part-time project directors. Now it is not uncommon for one person to oversee both a Talent Search project and another program, such as Upward Bound, Student Support Services, or an EOC. The 1992 legislation also increased the funding cycle from three to four years.

Greater accountability. The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 resulted in a greater focus on tracking participant outcomes. Projects must set specific objectives related to Talent Search goals and then report annually on the extent to which they met their goals. Projects with a good record receive extra points on grant applications, affording them an advantage over new applicants and thus promoting project stability.

CHAPTER 3: PROJECT HOSTS AND TARGET SCHOOLS

Chapter 3 focuses on the characteristics of Talent Search projects’ host institutions and target schools. It also estimates the percentage of eligible students served by Talent Search.

Postsecondary institution hosts. Colleges and universities accounted for about 40 percent of host institutions in 1973-74; today they account for about 80 percent. Among postsecondary institutions, public colleges and universities are much more

²The information in this paragraph and the preceding two paragraphs corresponds to the time period of our study and was the most current information available at the time this report was initially drafted. Since that time, the Talent Search program has grown. ED’s website reports that during FY 2002 there were 475 projects serving a total of 389,454 participants. Total program funding was about \$143.5 million, averaging \$302,117 per project and \$368 per participant.

likely than private institutions to be Talent Search grantees. In addition, large research-oriented and doctorate-granting institutions are more likely to host Talent Search projects than are other types of postsecondary institutions.

Minority-serving college hosts. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) comprise 2 percent of degree-granting institutions and 8 percent of Talent Search educational institution hosts. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) comprise 4 percent of degree-granting institutions and 9 percent of Talent Search educational institution hosts. Of 27 tribal colleges in 1999, three were Talent Search grantees.

Number and type of target schools. Talent Search projects served almost 5,000 target schools across the nation; the median number per project was 14; within projects, high schools typically outnumbered middle schools. About one-third of target schools served grades 6 through 8 and about half served grades 9 through 12. The program served about 11 to 13 percent of the approximately 41,600 secondary schools in the United States, 15 to 16 percent of high schools, and 8 to 11 percent of middle schools.

Target school characteristics. Over half of the students enrolled in target schools were racial/ethnic minorities compared with 33 percent in nontarget schools. About 40 percent of students enrolled in target schools were eligible for the federal free-lunch program compared with 25 percent nationwide.

Percent of eligible students served. Analyses indicate that Talent Search serves a relatively small percentage of students nationwide who, based on their family income, may be eligible for the program. Overall, the number of Talent Search participants is equal to about 21 percent of the number of students eligible for free lunch (not over 130 percent of poverty) in target schools and about 6 percent of that population in all schools serving grade 7 or higher.

CHAPTER 4: PROJECT STAFF AND ORGANIZATION

Chapter 4 provides information on project longevity; the number and types of Talent Search staff; staff duties, characteristics, and salaries; project budgets; several staffing issues, including turnover and relations with participants; and how staff compare with school counselors in terms of providing precollege information and advice.

Continuity of operations. Many Talent Search projects are long-lived. Projects averaged 13 years of operation in 2001. Slightly more than half of the projects began operating between 1975 and 1984, and 16 percent began in 1974 or earlier.

Number and types of staff. Nationwide, Talent Search projects employed about 2,500 full- and part-time staff—an average of 7.1 individuals and 5.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff per project and one staff member for every 125 participants. In addition, 68 percent of projects used volunteers (although typically not extensively), and 56 percent used work-study students. Overall, about 26 percent of FTE staff were project directors or coordinators and associate/assistant directors

and coordinators. Counselors and advisors accounted for just over one-third of FTE staff, about 15 percent were support staff, and 1 percent were data and information specialists.

Staff demographics. In 1999–2000, three-fourths of all Talent Search staff members and about 70 percent of project directors and coordinators were female. Forty-three percent of Talent Search staff were white, 36 percent were black, 13 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were American Indian, and Asians and Pacific Islanders each accounted for 2 percent.

Staff education and salary. About 43 percent of all Talent Search staff had advanced degrees (beyond a bachelor's), including 71 percent of project directors and coordinators and 68 percent of associate or assistant directors and coordinators. Project directors' and coordinators' salaries (from all sources) averaged about \$40,000, associate or assistant directors and coordinators earned an average of about \$36,000, and counselors and advisors received an average of about \$27,000.

Staff time allocation and responsibilities. Line staff, such as counselors and advisors, reportedly spent most of their time—often four days a week—in the field, visiting target schools. The project survey indicated that staff spent, on average, about 46 percent of their time in direct service, including counseling; 24 percent on record keeping, reporting, and administration; and 14 percent on participant recruitment. In 2000, just over one-third of all project directors and coordinators also served as directors or administrators of other student programs at their host institutions.

Project budgets. On average, Talent Search grant funds accounted for 96 percent of projects' total operating funds. Foundation and corporate funds averaged about \$17,000 per project. On average, Talent Search projects allocated two-thirds of their budgets to staff salaries.

Staff turnover. Staff turnover could make it hard for participants to develop close relationships with their Talent Search advisors or counselors. Among the 14 mature programs we visited, turnover of line staff did not appear to be a problem, and four of the directors had been in place for over 20 years. Nationwide, almost half (46 percent) of all directors and coordinators had served in those positions for six or more years.

Talent Search and school counselors. Much of what Talent Search staff do for students could theoretically be done by school counselors. Case study interviews revealed, however, that participants (1) typically had difficulty gaining access to school counselors due to the counselors' heavy caseloads and (2) often felt their Talent Search advisors provided better assistance. Participants could relate better to their advisors than to their school counselors.

CHAPTER 5: PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Chapter 5 examines participant characteristics and projects' targeting and recruitment practices.

Participant demographics and background. About 60 percent of Talent Search participants were female, a proportion similar to that in other TRIO programs. Two-thirds of participants were racial/ethnic minorities: 37 percent were black, 22 percent were Hispanic, 4 percent were American Indian, 4 percent were Asian, and 1 percent were Pacific Islanders. About 5 percent of participants had limited English proficiency. About 70 percent of participants were in the traditional age range for high school students—14 to 18 years. Just less than one-fourth of participants were in the 12th grade. High school dropouts and other unenrolled adults account for a small proportion of participants; staff saw these groups as difficult to serve and preferred to stress dropout prevention by working with students. Key factors in some student's backgrounds included poverty, poor school quality, geographic isolation, and low self-esteem.

Students' aspirations. Case study interviews revealed that Talent Search participants often had college aspirations before joining the program. Thus, projects mainly aimed to give participants the confidence that they could go to college and assisted them in taking the necessary steps to prepare and apply for college rather than working to convince students that college was a good idea. Indeed, helping participants to achieve pre-existing college aspirations has always been a major focus of Talent Search.

Participant eligibility status. Overall, almost three-fourths of Talent Search participants were reported to be both from low-income families and potential first-generation college students, 14 percent were potential first-generation college students only, and 7 percent were low-income only. About 5 percent were neither low-income nor first-generation.

Participant turnover.³ Projects reported that about half of all participants served in 1998–99 were new to the program. Since about one-fourth of all participants each year are seniors (as mentioned above) who would be leaving the program upon completing high school, this indicates that almost one-fourth of participants in lower grades also leave each year (do not come back the next year).

Participant targeting and recruitment. Talent Search projects report that overall about 80 percent of the number of targeted individuals apply and that about 90 percent of those who apply become participants. Staff typically described the target group as students “in the middle” with regard to academic performance. Very low-achieving students were often seen as too difficult to serve with the available

³We use the term “turnover” simply to describe the phenomenon of participants entering and leaving the program; it is not meant to imply the phenomenon is negative or problematic.

resources. The most frequent means of recruitment were recommendations of school guidance staff or teachers, class presentations, referrals from current participants, and informal networking.

CHAPTER 6: TALENT SEARCH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Chapter 6 presents information on the many types of services offered and projects' approaches to service delivery.⁴

Academic and personal/career development services. From 82 to 98 percent of Talent Search projects offered test-taking and study skills development, academic advising/course selection, and tutoring while 61 percent offered assisted (computer) labs. Compared with a decade earlier, more projects appear to be providing academic support services such as tutoring, and to a higher percentage of participants. Over 90 percent of projects offered college orientation activities, college campus visits, cultural activities, referrals, and counseling, whereas 65 percent offered mentoring and 80 percent sponsored family activities. During 1998–99, on average, projects served at least one parent/guardian for about 30 percent of their student participants.

Financial aid services and fee waivers. Large majorities (71 to 98 percent) of projects provided individual financial aid counseling for participants and/or parents, financial aid workshops for participants and/or parents, assistance with federal financial aid forms in the hard-copy and/or the Internet-based version, and scholarship searches. Just over 80 percent of projects provided some participants with waivers to cover the cost of SAT/ACT registration fees, and 78 percent provided waivers for college application fees.

Technology integration. Talent Search projects have integrated computer technology in their services and communications to varying degrees. For example, 71 percent used computerized career guidance programs, 45 percent used e-mail to communicate with target schools, and 11 percent offered interactive distance-learning activities.

Serving nonparticipants. It was common for the case study projects to provide limited, recurring services, such as career and college information sessions, to students who were not program participants. Staff saw this practice as a way to maintain good relations with target schools and did not think it diluted services to regular participants.

⁴The report also includes two appendices on Talent Search services. Appendix A uses information from the case studies to provide in-depth information on three service areas of particular interest: serving middle school students, academic support services, and using technology in program services. Appendix C presents a small amount of additional information on other services, drawing from both the survey and performance reports. Some of the findings from these appendices are mentioned herein.

Limited amounts of service. Many services were not offered very frequently, did not last very long, and were optional for participants. On average, 38 percent of middle school students and 48 percent of high school students reportedly spent less than 10 hours in program activities during the 1998–99 program year.

Resource limitations. Limited resources sometimes prevented projects from serving as many students as they would have liked or from serving all participants who requested a given service. For example, nearly half of all projects were unable to provide tutoring to all students who requested it.

Students served at school. At the case study projects, a common service delivery approach involved pulling students out of their regular classes for meetings or workshops lasting up to an hour.

Diversity of services between and within projects. There is considerable diversity in services both between and within projects. Projects may differ substantially on the following dimensions: specific services offered, delivery methods, target groups, and timing. Services may also vary substantially even for students in the same grade level but at two different target schools served by the same project. Some key factors behind inter- and intraproject service diversity were the size of the target area, target school receptivity and preferences, perceptions of different groups' needs, resource availability, and the initiative and creativity of project staff.

CHAPTER 7: PROJECT OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES, AND DATA

Chapter 7 first describes projects' outcome objectives and then presents quantitative and qualitative (subjective) information on projects' reported success in meeting their goals and on how participants may benefit from the programs. It next goes on to discuss projects' data-collection and evaluation practices.

Goals for student outcomes. Each Talent Search project must set goals for the percentage of participant subgroups that will achieve certain outcomes. The main goal for middle school students concerns grade level promotion. The average goals for high school students or dropouts in 1998–99 were as follows: 89 percent of students in 11th grade or lower would stay in school the following year; 88 percent of high school seniors and equivalency students would graduate or receive an equivalency certificate; 75 percent of graduates and equivalency recipients would enroll in a postsecondary program; 64 percent of secondary dropouts would return to school; and 65 percent of postsecondary stopouts would re-enter a postsecondary program.

Extent to which projects met their goals. Across all projects, 71 percent of graduating seniors reportedly enrolled in a postsecondary institution, slightly below projects' average goal for this major program objective (75 percent). Individual projects, however, demonstrated varying degrees of success in meeting their goals. For example, 87 percent of projects met their goal for secondary school graduation

while 53 percent met their goal for postsecondary admissions (another 18 percent of projects came within 5 percentage points of meeting this goal), and just 38 percent met their goal for postsecondary re-entry.

Postsecondary enrollment by host type. Among Talent Search projects hosted by postsecondary institutions, participants had a pronounced tendency to go on to an institution of the same type. For example, 20 percent of graduates at projects hosted by private 4-year colleges reportedly enrolled at a private 4-year college compared with 11 percent of graduates across all Talent Search projects. Even if host institutions abide by the guideline that they not use the program as a recruitment mechanism, it appears that students' familiarity with their host institutions may lead them to seek out similar types of colleges when they complete high school.

Opinions on program helpfulness. Although anecdotes, especially those offered by current or past participants, are not hard evidence of program effectiveness, it is useful to know how students and alumni perceived that the program helped them. Reported benefits included more knowledge about college and financial aid, better access to and more choice of colleges, improved academic performance, and increased confidence and motivation.

Data and record keeping. More than 95 percent of projects reported that they tracked or monitored data on the key participant outcomes of high school graduation, progression through high school, enrollment in college, and completion of college applications. Substantially lower percentages of projects had tried to measure or were collecting data on other outcomes such as grades, self-esteem, SAT/ACT scores, and financial aid awareness. Staff at case study sites cited resource limitations as a major factor behind their data-collection and analysis practices.

Project evaluation. Most projects rely on internal evaluations. More than 90 percent of projects reported using an ongoing assessment of program operation and success, and about 63 percent reported using a comprehensive year-end study. The two types of information most commonly used in project evaluations were school retention or graduation rates and students' written evaluations of services. The two types of information least commonly used were comparisons of standardized test scores of participants and nonparticipants and comparisons of participants' and nonparticipants' course completion rates.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND ISSUES

The implementation study brought to the surface a variety of issues that may merit reflection and consideration on the part of policymakers and practitioners alike.

Selecting target schools and participants. Projects find the vast majority of their participants by first identifying schools with a reasonable number of students who are eligible (based on family income and parents' education) and in need of supplemental services and then pursuing applications from interested students (either through direct appeals or referrals). For some projects, target schools are spread

over very large areas. In such cases, there may be a question about efficiency. Specifically, given projects' resource constraints, would it make sense (and would it be possible) for some projects to pursue more concentrated targeting—that is, choose fewer target schools, perhaps spread over a small area, but serve more students in each one? This may be a strategy that some projects might want to consider.

Relations with target schools. In general, staff in the case study sites had established positive relationships with their target schools. Good relations typically centered on reciprocation—for example, school staff assisted program staff in recruitment and granted limited use of school facilities and equipment while Talent Search staff provided critical assistance to guidance staff by delivering precollege services to students who might otherwise have been underserved. Occasionally, however, projects found relations to be more challenging, such as when key school staff left, requiring project staff to introduce the program all over again to new school officials, or especially when policy changes at the school or district level required Talent Search staff to modify their service approaches.

Talent Search as a nonintensive program. Despite recent modest increases in average funding per participant, Talent Search remains a generally nonintensive program. For the most part, participation in program services is optional; basic services might be offered biweekly or even just once a month; and many students spend less than 10 hours in program activities over the course of a year. Overall, the program still adheres to the original assumption that small amounts of service, delivered at crucial times, can make a difference in students' decisions concerning college preparation and enrollment. However, there is no solid evidence on which to judge whether the light-touch program model is effective overall or for various subgroups. It is also unclear what would happen to program enrollments if services were to become more intensive; some participants might currently be drawn to the program because of its lack of demands on their time.

Diverse service plans. Projects typically provided many diverse activities rather than focusing on just a few types of services. Service delivery approaches varied, too, by type of service, time, place, target group, and providers. Some projects we visited had developed a well-defined, coordinated set of services and materials for students at various grade levels, with services delivered in accordance with a detailed calendar of events prepared well in advance. Others had looser, less specific plans. Service plans reflected several factors, including the context of the target area, participants' perceived needs, and the creativity and initiative of key staff. The diversity of offerings between and within projects seems appropriate given the wide range of individuals served and their various needs and interests.

Providing academic services. In exploring this topic, we detected two distinct schools of thought among project directors: some feel that resources are too meager to provide effective academic support; others feel that academic needs are too crucial to be ignored. Approaches used by case study projects included daily tutoring services, Saturday test preparation sessions, subject area instruction, and summer

enrichment programs. If supplemental funds cannot be obtained, however, the expense of providing academic support services—which are inherently more intensive than one-shot workshops—can mean fewer services in other areas (a general issue we discuss below). It will be interesting to see if increased high-stakes testing and generally rising educational expectations will lead to a continued increase in the provision of academic services by Talent Search projects nationwide.

Serving middle school students. Though typically serving far more high school students than middle school students, most Talent Search projects appear to have committed to the idea of serving the younger age group. Some of the case study projects had developed curricula specifically for the middle school age group. Two interesting approaches called for offering short-term but more intensive services over the summer and serving the younger students in their regular classrooms. But questions may still exist about effective topics and methods for middle school services. Examining services more closely and comparing them to experts' ideas about this age group's developmental needs may be an issue for the future.

Integrating computer technology. Computers have the potential to make services more interesting to participants and possibly more efficient. Many Talent Search projects have begun integrating computer technology into project services, communications, and program management. But projects vary greatly in the extent to which they have done so. If various types of hardware and software are not already available to projects from other sources, such as host institutions or target schools, projects will obviously require resources to take advantage of various technological resources. Finding the funds and expert staff may be challenging for many Talent Search projects. Using college students to assist with computer technology could be an option worth exploring.

The pull-out approach to service provision. The pull-out model of delivering services during the regular school day has the advantage of not requiring students to attend service sessions after school or on weekends. But the case studies suggested that some projects are finding it increasingly difficult to pursue their traditional pull-out approach, in part because of increased pressure on schools to improve academic performance; teachers were sometimes reluctant to release students, and the students themselves sometimes did not want to miss their classes. Some projects tried to minimize the impact of pull-out services by alternating service times, and others tried to make their services look more educationally credible. But Talent Search staff often felt that solutions to the service provision problem were elusive. The pull-out method of service delivery will continue to pose a challenge for projects.

Generating parent involvement. Although most projects offered some services or activities for parents, such as financial aid workshops and orientation meetings, the offerings were limited, and generating parent involvement in program activities was a common challenge. Case study staff typically said they were trying but that their efforts rarely attracted many parents and that they were interested in learning about successful approaches. More information on how to get parents involved could be

useful, along with an empirically based explanation of why parent involvement in a program like Talent Search matters.

Participant turnover. Annual performance reports strongly suggest that many students stay in Talent Search a relatively short time—and not just those who join toward the end of high school. The estimated 14 percent of staff time (roughly equivalent to one out of every seven work days) spent on recruitment activities seems somewhat high and might be more productively turned toward direct services—if participant turnover were lower. While some project staff may not see participant turnover as a problem, this is an issue on which more information would be helpful. For example, what are the causes of turnover? Is longer involvement in a low-intensity program associated with better outcomes? And, if so, are there good strategies to increase participant retention?

Resource constraints and tradeoffs. Not surprisingly, the issue of resource constraints came up often in both the survey and case studies. Project staff could not do all they wanted to for all their participants. And some students, parents, and school staff expressed an interest in more and/or more intensive services. In some cases, however, staff might be able to do more with existing levels of funding per participant. One strategy would be to make greater use of volunteers and interns. Another option, mentioned above, would be more concentrated targeting—serving a smaller area and/or fewer schools but more students per school. Absent a funding increase, the alternative to stretching resources further is to make tough choices about service tradeoffs—downplaying some in order to emphasize others. Clearly, though, any such tradeoffs would require careful consideration.

Integration/coordination with other programs. Over the past three decades, various public and private organizations have established more and more precollege programs for disadvantaged students, sometimes modeled after Talent Search and other TRIO programs. Although almost unique when it started, Talent Search is now part of a sizable constellation of such programs. The project survey revealed that many host institutions have other programs for students, sometimes also headed by the Talent Search project director. The federal government already took steps to encourage service coordination and efficiencies, but as more programs come into existence, questions may arise about potentially overlapping or duplicative services and/or the need to coordinate or integrate Talent Search activities with those sponsored by other programs.

Staff salaries and turnover. Observers might expect that modest salaries would make it difficult to recruit new staff and retain experienced staff. On one hand, given that current and former participants we interviewed often had strong, fond memories of particular staff members, it could be important to keep staff for several years to help foster close relations between participants and staff. On the other hand, for a nonintensive program in which half of all participants each year are new, staff retention may not be particularly important. Overall, the project survey and case studies did not identify staff turnover as a major issue or concern, but turnover

probably does become a problem occasionally for some projects and therefore may be an issue worth monitoring.

Project self-evaluation. Talent Search projects could potentially benefit from collecting and analyzing more data on student outcomes. In light of resource constraints (both in funds and expertise), one approach worth considering may be for projects to draw on the resources of host colleges or other nearby postsecondary institutions. Undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and certain administrative staff, such as institutional research units or minority affairs offices, may be willing to undertake research projects on the benefits of Talent Search participation. Conducting such studies could serve as an applied learning experience for college students, and for college administrators it could illuminate effective ways to reach out to a disadvantaged group of potential applicants.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The federal Talent Search program, which was created in 1965 and started operating in 1967, was one of the original three federal programs designed to complement and encourage the use of federal financial aid in postsecondary education. The three programs eventually became known as the TRIO programs.¹ As such, Talent Search is one of the oldest of the federal education programs designed to increase college access among low-income youth. On an annual basis, Talent Search reaches out to more students than any of the other TRIO programs. Yet, the current study of Talent Search is the first national study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) since 1975 (Pyecha et al. 1975) and the first to include the possibility of a rigorous study of the program's effects on participants.

This report presents the results of the Phase I Implementation Study for the National Evaluation of Talent Search.² We place our description of Talent Search in the historical context in which it has evolved over the 35 years of its existence. We specifically look at Talent Search within the context of the U.S. system of education—a system that is undergoing systemic and widespread reform and technological change.

THE CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION FOR THE STUDY

This study, like all TRIO evaluations, is being conducted in response to congressional authorizations. Congress has authorized and requested ED to study

This is the first national study of Talent Search sponsored by ED in 25 years.

This implementation report provides an historical overview and a current profile.

¹The other two original TRIO programs were Upward Bound and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, which was later renamed Student Support Services. Upward Bound, created in 1964, provides intensive academic services to disadvantaged high school students. Student Support Services, created in 1968, provides services to disadvantaged college students. Today, several other federal programs are also part of TRIO. The Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program, created in 1972, focuses on adults. The Training Program for Special Programs Staff and Leadership, later renamed Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs, was created in 1976 and provides staff training grants. The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, created in 1986, provides services to foster preparation for and increased enrollment in graduate school. Upward Bound Math/Science was created in 1990 to address disadvantaged high school students' need for instruction in these subject areas. Finally, the TRIO Dissemination Partnership program was created in 1998 to encourage the replication of successful practices of TRIO programs.

²A second phase of the study, currently in progress, addresses questions of Talent Search's effects on participants in selected states.

and evaluate the TRIO programs. The Higher Education Act of 1998, the authorizing legislation for the TRIO programs, contains the following statement concerning evaluations:

The congressional authorization calls for studies focused on program improvement.

In General—*For the purpose of improving the effectiveness of the programs and projects assisted under this chapter, the Secretary may make grants to or enter into contracts with institutions of higher education and other public and private institutions and organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and projects assisted under this chapter.*

Practice—*The evaluations described in paragraph (1) shall identify institutional, community, and program or project practices that are particularly effective in enhancing the access of low-income individuals and first-generation college students to postsecondary education, the preparation of the individuals and students for postsecondary education, and the success of the individuals and students in postsecondary education. Such evaluations shall also investigate the effectiveness of alternative and innovative methods within Federal TRIO programs of increasing access to, and retention of, students in postsecondary education (H.R. 6, Sec. 402H).*

Evaluations that focus on program improvement are not new to the TRIO programs, but the 1998 reauthorization added language calling for an investigation into the effectiveness of “alternative and innovative methods within TRIO programs.” This language has influenced the approach we have taken to both the implementation study and the impact study.³

TALENT SEARCH PROGRAM BACKGROUND

TRIO programs are designed to complement the federal financial aid program and to serve as models for other programs.

In the legislation that first authorized the TRIO programs, Congress noted that financial aid alone would not ensure equal educational opportunity for disadvantaged students. Accordingly, Congress sponsored the development of supplemental services to prepare disadvantaged students for college and to help them succeed once there. In addition, Congress called for the development of higher education institutional policies designed to serve a more diverse population. In this regard, the TRIO programs’ role was not only to provide direct services but also to serve as a model and catalyst for the development of other similar services at the state and local levels.

PROJECT GOALS AND SERVICES

Talent Search college access goals
 --Identify
 --Motivate
 --Inform

The specific goals of the Talent Search program are to identify qualified youths with potential for postsecondary education, encourage them to complete secondary school and to enroll in postsecondary education programs, publicize the availability of student financial aid, and encourage secondary and postsecondary school dropouts to reenter an educational program (U.S. Department of Education 1998).

³A copy of the legislation governing the Talent Search program when this evaluation started is available at www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/trio/index.html.

In 1998, the Office of Federal TRIO Programs awarded new grants, increasing the number of Talent Search projects from 319 to 361.⁴ Talent Search projects are operated by 2- or 4-year colleges, public or private nonprofit agencies or organizations, or combinations of these sponsors. Talent Search participants must be 11 to 27 years of age⁵ and must have completed the fifth grade.

In each Talent Search project, two-thirds of the participants must be low-income students who are potentially first-generation college students. Unlike the case of the other TRIO programs, the other one-third of participants in Talent Search need not meet the low-income or first-generation criteria. As listed on the Office of Federal TRIO Programs Web site, Talent Search services include:

- Academic, financial, career, or personal counseling, including advice on entry and reentry to secondary or postsecondary programs
- Career exploration and aptitude assessment
- Tutorial services
- Information on postsecondary education
- Exposure to college campuses
- Information on student financial assistance
- Assistance in completing college admissions and financial aid applications
- Assistance in preparing for college entrance exams
- Mentoring programs
- Special activities for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders
- Workshops for the families of participants

In recent years, ED has undertaken two major initiatives to reshape Talent Search. First, it places increased emphasis on project accountability as manifest by new performance reporting requirements while according projects greater flexibility in

By 2000, there were about 360 Talent Search programs, with total funding of about \$100 million and about 300,000 participants served.

⁴One project stopped operating after the 1999-2000 program year; throughout this report, depending on the time frame of reference, we may refer to 360 or 361 projects.

⁵Projects may serve clients age 28 or older if no EOC is available to serve them and if doing so will not dilute the services provided to the main target group.

deciding how to deliver services. Second, ED encourages Talent Search projects to place greater emphasis on increasing the program participation of younger students.

TALENT SEARCH IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Given that TRIO programs are designed to work together, it is useful to look at Talent Search in the context of the other TRIO programs. Talent Search and EOCs are the least intensive of the TRIO programs. Talent Search was designed as an outreach program that would cast a wide net to complement other TRIO and non-TRIO services. The central features of Talent Search are its emphasis on school and community outreach and its primary reliance on personal, academic, and financial aid counseling. Talent Search serves more students per year—320,000—than any other TRIO program (table 1.1). In the 2000-01 program year, the average Talent Search project was funded to serve 891 students, and the average EOC served 1,961 people. Talent Search funding averaged \$313 per student. In contrast Upward Bound served an average of 73 participants at an average cost of \$4,414 in the same year.

The average Talent Search program serves about 900 participants per year at an average of just over \$300 per participant.

Table 1.1—TRIO funding, number of grants, average award, amount per person served, and number funded to serve: 2000–01

Program	Total funding	Number of grants	Number served	Average award	Average amount per person served	number funded to serve per project
Talent Search	\$100,544,841	360	320,854	\$279,291	\$ 313	891
Educational Opportunity Centers	30,504,684	82	160,836	372,008	190	1,961
McNair	34,859,043	156	3,774	223,455	9,237	24
Student Support Services	183,298,415	795	176,614	230,564	1,038	222
Upward Bound	249,650,137	772	56,564	323,381	4,414	73
Upward Bound Math/Science	32,302,902	123	6,093	254,495	5,302	50

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, 2001.

It may also be useful to briefly compare Talent Search to another recently created federal precollege program, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), which shares the same general objective as Talent Search—getting disadvantaged students into college—but which is not a TRIO program. In the 1999-2000 program year, GEAR UP grantees received, on average, \$261 per participant in federal funds,⁶ although they also provide matching resources of an equal value to the federal funds, resulting in higher total spending per participant. With total federal funding of about \$200 million, GEAR UP served about 766,700 students.

⁶This is considerably below the maximum that GEAR UP projects can request or receive per student, which is \$800.

STUDY OBJECTIVES, COMPONENTS, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current national evaluation of Talent Search is organized to accomplish the following overall objectives:

- To provide updated information on the Talent Search program's context, participants, staff, operations, services, and accomplishments
- To contribute to the knowledge base that informs thinking on how the federal government and other entities can improve high school graduation rates and access to college for disadvantaged students

The overall study has descriptive, strategic, and policy-related objectives.

STUDY COMPONENTS

To achieve the objectives, the overall study involves three major elements:

- An implementation study (for which this is the final report) of Talent Search that uses information from
 - Descriptive surveys of all Talent Search projects conducted in 1999–2000 and completed with a 93 percent response rate
 - Student-centered case studies of 14 sites conducted in 1999 and 2000
 - Analysis of recent performance reports
 - Analysis of the characteristics of Talent Search target schools by merging information with the Common Core of Data (CCD)
 - Analysis of the characteristics of Talent Search host institutions by merging information with the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
 - Interviews with former project directors from Talent Search sites that are no longer funded
- A study to look at the feasibility of conducting a rigorous assessment of Talent Search using information from the above components (the feasibility report was completed in summer 2000)⁷

*The evaluation has three major parts
--Implementation
--Feasibility
--Effects*

⁷See Maxfield et al. "Evaluation of the Federal Talent Search Program: Phase II and Phase III Feasibility Report." Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., October 2000.

- A rigorous study of the program’s effects on participants (currently being initiated in four states)

This report presents results from the implementation study. A companion report provides detailed results of the feasibility study. The Talent Search evaluation is cumulative in that the implementation study informs the next phase, which examines the program’s effects on participants, focusing generally on short-term outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This implementation report addresses the following questions, derived from the congressional mandate and the study design:

- How has the program grown over time, in terms of funding, grantees, and participants? How have the legislation and regulations governing Talent Search changed since its inception? What assumptions guided the program’s creation and development? What issues did previous studies address?
- What types of institutions/organizations have been awarded Talent Search grants? What were the characteristics of the target schools served? What proportion of eligible students were being served by Talent Search?
- How were projects staffed and organized? How did the Talent Search staff members spend their time? What were the relationships between the Talent Search staff and target school staff? How were Talent Search staff perceived in comparison with regular school counselors?
- Who was being served by Talent Search? What was the targeting and recruitment process? To what extent was Talent Search serving the intended population?
- What services were Talent Search projects providing? How much service did participants receive? What issues arose in service provision? To what extent did services vary between and within projects?⁸
- What outcome objectives were projects trying to accomplish? To what extent were projects meeting their goals? What were projects’ record keeping and evaluation practices?

⁸Note that we did not set out to evaluate the quality of services being provided.

IMPLEMENTATION STUDY METHODOLOGY

In addressing the above questions, we relied on information obtained from multiple sources: a project survey, case studies, performance reports, and other education data sets. This approach allowed us to make the most use of insights gained from both statistical and qualitative methods concerning topics of interest.

PROJECT SURVEYS

A questionnaire was distributed to each Talent Search project director and collected between spring 1999 and spring 2000. The survey covered all Talent Search projects operating at the time. Respondents had a choice of responding by mail or over the Web. The overall response rate was 93 percent, with 20 percent of respondents choosing to respond via the Web. MPR undertook extensive follow-up to achieve the high response rate. Table 1.2 provides response rates for the project survey by type of grantee.⁹

Project surveys were distributed to each project operating in 2000 and received a 93 percent response rate.

Table 1.2—Response rates to project survey and performance reports, by host type

Host institution	Number of projects in 1999–2000	Percentage of projects	Percent responding to survey	Percent completing 1998–99 performance report	Share of participants
Public 4-year	121	34%	91%	98%	34%
Private 4-year	48	13	94	96	12
2-year	124	34	94	97	29
Community org.	68	19	94	98	25
All projects	361	100	93	98	100

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002; National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

NOTE: “Public 4-year” refers to projects hosted by public colleges and universities offering a bachelor’s degree or higher; “private 4-year” refers to projects hosted by private colleges and universities offering a bachelor’s degree or higher; “2-year” refers to projects hosted by public and private postsecondary institutions that do not grant 4-year degrees; and “community org.” encompasses all other types of host institutions, virtually all of which are nonprofit community-based organizations.

The project survey built on previous TRIO surveys and was reviewed by an advisory panel and pretested with a group of nine project directors who provided helpful input. The survey collected information on project organization, target schools, participant characteristics, project services, outcomes, and evaluation and record-keeping. The purpose of the survey was two-fold: first and foremost, to provide a comprehensive, in-depth look at the program and, second, to help provide

⁹Throughout this report we frequently present data separately by type of host institution because (1) it will enable individual project staff to compare their own programs to others that share this basic characteristic and (2) other publications on Talent Search have also used this analysis strategy.

information for the feasibility study to assess the possibility of conducting a rigorous study of Talent Search's effects on participants. The survey asked for closed-ended information and also posed open-ended questions; the latter were designed to obtain more detailed information than can be collected from closed-ended questions.

CASE STUDIES

Case studies were conducted in 14 sites.

To gain a deeper understanding of the Talent Search program than is possible from a survey of project directors, we also conducted case studies of 14 Talent Search projects organized into two groups. We selected the first eight projects randomly, stratified along two major background characteristics: type of host institution and location. In one case, we chose a back-up project, instead of the first project sampled, to increase the number of large projects—those serving over 1,000 participants. The strata for selecting the first group of case study sites were as follows.

- Two public 4-year colleges in urban areas
- One public 4-year college in a rural area
- One private 4-year college in a rural area
- One public 2-year college in an urban area
- One public 2-year college in a rural area
- One nonprofit community-based organization in an urban area
- One nonprofit community-based organization in a rural area

Eight case study sites were chosen at random and six were chosen because of their emphasis on academic support, serving middle schools, or use of technology.

Projects in the first group were neither intended to be individually representative of the stratum from which they were selected nor collectively representative of all Talent Search projects in the nation. They are, however, useful for providing examples of a wide range of project characteristics, structures, and service approaches and complement the information gained from all projects in the surveys and performance reports.

The six case study projects in the second group were selected because of their emphasis on particular services. Together with ED's Planning and Evaluation Service, we decided to highlight ways in which projects are serving students in three areas of particular interest to project staff around the country: providing academic assistance, using technology in serving students, and working with middle school students. (Appendix A focuses specifically on the three types of services.) These projects also reflected a mix in terms of locations served and grantee types.

For both groups of case study projects, we considered only mature projects that had been funded during the preceding grant period, 1994–98. The reason is that we wanted to study projects with a track record, not grantees that might be dealing with the challenges of implementing the Talent Search program for the first time. In addition, to increase respondents' comfort and candor in interviews, we promised confidentiality to all projects selected for case studies. Thus, in describing the sites we visited, we do not identify them by name and do not provide public information, such as the size of their most recent grant, which could be used to identify individual projects.

Sites included in the case studies had all been in existence since at least 1994.

Site visits typically lasted three or four days, during which time we observed program activities and conducted one-on-one or small-group interviews with a variety of individuals, including project staff, target school staff, students, parents, alumni, and host institution staff. We also collected and reviewed documents that could shed light on project context and operations, such as recruitment brochures, activity schedules, past performance reports, and each project's most recent grant application. We visited half of the projects in spring 1999 and the remaining half in winter 2000.

At all 14 sites, we collected information on several major topics, including program goals and philosophy; the context of program operations, such as key characteristics of target schools and communities; participants' backgrounds and postsecondary aspirations; participant recruitment and selection; alternative service availability; program data and record-keeping; parent involvement; the service delivery plan; the extent and duration of participation in program services; organizational structure and staffing issues; relations between major players inside and outside the program; challenges or obstacles to program operations; and program outcomes. We also collected information on options for conducting a rigorous study of program impacts, which helped shape the direction we proposed to take in the next phase of the national evaluation.¹⁰

PERFORMANCE REPORTS

We also include and highlight information collected from the Talent Search performance reports covering the year 1998–99, which was the first year that the revised performance report was used. Overall, 98 percent of the 361 projects operating that year completed the report (table 1.2), which addresses participant characteristics, project services, and outcomes information.

We include data from Talent Search performance reports, completed by 98 percent of projects.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DATA SETS

To develop a better understanding of the Talent Search program, we also merged data on project hosts and target schools with two National Center for Education

¹⁰See Maxfield et al. "Evaluation of the Federal Talent Search Program: Phase II and Phase III Feasibility Report." Washington, D.C.: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., October 2000.

We merged project data with postsecondary and target school data from IPEDS and CCD.

Statistics databases: the CCD and IPEDS. The former includes demographic information on schools and school districts across the United States. The latter includes information on postsecondary institutions and collects information on institutional characteristics, enrollments, finance, and completions.

STRUCTURE OF THE REMAINDER OF THE REPORT

To address study questions, we present the report in nine chapters and four appendices. The structure of the report is as follows

- Chapter 2: A historical overview of the program, 1965-2000
- Chapter 3: Project hosts and target schools
- Chapter 4: Project staff and organization
- Chapter 5: Program participants
- Chapter 6: Talent search services and activities
- Chapter 7: Project objectives, outcomes, and data
- References
- Appendix A: A focused look at three types of services: providing academic assistance, using technology, and serving middle school students
- Appendix B: What happens when Talent Search projects shut down?
- Appendix C: Additional information on Talent Search services and activities
- Appendix D: Results from the survey of Educational Opportunity Centers¹¹

The report is descriptive, providing an historical summary and a comprehensive profile of the Talent Search program at the end of the 20th century. Phase II of the evaluation, now in its early stages, will address the question of Talent Search's effects on student educational outcomes.

¹¹Although the major focus of our research was on the Talent Search program, we also conducted a survey of all EOCs operating in 1999–2000. Appendix D contains selected results from key items on the survey, similar to the items reported in the body of this report for Talent Search.

CHAPTER 2

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM: 1965–2000

The Higher Education Act of 1965, which created the Talent Search program, has been reauthorized six times since it was first enacted (1968, 1972, 1980, 1986, 1992, and 1998), with each reauthorization introducing some changes to TRIO and Talent Search. This chapter presents an overview of Talent Search from 1965 to 2000 with a focus on indentifying how the program has changed and developed.

Overview and Selected Highlights

- Talent Search began with 45 projects; in 2000-01 there were 360 projects across the nation.
- In 2000, Talent Search served about 321,000 participants at an average cost of about \$313 per participant. The average funding per project was \$278,291.
- Talent Search reauthorization in 1980 made elibigibility criteria more specific and focused on family income and potential first-generation college status.
- There has been a shift from indentifying those with exceptional college potential to serving middle achieving students and to improving access for all students.
- The minimum age of participants has been lowered twice and is now 11 years.
- The 1992 reauthorization encouraged coordination of services and allowed for less than a full-time project director if doing so would facilitate coordination.
- The grant selection process fosters continuity of services by providing extra points for prior experience as manifest by meeting specified objectives.
- Talent Search's initial assumptions included the belief that small amounts of services targeted on informational and motivational services would lead to increasaed college enrollment and use of financial aid.
- Talent Search has been changing in interaction with changes in U.S. demographics, educational reform and technology change.
- Few studies have been conducted previously using national-level data on Talent Search.

STATISTICS CONCERNING THE TALENT SEARCH PROGRAM

The initial Talent Search appropriation was \$2 million for 45 experimental programs.

Authorized in 1965, the first Talent Search projects began operating in 1967, when Congress appropriated \$2 million to fund 45 experimental projects under the Higher Education Act (table 2.1). The expressed intent was to encourage and assist disadvantaged youth in obtaining a college education by means of the first federal need-based student grant program, known then as Educational Opportunity Grants (EOGs) (Franklin 1985). To provide a context for the statistics that follow, we note that federal student financial aid has grown from \$31 million under the original National Defense Student Loans (NDSLs) in 1959 to over \$13 billion by 2000. Table 2.1 summarizes key statistics on Talent Search funding, number of projects, number of participants, average grant amount, and number of participants served per project since program inception.

Table 2.1—Talent Search summary statistics: 1967–2000

Year	Funding in millions (current dollars)	Funding in millions (constant 2000 dollars)	Number of Talent Search projects	Average grant amount (current dollars)	Average grant amount (constant 2000 dollars)	Total number of students served	Average number of students served per project
1967	\$2.0	\$9.5	45	\$44,444	\$210,637	50,000	1,111
1970	4.0	16.7	85	47,059	196,078	100,000	1,176
1975	6.0	18.4	114	52,632	161,447	110,975	973
1980	15.3	32.0	167	91,617	191,667	198,817	1,191
1985	17.8	28.5	164	108,537	173,659	185,560	1,131
1990	26.2	34.5	207	126,570	166,759	199,420	963
1992	59.6	73.1	294	202,721	248,738	303,000	1,031
1997	78.4	84.1	319	245,768	263,700	298,147	935
1999	98.5	101.8	364	270,604	279,550	323,541	889
2000	100.5	100.5	360	279,291	279,291	320,854	891

SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs; the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE); and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, various years (historical information can be found at www.bls.gov/cpi/).

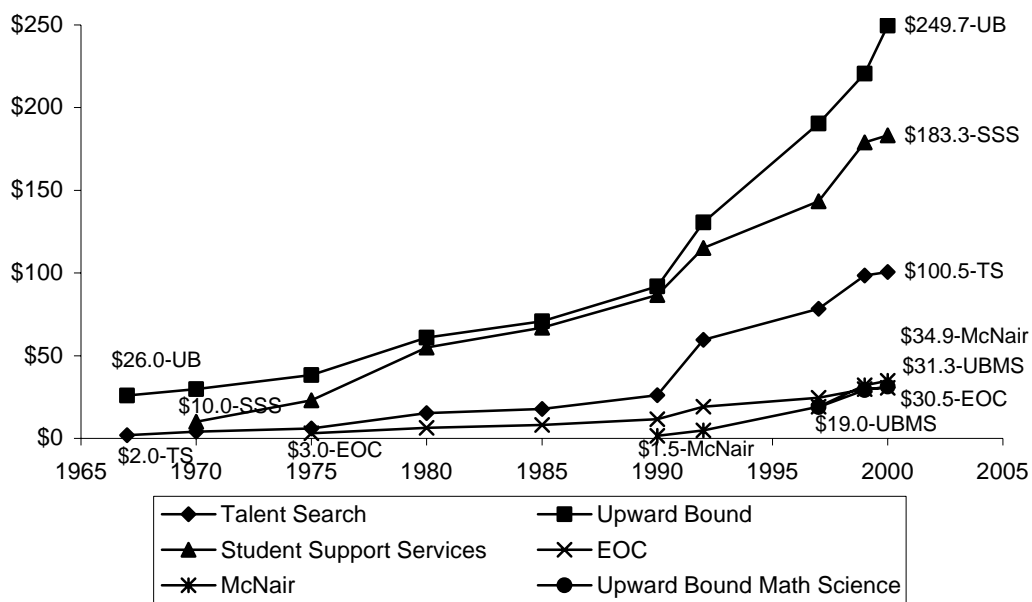
Talent Search has had larger percentage increases than other TRIO programs in recent years, but remains the lowest-funded of the original three programs.

TRIO AND TALENT SEARCH FUNDING HISTORY

Talent Search began with the lowest funding level among the first three TRIO programs. While it has seen larger percentage increases than Upward Bound or Student Support Services, it has remained the lowest-funded program of the original

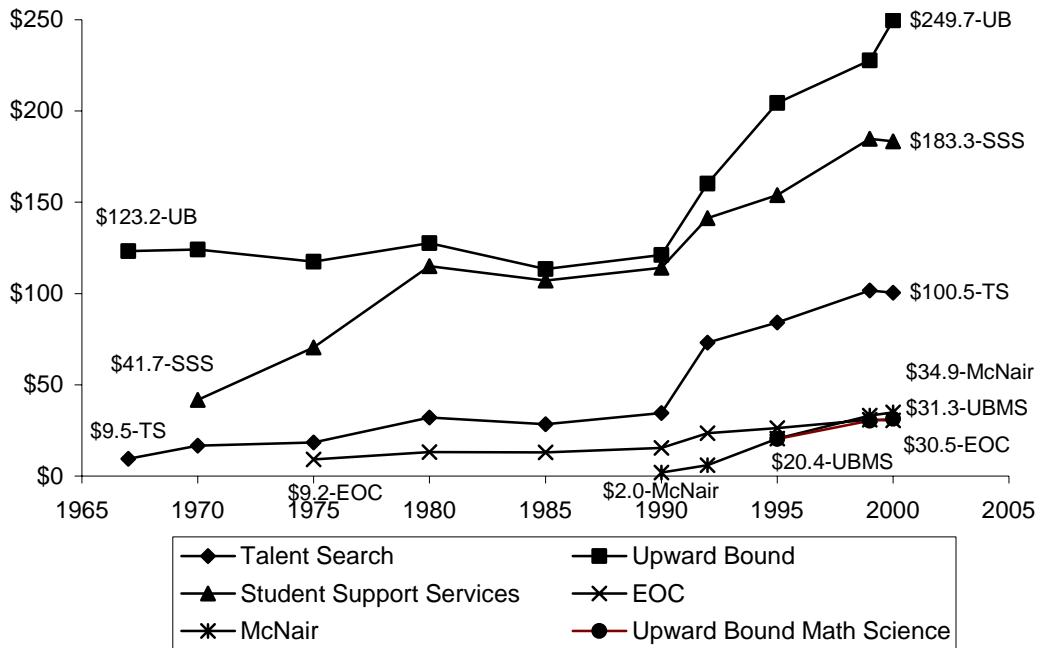
three programs. In current dollars, Talent Search funding totaled \$2 million in 1967 (figure 2.1).¹ In 2000, funding for Talent Search totaled just over \$100 million. As demonstrated by table 2.1 and figure 2.2, most of the growth in Talent Search funding (in constant dollars) occurred in the 1970s and 1990s. After a flat period for TRIO and Talent Search in the 1980s, Talent Search funding increased in constant dollars by 190 percent between 1990 and 2000. Starting from a lower base, Talent Search received larger percentage increases in the most recent decade than Upward Bound or Student Support Services. In the same period, Upward Bound increased by 100 percent and Student Support Services by about 60 percent.

Figure 2.1—TRIO funding in millions of current dollars: 1967–2000



SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs; Council for Opportunity in Education (COE).

¹The programs were Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services (originally known as Special Services for Disadvantaged Students).

Figure 2.2—TRIO funding in millions of constant 2000 dollars: 1967–2000

SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs; Council for Opportunity in Education (COE); Consumer Price Index, various years.

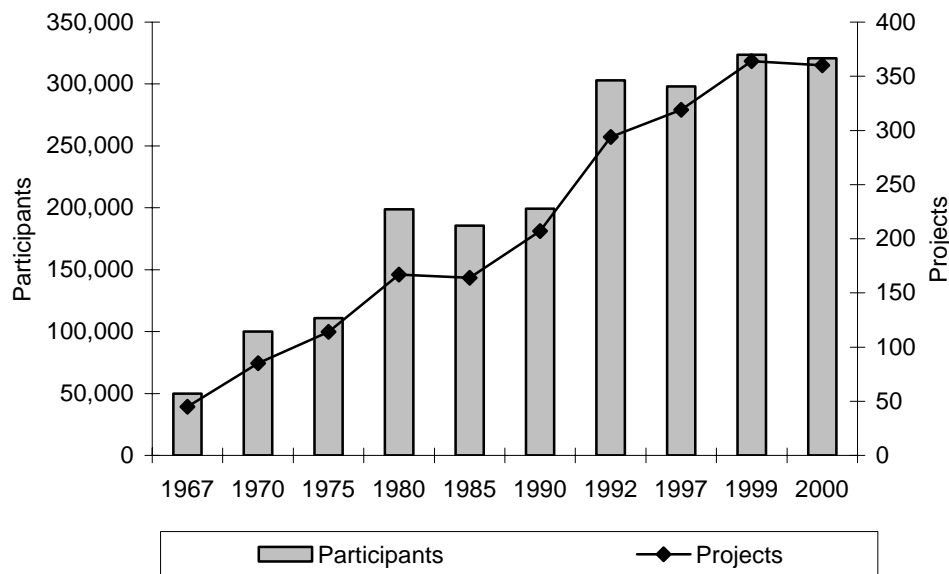
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS AND PARTICIPANTS

Most new competitions have seen increases in the number of funded projects. In the 1990s, the number of projects grew from 207 to 361.

The 45 initial Talent Search projects (in 1967) grew to 85 by 1970. By the end of the 1970s, the number of projects had almost doubled again, reaching 167. The early 1980s saw little growth in TRIO funding and a small decline in the number of funded Talent Search projects. By 1990, there were 207 Talent Search projects; by 1992, the number had increased to 294. Another large increase in the number of funded projects occurred with the 1997 competition. In 1999-2000, there were 361 funded projects; in 2000-01, 360.

The total number of participants served nationwide largely mirrors trends in the number of projects (figure 2.3). The initial 45 projects served about 50,000 students in 1967. In 2000-01, the 360 Talent Search projects were funded to serve about 320,000 students between 11 and 27 years of age.

Figure 2.3—Number of Talent Search participants and number of projects: 1967–2000

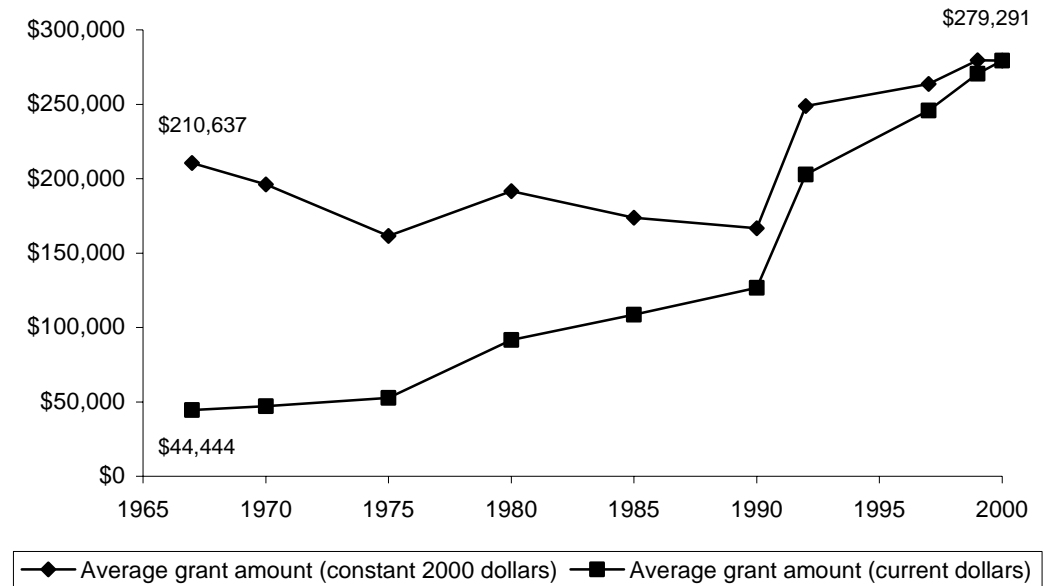


SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, and the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE).

FUNDING PER PROJECT AND NUMBER SERVED PER PROJECT

Increases in funding have generally been accompanied by an increased number of Talent Search projects rather than by large increases in the amount of funding per project. As figure 2.4 indicates, however, the 1990s saw some increases in constant (2000) dollars. Funding per project in 1967 was just over \$200,000 in constant dollars. In 2000-01, the amount was about \$279,000. The lowest point in constant dollar funding per project occurred during the 1980s. In 1990, Talent Search funding per project was at about \$166,000 in constant 2000 dollars. As discussed later, the 1992 reauthorization provided a minimum grant size of \$180,000 unless a project requested a lower grant amount.

In constant 2000 dollars, funding per project increased from about \$166,000 in 1990 to about \$279,000 in 2000.

Figure 2.4—Funding per project in current and constant 2000 dollars: 1967–2000

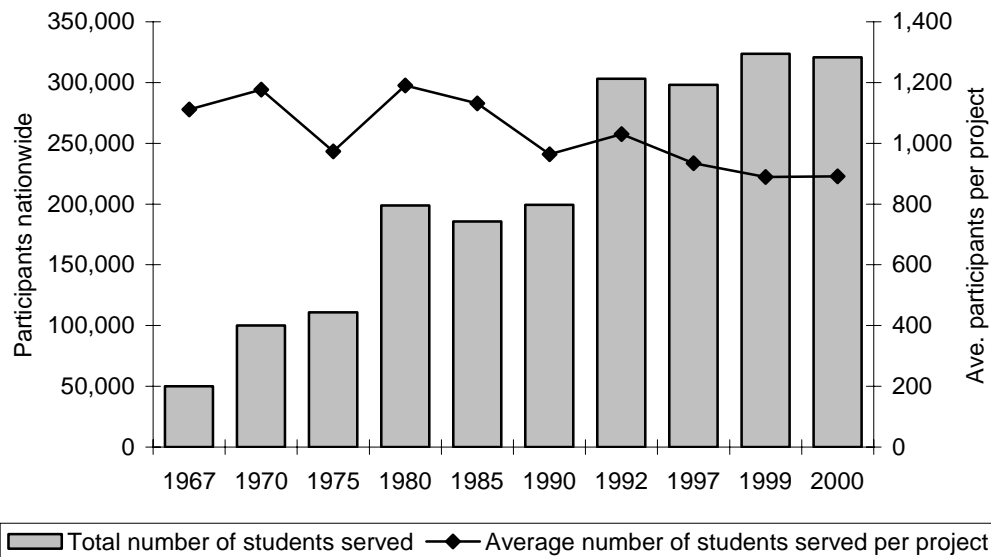
SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, and the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE).

AVERAGE NUMBER SERVED PER PROJECT AND FUNDING PER STUDENT

Projects are required to serve at least 600 participants per year. In 2000, projects were funded to serve about 900 participants on average.

Talent Search projects have historically been required by the ED to serve at least 600 students per year. The average number of participants served per Talent Search project has ranged from a high of 1,176 in 1970 to a low of about 890 in 2000 (table 2.1 and figure 2.5). The increases in funding per project since 1990 have not been accompanied by increases in the number of participants served per project. Rather, they have been accompanied by a stronger emphasis on providing more services to younger students and more services focused on academic preparation, such as summer camps, workshops, and tutoring during the academic year.

Figure 2.5—Number of participants per project and total number served nationwide by Talent Search: 1967–2000

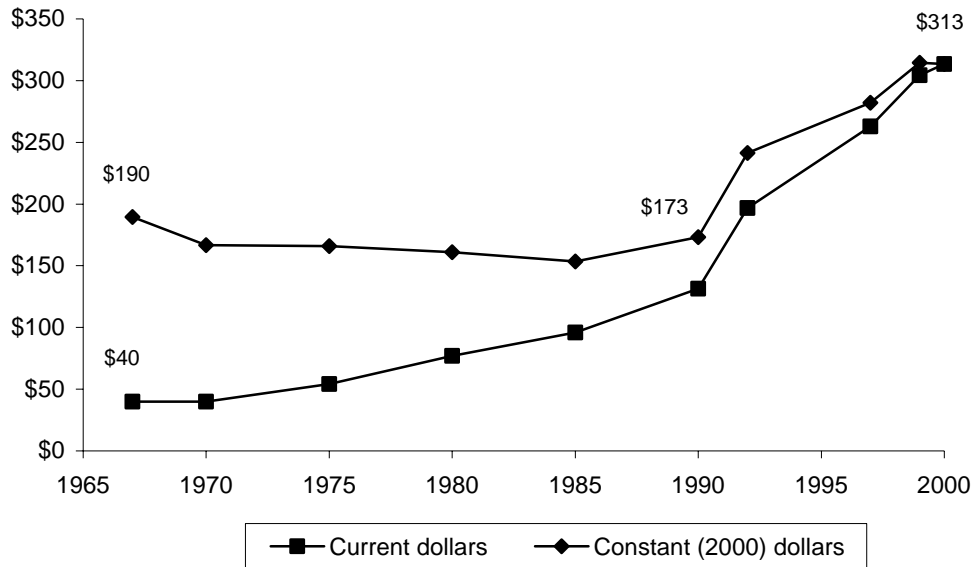


SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, and the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE).

This focus has meant that per-participant funding increased just under twofold in constant 2000 dollars—from about \$173 in 1990 to about \$313 in 2000 (figure 2.6). Talent Search remains the TRIO project that serves the largest number of participants per year (320,000) and is the second-lowest project in per-participant funding (table 1.1). EOC has the lowest per-participant funding at about \$190 per participant.

Increases in project funding in the 1990s have been used to increase the amount spent per participant rather than increasing the number served. Talent Search funding was at about \$313 per participant in 2000.

Figure 2.6—Talent Search funding per participant in current and constant 2000 dollars: 1967–2000



SOURCE: Calculated from information from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, and the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE).

CURRENT PROFILE OF PROJECTS: FUNDING AND PARTICIPANTS

Until now this chapter has focused on changes over time in overall program statistics, including funding and participant levels. Table 2.2 provides basic information about the program at the time of the project survey, but broken out by type of host institution. Projects hosted by community-based organizations tend to serve more participants and thus have larger budgets than projects hosted by postsecondary institutions.

Table 2.2—Number of projects, average grant funds, and number of participants, by type of host institution: 1999–2000

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Number of projects	361	121	48	124	68
Average grant funds	\$279,291	\$274,983	\$242,239	\$241,079	\$307,759
Total number funded to serve	320,854	109,090	38,502	93,048	80,214
Average number served	891	902	802	750	1,180

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000; analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99.

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING TALENT SEARCH: 1965–2000

This section highlights the basic guidelines governing Talent Search and the changes that have been enacted over time. These changes include a shift from conducting a search for talented youth to focusing on access for all, changes in eligibility criteria, targeting younger age groups, efforts to coordinate services; the grant selection process, serving the underrepresented, performance measurement, and the introduction of partnership agreements with ED.

SHIFT FROM CONDUCTING A TALENT SEARCH TO FOCUSING ON ACCESS AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

Initially, Talent Search was described legislatively as a program that identified students with high potential or talent for higher education (table 2.3). The initial language stated that the Talent Search was to identify those with exceptional potential for success in postsecondary education, those who demonstrated aptitude for entry into an educational program, and those who needed guidance, counseling, and assistance in gaining admission or readmission to an educational institution.

Talent Search’s mandate was to provide short-term assistance in completing financial aid and college application forms and gaining admission to college. Over time, as officials perceived that many eligible students had greater needs, the role of Talent Search in providing supplemental college preparation expanded. Moreover, as the goal of ever-increasing college attendance grew, Talent Search evolved into a program to assist those who requested services rather than a program seeking out those with “exceptional potential.” More and more, Talent Search became the program targeted to those in the middle who might not receive the attention given to the “talented and gifted” or the services delivered to students with special needs.

Original legislation stated that Talent Search was to identify those with exceptional potential for higher education. Over time, its focus shifted to serving middle-achieving students and to increasing access for all students.

Table 2.3—TRIO program eligibility criteria before October 1981

Talent Search	Upward Bound	Student Support Services	Educational Opportunity Centers
Age 14–27 (veterans excepted)	Age 14–17 (veterans excepted)	Students enrolled in or accepted at postsecondary institutions	Resident of area
U.S. citizen or national	U.S. citizen or national	U.S. citizen or national	U.S. citizen or national
Exceptional potential for success in postsecondary education	Resides in target area or attends target school	Individual with academic potential who needs remedial or special services as a result of a deprived educational, cultural, or economic background; a physical handicap; or limited English-speaking ability	
Demonstrated aptitude for entry into an educational program	Completed first year of secondary school and has not entered the 12th grade (veterans excepted)		
Needs guidance and counseling	Has ability to benefit		
Needs assistance in gaining admission or readmission to educational institution			

SOURCE: Adapted from material in Steven M. Jung, Jane Schubert, and Kim Putnam, "Evaluability Assessment of the Special Programs for Disadvantaged Students" (Palo Alto, CA: The American Institutes for Research, 1982), table 2.

NOTE: October 1981 is when the changes in the 1980 amendments took effect.

DEFINING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Before 1980, TRIO programs were mandated to serve students who were "disadvantaged" and needed project services. However, projects were not tied to formalized criteria for defining "disadvantaged." The 1980 legislation (that took effect in October 1981) for the first time defined specific criteria for service eligibility. The intent of the regulations was to make the criteria more uniform across TRIO programs and across projects that were using a variety of ways to demonstrate eligibility.

In recognition of how Talent Search was structured within schools, the legislation provided less rigid criteria for Talent Search than for Upward Bound or Student Support Services. As with other TRIO programs, the requirement stated that in each Talent Search project two-thirds of participants have to be both low-income individuals (defined as 150 percent of poverty) and potential first-generation college students (neither parent nor guardian held a bachelor's degree). However, whereas in other TRIO programs the remaining one-third of participants had to be either

Talent Search has the same low-income, first-generation requirement as other TRIO programs for two-thirds of participants; the other one-third need not meet these eligibility requirements.

low-income or first-generation (or disabled), in Talent Search this requirement does not apply; the remaining one-third do not have to meet any eligibility criteria.

Under the revised criteria, projects had to document the eligibility status of their participants. The regulations required documentation of the income of dependent students by means of a statement signed by a parent or legal guardian, verification from another government source, a signed financial aid application, or a signed tax return. Independent students may themselves submit signed statements. Finally, any veteran serving after 1955 is eligible for Talent Search services.

TARGETING YOUNGER STUDENTS

Initially, the legislation stated that students had to be 14 years of age—typically in ninth grade—to participate in Talent Search. The Educational Amendments of 1980 lowered the minimum age to 12 years. In an effort to make all middle school students eligible for services, the current age requirements specify that participants must have completed the fifth grade or be at least 11 years of age but generally no more than 27 years of age.²

Talent Search age requirements have been lowered from 14 to 11 over the history of the program.

COORDINATING SERVICES

During the 1980s, program regulations required that, except in special circumstances, Talent Search project directors be committed full-time to their respective projects. The general ED program regulations also required that programs not in any way duplicate other services provided by the host institution. Over time, the TRIO community concluded that these regulations discouraged staff advancement and, more importantly, discouraged potentially useful coordination of service delivery. Accordingly, with urging from the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE, formerly National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations), the 1992 reauthorization introduced new provisions addressing service coordination and the status of project directors.

The 1992 reauthorization addressed issues of project coordination and the project director's level of commitment to the program.

Service coordination and duplication. The 1992 reauthorization added a provision that “the Secretary should encourage coordination of programs assisted under TRIO with other programs for disadvantaged students operated by the sponsoring agency, regardless of funding source of such programs.” The provision also stated that the “Secretary should not limit an entity’s eligibility to receive funds because the entity sponsors a program similar to the programs to be assisted regardless of the funding source.”

Less than full-time project director. Under the same provision, the legislation also permitted project directors to administer more than one program. The

²Projects may serve those over 27 years of age if no EOC services are available and if the individual’s participation would not diminish the Talent Search project’s services to the individuals within the main Talent Search age group. In addition, regardless of age, veterans are eligible for either Talent Search or EOC.

legislation specified that “the Secretary shall permit the Director of such a program receiving funds to administer one or more additional programs.” This provision has resulted in an increasing number of instances in which a senior project director is responsible for multiple TRIO programs at a host institution.

THE GRANT SELECTION PROCESS

Many Talent Search projects have been in operation for many years (the average project age was 13 years in 2001; see chapter 4). The 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965 increased the duration of TRIO grants from three to four years, with the top-scoring 10 percent of grant applicants awarded five-year grants. The 1992 legislation also specified minimum grants. For Talent Search, the minimum was \$180,000. A grant award is based on the following:

- The need for the project (24 points)
- Objectives (8 points)
- Plan of operation (30 points)
- Applicant and community (16 points)
- Quality of personnel (9 points)
- Evaluation plan (8 points)
- Budget (5 points)

Experience. Talent Search promotes continuity of program services by scoring grant applications partly on past experience. The legislation provides that the Secretary shall consider each applicant’s service delivery experience. Based on that experience, the applicant may receive up to 15 extra points. The annual performance reports contain a section in which projects report on their attainment of agreed-upon objectives specified in their partnership agreements with ED. Table 4.4 reproduces the key elements of the 2000-01 performance report form.

Peer review process and under-represented groups. The legislation specifies that, to the extent practical, people selected to review grant applications should include members of groups under-represented in higher education as well as representatives of urban and rural areas. Readers cannot be employees of the federal government.

The 1992 reauthorization specified a minimum grant amount and increased the funding cycle from three to four years.

Service delivery experience can allow applicants to receive up to 15 extra points in the grant selection process based on achieving agreed upon objectives.

Table 2.4—Talent Search project performance outcomes used for experience determination	
SECTION IV: PROJECT PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES	
In this section, state your approved project objectives related to each of the prior experience criteria in quantifiable terms (percentage of participants) and then provide the requested data under “Participant Status” that will demonstrate the extent to which your project achieved each of these objectives.	
A. SECONDARY SCHOOL RETENTION, GRADUATION, AND REENTRY (Talent Search — 34 CFR 643.22(b)(2)) Approved Objective(s):	
Secondary school retention	_____ % of secondary participants served this project period will continue in secondary school for the next academic term.
Secondary school graduation	_____ % of high school seniors (and GED or alternative education students) will graduate from high school or receive a certificate of high school equivalency this project period.
Secondary school re-entry	_____ % of secondary school dropouts will re-enter a program of secondary education this project period.
Participant status (at the end of this reporting period)	Number of Participants
Continued in middle school (Talent Search only)	
Promoted from middle school to high school (Talent Search only)	
Continued in high school (do not include those who graduated)	
Re-entered middle school	
Re-entered high school	
Received high school diploma	
Obtained a GED/high school equivalency degree	
B. ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID ASSISTANCE (Talent Search, 34 CFR 643.1; EOC, 34 CFR 644.1 and 644.22(b)(2)) Approved Objective(s):	
Assistance in applying for postsecondary admissions	_____ % of “college ready” project participants will receive assistance in applying for postsecondary admission this project period.
Assistance in applying for student financial aid	_____ % of “college ready” project participants will receive assistance in applying for financial aid this project period.
Participant status (at the end of this reporting period)	Number of Participants
1. Applied for admission to programs of postsecondary education	
2. Applied for student financial aid for postsecondary education	

(Table 2.4 continued)	
C. POSTSECONDARY ADMISSION AND RE-ENTRY (Talent Search — 34 CFR 643.22(b)(3); EOC — 34 CFR 644.22(b)(3)) Approved Objective(s):	
Postsecondary admissions	_____ % of high school (and high school equivalency) graduates will enroll into a program of postsecondary education this project period (or for the fall term).
Postsecondary re-entry	_____ % of postsecondary education stopouts will re-enter a program of postsecondary education this project period (or for the fall term).
Participant status (at the end of this reporting period)	Number of Participants
1. Enrolled in (or admitted to) a program of postsecondary education (first-time enrollment in postsecondary education)	
2. Re-enrolled in (or re-admitted to) a program of postsecondary education	
D. POSTSECONDARY PLACEMENTS (TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS) For those participants enrolled in or admitted to programs of postsecondary education as reported in Section IV, C above, indicate the number of participants enrolled in or admitted to the following types of postsecondary institutions:	
Type and Control of Postsecondary Institutions	Number of Participants
Public, two-year institution	
Private, non-profit, two-year institution	
Public, four-year institution	
Private, non-profit, four-year institution	
Public or non-profit vocational/technical institution	
Proprietary school	
Unknown	
E. OTHER PARTICIPANT STATUS (Talent Search, 34 CFR 643.22(b); EOC, 34 CFR 644.22(b))	
Participant status (at the end of this reporting period)	Number of Participants
Dropped out of middle school (Talent Search only)	
Dropped out of high school	
Did not continue in program of postsecondary education (EOC only)	
Other (i.e. military, death, illness, transfer, etc.)	
Unknown	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs.

Allowable services. The legislation lists 10 services—revised over the years—as acceptable (the current list was presented in chapter 1). No project is expected to provide all the services. In the 1990s, Congress added to the list mentors in the form

of elementary or secondary school teachers, counselors, members of institutions of higher education, students, or any combination of the above.

Allowable costs. The grant application instructions indicate that applicants may include all costs that are reasonable and associated with carrying out the objectives of the Talent Search program. Funding may be used for the following:

- Personnel
- Fringe benefits
- Travel for employees and participants
- Equipment related to providing services
- Supplies
- Contractual services
- Other (equipment, required fees, communication, utilities, custodial services, printing)

Indirect costs are limited to 8 percent of total modified direct costs. The Office of Federal TRIO Programs developed travel guidelines that allow the project director to travel to one national conference, one regional meeting, one state meeting, and one professional development workshop per year. Full-time professional staff may travel to one national, regional, or state meeting and to staff development activities offered under the training program for federal TRIO programs.

Assurances. Host institution grantees are required to provide the following assurances:

- Participants are not receiving services from another Talent Search project or from an EOC
- The project and its services are located in settings accessible to the persons proposed to be served
- At least two-thirds of participants are low-income individuals and potential first-generation college students
- If the grantee is a higher education institution, it will not use Talent Search as part of a recruitment process

Projects need to provide assurances concerning eligibility, duplication, service access, and not using the program for college recruitment.

In addition to these provisions specific to TRIO and Talent Search, two other pieces of legislation have influenced the grant process. They are the General Education Provisions Act and the Government Performance and Results Act. Next we discuss each as they apply to Talent Search.

SERVING THE UNDER-REPRESENTED: THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT

Grant applicants need to specify actions they are taking to ensure equitable access to federal services for underrepresented groups.

The General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) of 1994 required all new applicants for Department of Education awards to include as part of their applications a description of steps the applicant proposed to take to ensure equitable access to and participation in its federally assisted programs for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs. The statute highlights six types of barriers that can impede equitable access or participation: gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. Based on local circumstances, applicants are instructed to determine whether these or other barriers might prevent their students and teachers from gaining access to federally funded projects. Applications need to specify actions underway to overcome the various barriers.

This provision (Statute 427) is intended to ensure that, in designing projects, applicants for federal funds address equity concerns that may affect the ability of certain potential beneficiaries to participate fully in the project and to achieve high standards. The applicant may propose to use federal funds to eliminate the identified barriers. The Talent Search application provides examples of how applicants might propose to overcome the access barriers, such as recruitment materials that address the concerns of the underserved group or how to take advantage of technology to provide instructional materials for use by disabled individuals.

The TRIO authorizing legislation also directs the Secretary to conduct outreach to those entities that propose to serve geographic and eligible populations that have been underserved by the projects assisted under the program.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT

GPRA has resulted in an increased focus on project outcome tracking, record-keeping, and performance reporting.

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 strongly influenced the activities of TRIO as well as those of other federal programs. GPRA requires all federal agencies and the programs for which they are responsible to consider the consequences of their management activities. Each agency identifies what is to be accomplished, specifies the available resources, and periodically reports to Congress on its progress. The intent is to improve accountability in expending public funds and to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction.

As indicated in the Talent Search application for funding, “the performance indicators for the Federal TRIO program are part of the Department’s [ED] plan for building a solid foundation for learning and ensuring access to postsecondary education and lifelong learning.” The specific performance goal for TRIO is to provide increased educational opportunities for low-income, potential first-generation college students.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

The submitted applications typically set forth a detailed plan for services and the target number of participants to be served in identified schools. The applications also describe each staff person and his or her role and qualifications. In addition, the applications must include an evaluation plan. In practice, projects are seldom funded for everything described in their grant applications, and some reconciliation is needed after the grant award.

Following award, the Office of Federal TRIO Programs and the projects develop a partnership agreement that reconciles differences between the amount requested and the services proposed and the amount awarded and the services to be provided. Through the reconciliation process, projects also specify their objectives in various categories. The objectives then become the means for establishing the scores for experience points in the next competition.

Partnership agreements reconcile grant proposals with funded amounts and specify agreed-upon performance objectives for experience points in the next competition.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OVER TIME

As indicated above, the grant selection process creates a good deal of stability in terms of the organizations hosting Talent Search projects, but funding, legislative, and regulatory changes have somewhat altered the way projects operate. In the final section of this chapter we consider the initial assumptions behind the Talent Search program, how the program has changed over time, and some of the factors that may have influenced those changes.

Talent Search emerged out of the War on Poverty, and reflected an increased focus on promoting equal educational opportunities. A few primary assumptions appear to have been operative in the creation of Talent Search—and continue to undergird the program even today:

- Small amounts of service *at key points* can make a difference in student decisions and actions concerning college attendance
- The program should target needy public schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged students
- Within the target schools, the program should target individual needy students with the potential for college
- The program can increase the chances of college going by providing information, motivation, and exposure to college

Talent Search assumptions included a belief that small, targeted, informational, motivational exposure services could foster decisions to enroll in college when used in combination with financial aid programs.

Just as the assumptions—and basic goals—of Talent Search have remained consistent since its inception, some program features appear to have been rather enduring, including the use of pull-out workshops as a common mode of service delivery, the focus on providing information about and assistance with financial aid forms, the focus on helping students with college applications, and exposing students to college through campus visits. In many other respects, however, program

operations have changed substantially over time. Some of these changes and issues were mentioned earlier in this chapter; some will be revisited in later chapters as well.

- Increased focus on targeting “middle-achievement” students
- Increased use of technology for completing college and financial aid applications
- Increased focus on program retention from year to year and from middle to high school
- Increased emphasis on academic support services
- Increased emphasis on parent involvement
- Increased sponsorship of summer programs
- Increased focus on high-stakes testing preparation
- Increased provision of mentoring services
- Increased emphasis on records and participant tracking
- Increased focus on developing individual service plans for participants

Important changes in U.S. demographics, economy, technology, and educational thinking have occurred—these in turn have led to changes in Talent Search.

Some of these operational changes resulted directly and intentionally from legislative and regulatory changes. Others resulted from broad or large-scale changes or factors in American society more generally, such as demographic shifts. (The legislative and regulatory changes, too, were undoubtedly influenced by some of these same broad changes.) Key changes or developments include the following:

- Greater recognition that postsecondary education is the fault line between those who will prosper and those who will not³
- A growing belief in the importance of early intervention as a major approach for motivating and preparing students for college
- Awareness that while college enrollment rates have increased, the gap between those from high income families and those from low income families remains unacceptably wide

³For example, according to March 2000 CPS data, the median annual earnings of individuals whose highest level of education was a high school diploma was about \$20,900, whereas the median income of those with a bachelor’s degree or higher was about \$40,800.

- The spread of systemic reform of the education system at the district and school levels as a major method of increasing the educational attainment of all children, as well as an increase on high-stakes testing
- Increased focus on performance measurement in public and private programs at all levels
- Rapid proliferation and advancement of computer-based technology

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF TALENT SEARCH

Studies of Talent Search conducted thus far have been descriptive. Other than the current study, the only major government-sponsored study of Talent Search was part of a larger review of Upward Bound conducted by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and published in 1975 (Pyecha et al. 1975). The study used project and staff surveys and case studies as the major sources of information and arrived at the following major conclusions:

- It was not possible to identify a typical Talent Search project—while there was a common set of services, there were differences in clients, staff, hosts, and target schools that resulted in more program differences than similarities.
- The national impact of the program was “unevaluable” because of the nature of the services, the lack of project records, and differences in defining target populations.
- Identified program strengths included effective recruitment strategies; dedication to a common set of appropriate services; ability to respond to the needs of all who come for assistance—whether client or not; effective relationships with institutions to which clients applied and could attend; continuing and effective referral activity; staff dedicated to program goals and objectives despite limited training and high staff turnover; client recruitment from a wide spectrum of agencies; and a degree of meaningful impact on high school counseling programs and on a variety of postsecondary institutions.
- Program problem areas included failure to seek out all eligible individuals; the need to make greater efforts to match clients to appropriate institutions; inadequate funding for project activities; the need for content and organizational improvement of project files; minimal long-range follow-up of clients; the need to reexamine the nature and function of advisory boards in many projects; the need for enhanced communication with the U.S. Office (now Department) of Education regional office through greater attention to the considerable technical and support needs of individual projects; apathy or a lack of cooperation in high school recruiting of

Previous studies of Talent Search have been descriptive, have noted the diversity of programs and populations served, and have pointed to the difficulty in conducting impact evaluations.

The 1975 study identified these strengths: effective recruitment, appropriate services, responsiveness to diverse student needs, effective referrals, and a positive influence on school guidance programs.

The 1975 study identified these problems: lack of resources, not serving some groups of eligible individuals, and limited record-keeping.

disadvantaged students; some high schools' dependence on Talent Search to provide counseling-related services to disadvantaged students; staff ill-equipped to handle academic counseling, career guidance, testing, and interpretation of educational and aptitude data; Talent Search's lack of status and image as a national service program; and a feeling among Talent Search project personnel that the program should receive more national recognition and support.

Table 2.5 lists additional descriptive, empirical studies of Talent Search conducted over its history. In 1992, ED commissioned six papers for a design conference examining issues for a possible evaluation of Talent Search (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning 1992). The studies pointed out the difficulty in implementing a random assignment study for Talent Search but noted the potential for a comparison group design focused on short-term impacts. In the early 1990s, ED contracted with Decision Information Resources to conduct a small descriptive study of Talent Search to look at feasible measures of program performance criteria (Decision Information Resources 1994) and to prepare a review of target population needs and effective interventions (Arbona 1994). The first study concluded that it would be possible for projects to keep records of participants' services and perform limited tracking of outcomes. In addition, the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations (NCEO) sponsored a literature review (Nettles and Getzfeld 1990) and survey of Talent Search and Upward Bound in the early 1990s (NCEO 1992). The literature review prepared for the present national evaluation summarizes selected results of some of these studies (Silva and Kim 1999).

Table 2.5—Previous Studies of Talent Search

Authors and date	Description
Pyecha et al., 1975	First national evaluation of Talent Search, conducted for the U.S. Office of Education by Research Triangle Institute. It included a survey of all 114 project directors (response rate 92 percent), a survey of the postsecondary institutions on the enrollment status of a sample of former program participants (response rate 93 percent), and case studies of 20 projects.
Franklin, 1985	Primarily focused on 11 purposefully selected Talent Search projects. It used a mail survey, telephone interviews, and document review and drew on a limited amount of national data—Annual Performance Reports—from ED for 1979–83. Conducted for the College Entrance Examination Board.
Coles, 1992	In-depth interviews with the directors of 19 purposefully selected Talent Search projects. Prepared for the Design Conference for the Evaluation of the Talent Search Program, hosted by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, September 30, 1992.
Eisner, 1992	A review of data from Annual Performance Reports for 1986–87 and 1990–91. Data obtained for an estimated two-thirds of the Talent Search projects funded in 1986–87 and for 92 percent of the 177 projects funded in 1990–91. Included in the report from the Talent Search Design Conference.
Lee and Clery, 1993	A mail survey of all 294 Talent Search projects operating in 1992 (response rate 72 percent). Conducted for the National Council of Educational Opportunity Associations.
Decision Information Resources, 1994	Case studies of seven purposefully chosen Talent Search projects, focusing on current and potential program performance measures. Conducted for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning and Evaluation.

SOURCE: Silva, Tim and Julia Kim, "The Federal Talent Search Program: A Synthesis of Information from Research Literature and Grant Applications." Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 1999.

CHAPTER 3

PROJECT HOSTS AND TARGET SCHOOLS

In this chapter we use multiple data sources—including the project survey, case studies, annual performance reports, CCD, and IPEDS—to provide a current profile of the colleges and community organizations that host Talent Search projects and the secondary schools they serve.

Overview and Selected Highlights

- Over time, Talent Search grants have increasingly been awarded to 2- and 4-year public educational institutions and less frequently to community organizations.
- Four-year educational institutions host about half of Talent Search projects, 2-year institutions host about one-third, and community organizations host about one-fifth. Public educational institutions are much more likely to be Talent Search grantees than are private institutions.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) comprise 2 percent of degree-granting institutions and 8 percent of Talent Search educational institution hosts.
- Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) comprise 4 percent of degree-granting institutions and 9 percent of Talent Search educational institution hosts.
- Almost 90 percent of Talent Search projects reported that their host organization administered another program that serves disadvantaged students.
- Talent Search projects served over 5,500 target schools and agencies across the nation, reaching about 16 percent of high schools and about 8 to 11 percent of middle schools.
- Talent Search target schools were more likely to be in both urban and rural settings than in suburban settings.
- Minorities were over half of the enrollment in target schools, compared with 33 percent in non-target schools.
- Just over 42 percent of students enrolled in Talent Search target schools were eligible for free lunch compared with 25 percent nationwide. Overall, we estimate that Talent Search serves about 21 percent of the number of students eligible for free lunch in the target schools and 6 percent in all secondary schools.
- Over three-fourths of projects reported that there were other schools in the area that could have benefited from Talent Search services, but which could not be served due to lack of resources.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING GRANTS

The legislation authorizing Talent Search specifies that grants may be awarded to institutions of higher education, other public or private organizations, or a combination of the above and, in exceptional cases, directly to secondary schools. An examination of the characteristics of those organizations that have received the competitive grants provides insight into the federal grant-making process and the implicit or explicit policies that have been operating since Talent Search's inception.

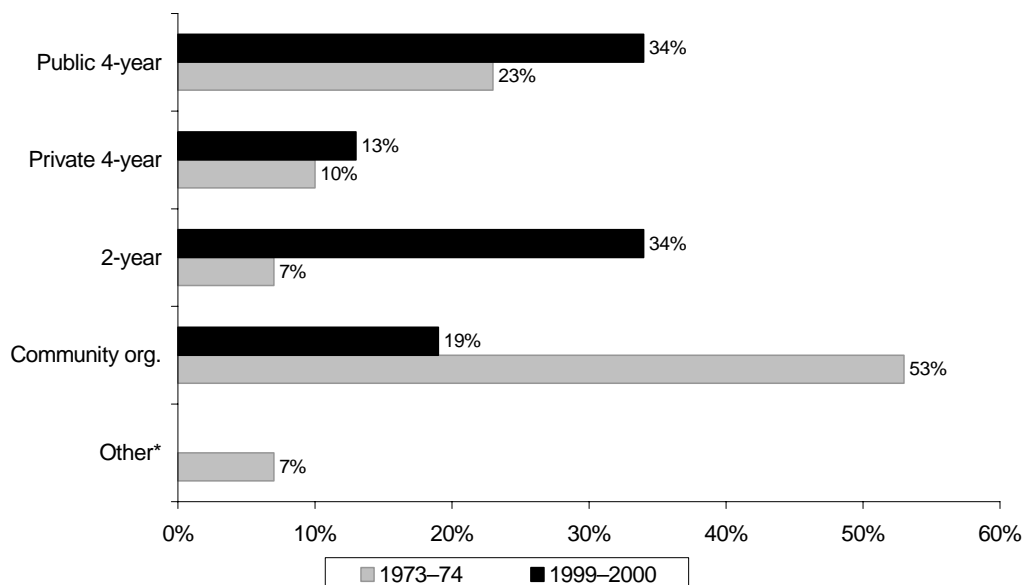
Looking at data from the early years of the program in 1973–74 compared with data from 1999–2000, we see that the distribution of project grantees (hosts) has changed significantly (figure 3.1). Most notable was a decrease in the proportion of community organization grantees along with an increase in the proportion of 2- and 4-year public institutions. Over the 25-year period, the proportion of 2-year institutions increased from 7 percent in 1973–74 to 34 percent in 1999–2000. In part, the increase in the proportion of 2-year institution grantees mirrors the increase in the number of 2-year colleges and the enrollment in such institutions over the period (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 1994). By the start of the 1990s, 2-year colleges were enrolling about 40 percent of all freshmen and half of minority freshmen in the United States. The proportion of grantees that were 4-year public institutions also increased, from 23 percent in 1973–74 to 34 percent in 1999–2000. Correspondingly, community organization grantees went from over half (53 percent) of the total grantees in 1973–74 to 19 percent in 1999–2000.

AREA SERVED

The project survey asked Talent Search projects to indicate the area served by their project. Table 3.1 shows the responses by grantee type. Overall, just over one-third of projects (36 percent) reported that they served a large or medium-sized urban area, and just over one-fourth (28 percent each) indicated that they served a rural area or a small city or town. Six percent reported that they served a suburban area while 3 percent served a reservation.

Over time, Talent Search grants have increasingly been awarded to 2- and 4-year public educational institutions and less frequently to community-based organizations.

Figure 3.1—Distribution of Talent Search projects by grantee type: 1973–74 and 1999–2000



SOURCES: Pyecha et al. 1975; analysis of Talent Search performance reports, 1999-2000.

NOTE: In 1973–74, there were 114 Talent Search projects; in 1999–2000, there were 361 projects.

*Includes 5 percent hosted by consortia of educational institutions, not classified as to level or control; also includes other types of schools. In 1999–2000, all agencies that were not 2-year or 4-year educational institutions were classified as community organizations.

Table 3.1—Distribution of Talent Search projects by primary area served: 2000

	All projects	Host institution		
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	Community org.
A large or very large city (100,000 or more)	36%	37%	53%	12%
A small or medium-sized city (up to 100,000)	28	25	21	41
A rural or farming community	28	29	26	35
A suburb of a medium-sized, large, or very large city	6	7	0	7
A reservation	3	2	0	7

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

REGIONAL LOCATION

Performance report data indicate that the largest number of projects was located in federal Region IV (Atlanta), which accounted for almost one-fourth of Talent Search projects (table 3.2).

Table 3.2—Number of Talent Search projects and participants by grantee host federal region, performance report data: 1999

Federal region (city)	Total grantees	Project distribution	Number of participants
I (Boston)	14	4%	11,508
II (New York)	33	9	31,059
III (Philadelphia)	35	10	41,678
IV (Atlanta)	88	24	70,815
V (Chicago)	55	15	36,428
VI (Dallas)	48	13	44,310
VII (Kansas City)	20	6	15,626
VIII (Denver)	18	5	15,684
IX (San Francisco)	38	11	33,031
X (Seattle)	12	3	7,312
Total	361	100	307,451

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POSTSECONDARY GRANTEE INSTITUTIONS

To develop a better understanding of the characteristics of Talent Search grantee organizations, we compared information on the 293 educational institution grantees (excludes the 68 Talent Search projects hosted by community-based organizations) with characteristics of other 2- and 4-year public and private colleges. We used data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Of the 9,898 postsecondary institutions in the IPEDS data set, 4,483 were public or private, non-profit 2- and 4-year degree-granting institutions, which provided the basis for the comparisons.

INSTITUTION CONTROL

Compared with their numbers in the IPEDS, public educational institutions were much more likely than private institutions to be Talent Search grantees (table 3.3). Public 4-year institutions accounted for 14 percent of all IPEDS degree-granting institutions but for just over 40 percent of the Talent Search educational institution hosts. Private 4-year institutions, which represent 45 percent of the institutions in the IPEDS database, hosted 16 percent of the Talent Search projects at educational institutions. Two-year institutions represented 41 percent of the IPEDS institutions and accounted for 42 percent of the Talent Search grantees that were educational institutions.

Public educational institutions were much more likely than private educational institutions to be Talent Search grantees.

Table 3.3—Number of Talent Search projects hosted at postsecondary educational institutions and number of IPEDS degree-granting institutions, by type of institution: 1999

Type	Number of Talent Search grantees	Percent of Talent Search grantees	Total IPEDS	Percent of IPEDS
Public 4-year	121	41%	642	14%
Private 4-year	48	16	2,003	45
2-year	124	42	1,838	41
All education institutions hosting projects	293	100	4,483	100

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Institutional Characteristics 1997–98.”

NOTE: This table includes only those Talent Search projects that reported being hosted by educational institutions (293 of 361 total Talent Search projects). Of the 2-year institutions hosting Talent Search projects, all but two were public. Institutions included from the IPEDS were all public 4-year or above, all private nonprofit 4-year or above, all public 2-year, and all private nonprofit 2-year.

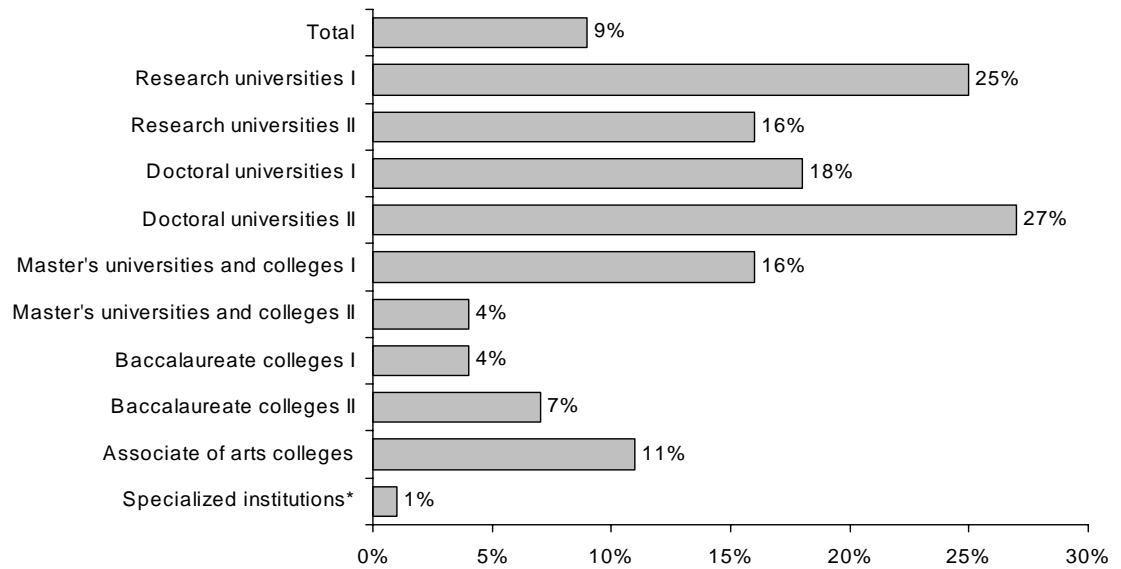
CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION

The Carnegie Classification is a system developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching that groups postsecondary degree-granting institutions into categories based on a combination of levels of degrees awarded and research funding (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1994). A variable within the classification system is also included in the IPEDS file. Thus, 3,123 of the 4,483 degree-granting institutions carry Carnegie classification codes.

Figure 3.2 provides the percent of institutions in each Carnegie category that hosted Talent Search projects (291 of the 293 Talent Search educational institution hosts carried a Carnegie code). Table 3.4 also arrays the number of Talent Search projects in each of the categories and demonstrates that compared to their numbers research institutions and institutions granting doctoral degrees were more likely than baccalaureate institutions to have received Talent Search grants. Talent Search operates at about 9 percent of the total Carnegie-classified institutions; however, it operates at 25 percent of Research I institutions and 27 percent of Doctoral II institutions, while operating at just 4 and 7 percent, respectively, of the much more numerous Baccalaureate I and Baccalaureate II institutions. It may be that the effort needed to prepare competitive grants and the ability to demonstrate the need for services are more associated with large research and doctoral granting institutions. These institutions also receive a large number of other federal grants.

Carnegie classified research and doctorate granting institutions were more likely to have Talent Search grants than were other types of institutions.

Figure 3.2—Percent of institutions with Talent Search grants, by Carnegie Classification: 1999



SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics 1997–98."

*Specialized institutions include the following 10 categories: theological seminaries, Bible colleges, and other institutions offering degrees in religion; medical schools and medical centers; other separate health profession schools; schools of engineering and technology; schools of business and management; schools of art, music, and design; schools of law; teachers' colleges; tribal colleges; and other specialized institutions.

Table 3.4—Distribution of Talent Search grantees hosted at educational institutions by Carnegie Classification: 1999

Carnegie Classification	Total Talent Search projects with Carnegie Classification		All Carnegie-classified institutions	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Research universities I	22	7.6%	88	2.8%
Research universities II	6	2.1	37	1.2
Doctoral universities I	9	3.1	51	1.6
Doctoral universities II	16	5.5	60	1.9
Master's universities and colleges I	70	24.1	434	13.9
Master's universities and colleges II	4	1.4	94	3.0
Baccalaureate colleges I	6	2.1	166	5.3
Baccalaureate colleges II	30	10.3	461	14.8
Associate of arts colleges	122	41.9	1,105	35.4
Specialized institutions*	6	1.7	629	20.1
Total	291	100.0	3,125	100.0

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics 1997–98."

*Specialized institutions include the following 10 categories: theological seminaries, Bible colleges, and other institutions offering degrees in religion; medical schools and medical centers; other separate health profession schools; schools of engineering and technology; schools of business and management; schools of art, music, and design; schools of law; teachers' colleges; tribal colleges; and other specialized institutions.

GRANTEE INSTITUTION SIZE

Consistent with the fact that Talent Search postsecondary institution hosts were much more likely to be public institutions, Talent Search grantees were also much more likely to be large rather than small postsecondary institutions. Talent Search grantees had a median enrollment of 5,645 students, while all IPEDS institutions had a median enrollment of 1,154 students (table 3.5). The most pronounced differences occurred in regions I, II, IX, and X.

Large institutions were more likely than small institutions to be Talent Search grantees.

Table 3.5—Median enrollment at Talent Search host institutions and all IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Talent Search grantees	All other IPEDS institutions	All IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	11,351	1,127	1,258
II (New York)	7,872	764	824
III (Philadelphia)	5,719	854	1,033
IV (Atlanta)	3,412	1,073	1,204
V (Chicago)	7,323	1,130	1,254
VI (Dallas)	4,323	1,078	1,451
VII (Kansas City)	3,287	957	1,082
VIII (Denver)	5,401	946	1,117
IX (San Francisco)	15,566	824	900
X (Seattle)	10,096	1,176	2,026
All	5,645	999	1,154

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics 1997–98."

MINORITY ENROLLMENT AT GRANTEE HOST INSTITUTIONS

Talent Search hosts had an average of 28 percent minority enrollment. All other institutions reported an average of 24 percent.

The Talent Search and TRIO programs are not targeted to specific racial and ethnic groups. Rather, they have a mission to serve all low-income and first-generation college students. However, the programs have historically played an important role in serving underrepresented ethnic groups and institutions that serve higher proportions of minority students might be more likely to have interest in hosting a Talent Search project. Overall, Talent Search hosts had an average of 28 percent minority enrollment. All other institutions had an average minority enrollment of 24 percent (table 3.6). The small difference is consistent with the fact that Talent Search projects are much more likely to be lodged in large public institutions that account for a large proportion of total enrollment. The largest differences between Talent Search hosts and all other institutions occurred in Region II.

Table 3.6—Percentage of minority enrollment at Talent Search host institutions and all IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Talent Search grantees	All other IPEDS institutions	All 2-year and 4-year IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	12%	12%	12%
II (New York)	47	33	35
III (Philadelphia)	24	19	20
IV (Atlanta)	27	25	25
V (Chicago)	22	15	16
VI (Dallas)	39	31	32
VII (Kansas City)	10	11	10
VIII (Denver)	12	11	11
IX (San Francisco)	41	40	41
X (Seattle)	17	13	14
All	28	24	25

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics 1997-98."

BLACK ENROLLMENT AT HOST INSTITUTIONS

Talent Search grantees that were educational institutions had, on average, 13 percent black enrollment compared with 10 percent overall for IPEDS institutions (table 3.7). Black enrollment was highest in Region IV (23 percent).

Table 3.7—Percentage of black student enrollment at Talent Search host institutions and all IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Talent Search grantees	All other IPEDS institutions	All IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	4%	5%	5%
II (New York)	14	10	11
III (Philadelphia)	16	13	13
IV (Atlanta)	23	17	18
V (Chicago)	12	8	9
VI (Dallas)	19	10	12
VII (Kansas City)	4	6	5
VIII (Denver)	2	2	2
IX (San Francisco)	5	7	6
X (Seattle)	2	3	3
All	13	9	10

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics 1997-98."

HBCUs made up 2 percent of degree-granting institutions and 8 percent of Talent Search educational institution hosts.

The 2- and 4-year IPEDS institutions include 75 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Of these, 30 operate Talent Search projects. Of the 293 postsecondary institution hosts of Talent Search projects, 8 percent are HBCUs (table 3.8). HBCUs accounted for slightly more than 2 percent of the entire population of 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. Of the 30 HBCUs, 19 were located in Region IV.

Table 3.8—Number of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) serving as Talent Search hosts and HBCUs as a percent of all Talent Search hosts and all IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Number of HBCU Talent Search grantee organizations	HBCUs as a percent of all Talent Search grantee organizations	Total number of HBCUs among all IPEDS institutions	Percent of HBCUs among all IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	0	0%	0	0%
II (New York)	0	0	1	<1
III (Philadelphia)	3	9	14	3
IV (Atlanta)	19	22	42	5
V (Chicago)	0	0	3	<1
VI (Dallas)	7	15	14	3
VII (Kansas City)	1	5	1	<1
VIII (Denver)	0	0	0	0
IX (San Francisco)	0	0	0	0
X (Seattle)	0	0	0	0
All	30	8	75	2

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Institutional Characteristics 1997–98.”

HISPANIC ENROLLMENT AT HOST INSTITUTIONS

HSIs made up 4 percent of degree-granting institutions and 9 percent of Talent Search educational institution hosts.

Overall Hispanic enrollment at Talent Search grantee institutions (9 percent) was similar to the total for all IPEDS institutions (table 3.9); however, Talent Search projects were more likely to be located in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) (table 3.10). Despite the absence of an official designation for Hispanic-serving institutions, Title V of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended, identifies HSIs as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with at least 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment.¹ According to the act’s criterion,

¹It should be noted that Title V applies additional criteria for specific program eligibility. To be eligible for the Title V program, an institution of higher education *must* also have a high enrollment of needy students, low educational and general expenditures, and 25 percent or more undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent enrollment, where 50 percent of Hispanic students are low-income. The

(continued)

196 institutions nationwide would be classified as HSIs. Of these, 25 were Talent Search grantees. Among all Talent Search grantees that were educational institutions, 9 percent were HSIs. Among all 2- and 4-year IPEDS institutions, 4 percent were HSIs, indicating that HSIs were more than twice as likely to have received Talent Search grants than all IPEDS institutions.

Table 3.9—Percentage of Hispanic and Latino enrollment at Talent Search grantees and IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region	Talent Search grantees	All other IPEDS institutions	All IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	4%	3%	3%
II (New York)	27	17	19
III (Philadelphia)	2	2	2
IV (Atlanta)	1	6	5
V (Chicago)	5	3	4
VI (Dallas)	16	15	15
VII (Kansas City)	3	2	2
VIII (Denver)	6	5	5
IX (San Francisco)	19	17	17
X (Seattle)	3	3	3
All	9	9	9

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998-99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics 1997-98."

(continued)

list of potentially eligible HSIs is compiled by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. The White House Initiative uses IPEDS, developed by the National Center for Education Statistics, to create a list of institutions with 25 percent or more undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent enrollment in order to help provide some context for agencies and others inquiring about HSIs. The list does not, however, designate HSIs, and there is no official certification process. The onus is on institutions to prove that they meet the criteria set out in legislation in any venue in which they apply.

Table 3.10—Number of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) serving as Talent Search hosts and HSIs as a percent of all Talent Search hosts and all IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Number of HSI Talent Search grantee organizations	HSIs as a percent of all Talent Search grantee organizations	Total number of HSIs among all IPEDS institutions	Percent of HSIs among all IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	0	0%	0	0%
II (New York)	7	29	58	11
III (Philadelphia)	0	0	0	0
IV (Atlanta)	0	0	7	1
V (Chicago)	1	2	9	1
VI (Dallas)	6	15	47	10
VII (Kansas City)	1	5	1	0
VIII (Denver)	3	19	6	4
IX (San Francisco)	7	23	67	13
X (Seattle)	0	0	1	1
All	25	9	196	4

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Institutional Characteristics 1997–98.”

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER, AND AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE ENROLLMENT AT HOST INSTITUTIONS

Three Talent Search grantees were tribal colleges. Nationwide there were 27 tribal colleges in 1999.

Nationwide, about 5 percent of enrollment in postsecondary institutions is Asian and Pacific Islander, while the enrollment at Talent Search grantees is 6 percent (table 3.11). Enrollment of American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary institutions is just under 1 percent (0.9 percent) nationwide and is similar for Talent Search grantees (table 3.12). Three of the Talent Search grantees were tribal colleges. Nationwide, IPEDS listed 27 tribal colleges in 1999.

Table 3.11—Percentage of Asian and Pacific Islander student enrollment at Talent Search grantees and IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Talent Search grantees	All other IPEDS institutions	All IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	4%	4%	4%
II (New York)	5	6	6
III (Philadelphia)	5	4	4
IV (Atlanta)	2	2	2
V (Chicago)	4	3	3
VI (Dallas)	3	4	3
VII (Kansas City)	3	2	2
VIII (Denver)	2	2	2
IX (San Francisco)	16	15	15
X (Seattle)	8	5	6
All	6	5	5

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; and U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Institutional Characteristics, 1997–98.”

Table 3.12—Percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native enrollment at Talent Search grantees and IPEDS institutions, by federal region: 1999

Federal region (city)	Talent Search grantees	All other IPEDS institutions	All IPEDS institutions
I (Boston)	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
II (New York)	<0.1	0.2	0.2
III (Philadelphia)	0.2	0.2	0.2
IV (Atlanta)	0.3	0.4	0.3
V (Chicago)	0.4	0.5	0.5
VI (Dallas)	1.8	1.8	1.8
VII (Kansas City)	0.5	0.7	0.7
VIII (Denver)	2.2	2.5	2.4
IX (San Francisco)	1.4	1.4	1.4
X (Seattle)	2.6	2.0	2.1
All	0.9	0.8	0.9

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, “Institutional Characteristics, 1997–98.”

PRESENCE OF OTHER PROGRAMS AT THE HOST INSTITUTION

Almost 90 percent of projects reported that their host organization administered another program that serves disadvantaged students.

Nearly nine of every 10 Talent Search projects reported that their host organizations administered additional programs targeted to disadvantaged student populations (87 percent; table 3.13 and figure 3.4). More of the projects hosted by public 4-year institutions (96 percent) administered additional programs than did projects at any other host type. Community-hosted projects were somewhat less likely to administer additional programs.

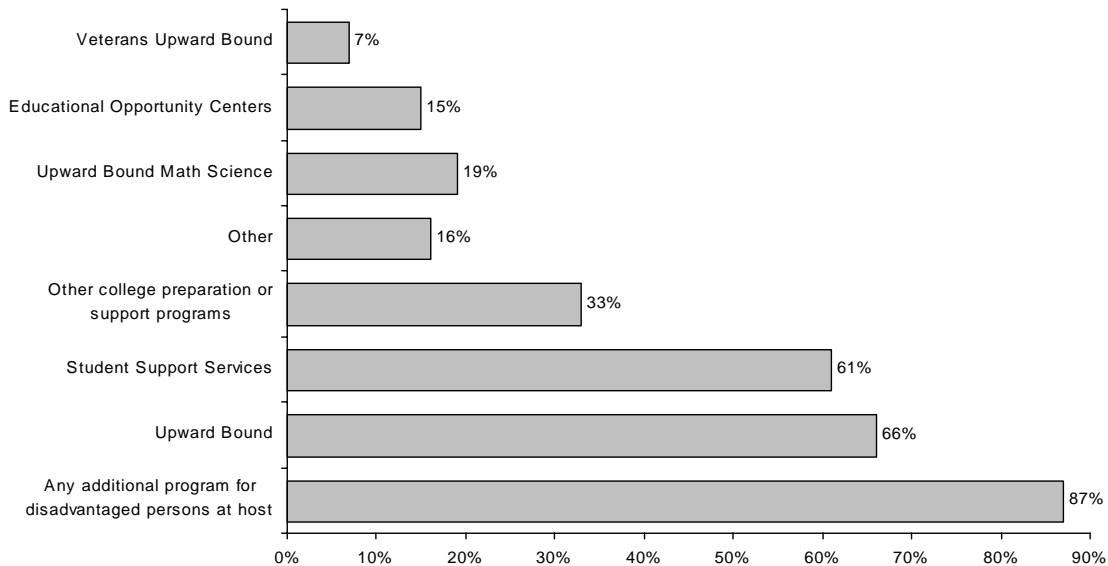
The program administered most frequently was regular Upward Bound (66 percent of all Talent Search host organizations). Upward Bound was also the program administered most frequently by each of the host types, except for 2-year institutions, which were more likely to administer Student Support Services. About one-third of the projects indicated that their host organization administered another college preparatory program that was not one of the TRIO programs listed on the survey.

Table 3.13—Percentage of Talent Search host institutions that administered additional programs for disadvantaged persons: 2000

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Other programs for disadvantaged persons at this host	87%	96%	94%	92%	61%
Upward Bound	66	88	81	65	23
Student Support Services	62	82	75	72	3
Other college preparation or support programs	33	48	48	22	21
Upward Bound Math/Science	19	36	25	9	3
Other	16	26	17	9	11
Educational Opportunity Centers	15	23	3	13	15
Veterans Upward Bound	7	12	3	6	3

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Figure 3.3—Percentage of Talent Search projects reporting that host institutions administered additional programs for disadvantaged persons: 2000



SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

NUMBER AND CHARACTERISTICS OF TALENT SEARCH TARGET SCHOOLS

As an outreach program, virtually all Talent Search projects collaborate with schools or agencies serving youth. Target schools, by definition, are middle or secondary schools designated by the grantee as a focus of project services. Both the performance report and the project survey collected information on target schools. The project survey also requested information on agencies with which Talent Search worked, including referrals. Table 3.14 provides information from the survey on the number of secondary and middle school target schools and the number of agencies. Projects listed 5,553 target schools and agencies on the survey. They served somewhat more secondary than middle schools and far more schools than agencies.

Talent Search projects served over 5,500 target schools and agencies across the nation.

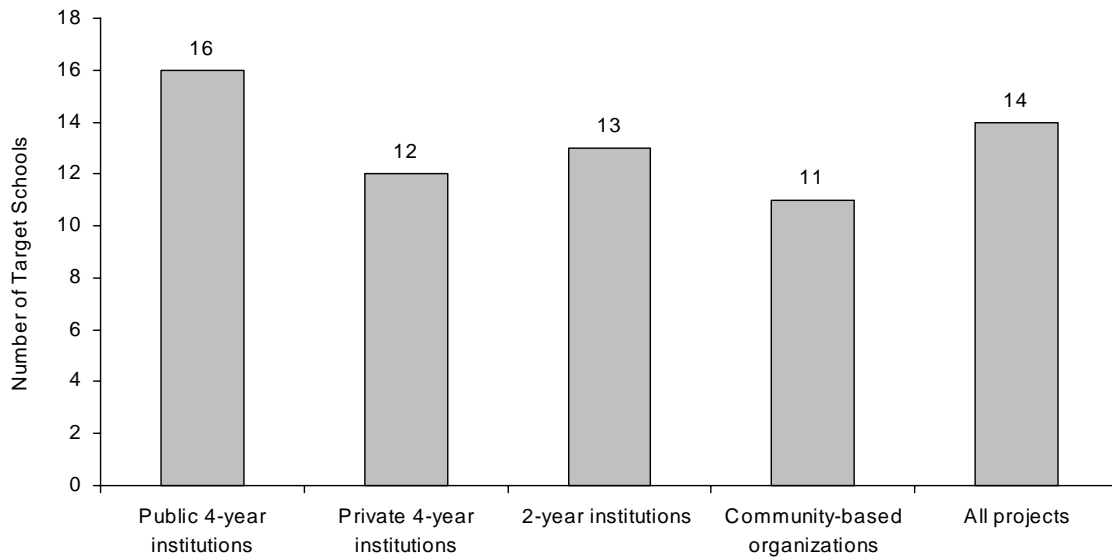
Table 3.14—Number of target schools and agencies from which project drew participants, as reported in project survey: 1999–2000

	Total	Mean	Min.	Max.	Mode
Target secondary schools	2,884	9.6	1	63	5
Target middle schools	2,081	7.0	1	49	4
Agencies	588	3.3	0	60	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Now we consider annual performance report data on target schools. Of the 349 projects that completed the 1998–99 APR, 341 submitted a list of target schools. In total, these projects served 5,105 target schools. The median number of schools served by a project was 14.² Projects based in public 4-year colleges served the largest number of target schools on average, 16 schools per project (figure 3.5). Private 4-year college grantees served an average of 12 schools, 2-year college grantees served an average of 13 schools, and community-based organization grantees served an average of 11 target schools.

Figure 3.4—Median number of target schools per project, by type of host institution: 1998-99



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

DESCRIBING TARGET SCHOOLS WITH THE COMMON CORE OF DATA

In an effort to obtain more in-depth knowledge of the characteristics of Talent Search target schools, we merged target school names from the 1998-99 annual performance reports with school names in the Common Core of Data (CCD). The CCD is a comprehensive database of elementary and secondary schools across the nation. Using data from CCD, we were able to compare characteristics of the Talent

²We report the median because one particularly large grantee, with several local projects around the country, served a total of 135 target schools and thus skewed the overall mean.

Search target schools with characteristics of middle and high schools in each state and nationwide. We found matches with the CCD for 91 percent of the target schools listed in the performance report. The fact that some matches could not be found may be attributable to erroneous or outdated information from either source. For example, some “schools” listed in the performance reports may have actually been other types of agencies the projects worked with, and schools’ names could have changed after CCD data were compiled.

School Setting

Talent Search target schools were more likely to be located in urban or rural settings than were all other secondary schools. This reflects the presence of more low-income students in urban and rural schools than in suburban schools. The fact that large public institutions host a high proportion of Talent Search projects also influences which target schools are served such that target schools tend to be located within driving distance of the host campuses. Thirty percent of target schools were located in a large or medium-sized city, compared with 20 percent of all other secondary schools (table 3.15). Correspondingly, fewer target schools were located in the suburbs or at the urban fringe of a large or medium-sized city (20 percent compared with 34 percent of all secondary schools). Forty-five percent of target schools were located in a small town or rural area outside a large or medium-sized city.

Talent Search target schools were disproportionately located in urban and rural settings.

Table 3.15—Distribution of Talent Search target schools and all secondary schools by geographic location: 1998-99

Geographic location	Percent of Talent Search target schools	Percent of all other secondary schools	Percent of all secondary schools
Large city	16.5%	10.0%	10.7%
Medium-sized city	13.8	10.1	10.5
Urban fringe of a large city	10.5	23.4	22.0
Urban fringe of a medium-sized city	9.0	10.7	10.5
Large town	1.5	1.0	1.1
Small town	16.5	13.1	13.5
Rural, outside metropolitan statistical area	28.4	23.6	24.1
Rural, inside metropolitan statistical area	3.7	8.2	7.7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, “Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99,” and National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, “Common Core of Data, 1998–99.”

Minority Enrollment

Talent Search target schools reported a higher percent of minority enrollment than all other schools. Over half (54 percent) of students in Talent Search target schools were minorities compared with 33 percent in all non-Talent Search schools (table 3.16). The data vary considerably by state.

Minorities were over half of the enrollment in Talent Search target schools, compared with 33 percent in non-target schools.

Table 3.16—Minority enrollment in Talent Search target schools, all other secondary schools, and all secondary schools, by state: 1998–99

State	Talent Search target schools	All other secondary schools	All secondary schools
Alabama	44.1%	33.2%	37.1%
Alaska	33.1	7.2	9.8
Arizona	44.5	36.4	37.1
Arkansas	25.6	25.0	25.1
California	74.1	56.4	59.1
Colorado	46.5	22.3	26.6
Connecticut	74.5	21.7	29.3
Delaware	38.8	32.4	35.5
District of Columbia	99.8	95.5	97.1
Florida	47.3	42.3	43.0
Georgia	61.7	38.4	42.9
Hawaii	82.6	78.5	80.0
Idaho	n/a	n/a	n/a
Illinois	69.1	40.0	43.9
Indiana	32.2	11.6	14.4
Iowa	11.5	5.7	7.1
Kansas	36.4	10.4	15.6
Kentucky	13.0	9.4	10.4
Louisiana	63.1	39.4	45.7
Maine	1.5	2.2	2.1
Maryland	72.8	37.0	43.0
Massachusetts	59.2	18.7	22.4
Michigan	61.8	20.0	22.5
Minnesota	29.3	10.9	12.2
Mississippi	78.4	44.1	48.8
Missouri	50.2	15.4	17.5
Montana	2.1	2.7	2.5
Nebraska	27.5	4.4	9.1
Nevada	59.6	30.1	34.4
New Hampshire	2.1	3.1	3.0
New Jersey	84.1	37.6	40.5
New Mexico	55.7	47.9	50.5
New York	74.3	40.3	43.1
North Carolina	44.8	30.2	33.5
North Dakota	2.1	2.2	2.2
Ohio	52.7	13.3	16.7
Oklahoma	21.9	12.0	14.2
Oregon	24.1	11.7	13.0
Pennsylvania	45.0	16.7	20.3
Rhode Island	54.4	13.4	21.2
South Carolina	46.2	41.6	42.8
South Dakota	4.6	2.2	2.4
Tennessee	26.7	21.1	21.9
Texas	79.1	47.7	52.3
Utah	5.0	9.8	9.1
Vermont	25.3	33.8	32.8
Virginia	3.1	1.8	2.0
Washington	21.2	19.8	19.9
West Virginia	45.6	11.6	14.1
Wisconsin	6.6	3.8	4.5
Wyoming	7.8	7.2	7.3
Outlying areas	>99.5	>99.5	>99.5
Overall	53.5	32.5	35.5

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, Common Core of Data, 1998–99.

Free-Lunch Eligibility

Talent Search (and other TRIO program) income eligibility requirements are written in terms of individual students being at or below 150 percent of poverty, not in terms of target school statistics. In contrast, for GEAR UP, a program with goals similar to Talent Search, but which serves entire cohorts of students within particular schools, Congress established a school-level income eligibility criterion. Specifically, for a school to participate in GEAR UP, more than 50 percent of its students must be eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch. Nonetheless, many Talent Search grantees do pay attention to school-level income statistics, because that it is one way they can establish the need for services at proposed target schools, something they must do in their grant applications.

Forty percent of students enrolled in Talent Search target schools were eligible for free lunch compared with 25 percent nationwide.

To examine the extent to which Talent Search projects were targeting their services to schools with a high proportion of low-income students, table 3.16 compares the percentage of students eligible for free lunch in Talent Search target schools with the eligible percentage at all other schools serving the Talent Search grade range. As noted in the table, data are not available for several states. Thus, the tabulations are based on states for which data are available on the CCD files.

Among the target schools for which data are available, 40 percent of all students in grades six through 12 enrolled in Talent Search target schools were eligible for the free lunch program (table 3.17). This proportion is 17 percentage points higher than the 23 percent of students reported eligible for the free lunch program at all other secondary schools reporting this statistic.

Target school profiles differ somewhat by project host type (table 3.18). Projects hosted at 2-year colleges tend to have target schools with lower percents eligible for free lunch than is the case among projects hosted by other types of grantees. For example, target schools at projects hosted by 2-year institutions averaged 34 percent eligible compared with 48 percent eligible at projects hosted by community organizations. Geographic locations of 2-year institutions and the more recent date of project initiation may account for this difference.

Table 3.17—Percentage of students eligible for the federal free-lunch program in Talent Search target schools, all other secondary schools, and all secondary schools, by state: 1998–99

State	Talent Search target schools	All other secondary schools	All secondary schools
Alabama	41.5%	29.3%	33.6%
Alaska	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arizona	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arkansas	33.4	28.3	29.5
California	46.4	31.1	33.4
Colorado	33.4	14.1	17.6
Connecticut	49.4	13.3	18.5
Delaware	24.2	22.1	23.1
District of Columbia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	32.5	28.0	28.7
Georgia	45.3	27.6	31.0
Hawaii	35.4	25.8	29.4
Idaho	17.3	20.5	19.3
Illinois	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indiana	27.7	15.4	17.0
Iowa	20.7	15.2	16.5
Kansas	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kentucky	32.6	32.1	32.3
Louisiana	50.7	39.0	42.1
Maine	27.9	19.9	20.5
Maryland	26.1	18.7	19.9
Massachusetts	41.1	10.2	13.0
Michigan	44.4	18.5	20.1
Minnesota	32.6	15.3	16.5
Mississippi	68.3	51.9	54.2
Missouri	41.5	20.0	21.3
Montana	26.0	15.7	17.9
Nebraska	30.4	13.6	17.0
Nevada	14.1	14.0	14.0
New Hampshire	11.6	9.1	9.3
New Jersey	54.6	22.1	24.1
New Mexico	n/a	n/a	n/a
New York	50.7	30.5	32.2
North Carolina	30.1	23.2	24.8
North Dakota	42.7	16.6	18.9
Ohio	40.8	14.3	16.6
Oklahoma	44.0	28.9	32.3
Oregon	28.8	19.2	20.2
Pennsylvania	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rhode Island	46.8	17.6	23.2
South Carolina	30.9	33.4	32.8
South Dakota	29.7	21.4	22.0
Tennessee	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas	44.6	28.8	31.2
Utah	20.7	14.4	15.3
Vermont	29.3	18.1	19.4
Virginia	22.2	14.5	15.7
Washington	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Virginia	47.3	15.8	18.1
Wisconsin	41.0	32.0	34.2
Wyoming	21.0	14.9	15.5
Outlying areas	63.7	71.4	70.0
Overall	39.6	22.7	25.1

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, “Common Core of Data, 1998–99.”

Table 3.18—School lunch program eligibility rates at Talent Search target schools, by type of host institution: 1998-99

Host institution	Average percent eligible for free lunch	Average percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
Public 4-year	40.5%	47.5%
Private 4-year	43.6	47.0
2-year	34.3	40.3
Community org.	47.7	53.2

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, “Common Core of Data, 1998–99.”

Another analytical approach we took was to rank all secondary schools from high to low on the percentage of their students eligible for the school lunch program and then to determine where Talent Search target schools fell in the distribution. Considering both free and reduced-price lunch eligibility, about 40 percent of Talent Search target schools were in the top quarter and 83 percent were in the top half of the distribution (table 3.19).

Table 3.19—Comparison of the distributions of Talent Search target schools and all secondary schools in terms of the percentage of students eligible for the school lunch program: 1998-99

	Ranking based on student eligibility for free lunch	Ranking based on student eligibility for free and reduced-priced lunch
Number of secondary schools in top quarter	8,049 ³	6,631 ⁴
Number of target schools in top quarter of all secondary schools	1,596 ¹	1,371 ²
Percentage of target schools in top quarter of all secondary schools	41.5%	39.4%
Number of secondary schools in top half	16,098 ³	13,264 ⁴
Number of target schools in top half of all secondary schools	2,486 ¹	2,892 ²
Percentage of target schools in top half of all secondary schools	64.6%	83.1%

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; National Center for Education Statistics, Elementary/Secondary and Libraries Studies Division, “Common Core of Data, 1998–99.”

¹For 935 target schools we did not have data on the number of students eligible for free lunch.

²For 1,300 target schools we did not have data on the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

³For 8,658 non-target schools we did not have data on the number of students eligible for free lunch.

⁴For 13,962 non-target schools we did not have data on the number of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

Student-Teacher Ratios

We also used CCD data to look at student-teacher ratios in Talent Search and non-Talent Search schools. Talent Search schools had very slightly higher ratios (16.5:1) than non-Talent Search schools (15.9:1) (table 3.20).

Table 3.20—Average number of students per teacher in Talent Search target schools, all other secondary schools, and all secondary schools, by state: 1998–99

State	Talent Search target schools	All other secondary schools	All secondary schools
Alabama	17.1	16.5	16.7
Alabama	17.1	16.5	16.7
Alaska	19.0	21.3	21.3
Arizona	17.7	18.7	18.6
Arkansas	15.6	16.5	16.3
California	22.8	22.2	22.2
Colorado	15.6	17.0	16.9
Connecticut	15.0	14.1	14.1
Delaware	16.4	13.4	14.5
District of Columbia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	18.8	17.1	17.3
Georgia	16.2	16.3	16.3
Hawaii	17.0	16.7	16.8
Idaho	17.6	15.7	16.1
Illinois	16.2	16.6	16.6
Indiana	17.3	16.9	17.0
Iowa	14.1	14.0	14.1
Kansas	14.8	13.1	13.3
Kentucky	16.5	17.0	16.9
Louisiana	17.1	15.9	16.1
Maine	13.9	14.3	14.2
Maryland	17.0	16.1	16.2
Massachusetts	n/a	n/a	n/a
Michigan	18.5	18.4	18.4
Minnesota	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mississippi	17.3	17.4	17.4
Missouri	14.7	14.2	14.2
Montana	13.7	12.3	12.4
Nebraska	14.7	11.0	11.2
Nevada	21.8	18.6	18.9
New Hampshire	14.5	14.4	14.4
New Jersey	13.2	13.7	13.7
New Mexico	15.6	15.8	15.8
New York	17.7	15.4	15.5
North Carolina	13.8	13.4	13.5
North Dakota	11.4	13.4	13.3
Ohio	17.1	16.9	16.9
Oklahoma	14.6	14.8	14.8
Oregon	19.5	17.9	18.0
Pennsylvania	17.7	16.9	17.0
Rhode Island	14.1	13.0	13.1
South Carolina	15.7	15.7	15.7
South Dakota	17.9	13.7	13.9
Tennessee	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas	13.9	13.7	13.7
Utah	19.0	19.7	19.6
Vermont	n/a	n/a	n/a
Virginia	12.9	13.5	13.4

Table 3.20—Average number of students per teacher in Talent Search target schools, all other secondary schools, and all secondary schools, by state: 1998–99 (continued)

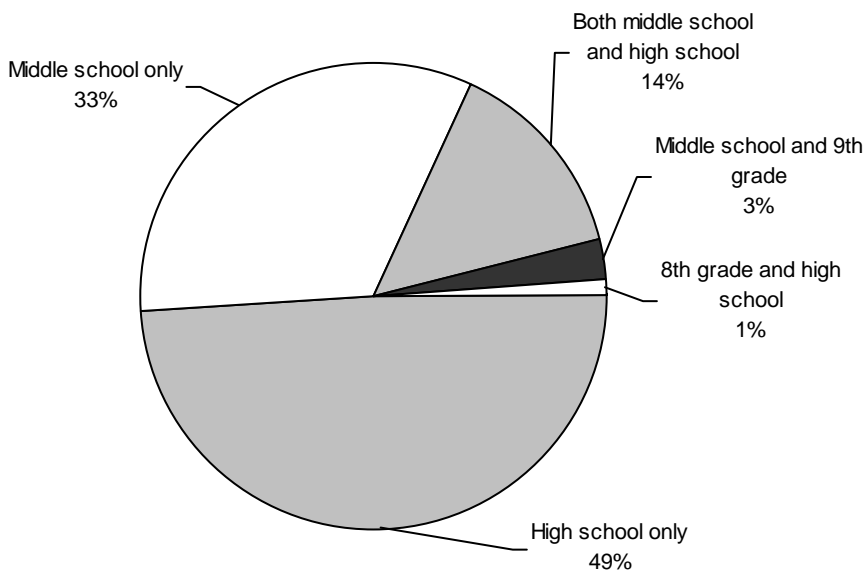
State	Talent Search target schools	All other secondary schools	All secondary schools
Washington	19.5	20.3	20.3
West Virginia	16.2	15.7	15.7
Wisconsin	15.1	14.8	14.9
Wyoming	16.3	13.7	13.9
Outlying areas	18.2	20.1	19.0
Overall	16.5	15.9	16.0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

Distribution of Target Schools by Grade Level Served

Using CCD information, figure 3.5 arrays the distribution of target schools by grade level. High schools constituted just under half (49 percent) of the Talent Search target schools while middle or junior high schools constituted just over one-third (36 percent) of the total. About 15 percent were combined high and middle schools.

Figure 3.5—Distribution of Talent Search target schools by grade levels in school: 1998–99



SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports and Common Core of Data, 1998–99.

Percent of Schools Served

Overall, there were about 41,640 middle and secondary schools in the United States in 2000. We estimate that Talent Search served about 11 to 13 percent of these schools (15 to 16 percent of high schools and about 8 to 11 percent of middle schools).

ESTIMATES OF ELIGIBLE STUDENTS SERVED

The data merger with the CCD allowed us to examine the extent to which Talent Search served the eligible students in the target schools. A proxy measure of the number of students eligible for Talent Search is the number of students eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch. This measure is not the same as the Talent Search income eligibility criterion, but it does provide an indication of the proportion of economically disadvantaged students served by Talent Search. To be eligible for a free lunch, a student's household income must not exceed 130 percent of poverty. To be eligible for a reduced-price lunch, a student's household income must not exceed 180 percent of poverty. Given that fewer schools had information on free and reduced-price lunch eligibility than had information on free lunch eligibility, we used the latter statistic.

Overall we estimate that Talent Search served about 21 percent of the estimated number of students eligible for a free lunch in the target schools (table 3.22). Estimates varied widely across states. California Talent Search projects, for example, served 12 percent of the "eligible population" in the target schools while Alabama projects served 33 percent.³

Table 3.21 presents estimates of the number of students served by Talent Search as a percentage of the free-lunch-eligible students in all secondary schools, not just the target schools. In constructing table 3.22, we defined Talent Search-eligible schools as schools serving any students in grade 7 or higher. We limited our analysis to middle and secondary schools because the Talent Search program regulations require participants to be enrolled in grade 6 or higher. Using this method to estimate the percentage of students served, we concluded that Talent Search projects served about 6.1 percent of students enrolled in grades 6 through 12 estimated eligible for the free-lunch program in schools across the United States and in outlying areas. This does not mean that Talent Search served 6.1 percent of eligible students, because not all students served by Talent Search were low-income students.

³There are several possible reasons why a state might exceed 100 percent (i.e., the number of participants served was greater than the number of free-lunch-eligible students). First, the income guidelines for participation in Talent Search and participation in the federal free-lunch program differ somewhat. For Talent Search, a participant's household income must not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level. To qualify for a reduced-price lunch, income must not exceed 180 percent of the poverty level; for free lunch, income must not exceed 130 percent. In addition, Talent Search requires that only two-thirds of participants meet both the low-income and first-generation eligibility requirements. The remaining one-third need not meet either of those criteria.

Overall, we estimate that Talent Search serves about 21 percent of the number of students eligible for free lunch in the target schools and 6 percent in all secondary schools.

Table 3.21—Estimated number and percentage of students eligible for free-lunch program who are served by Talent Search: 1999

State	Number served by Talent Search, from annual performance reports		Number eligible for free-lunch program in grades 6–12		Number served as percentage of number eligible for free-lunch program	
	Total	Grades 6–12	Target schools	All secondary schools*	Target schools	All secondary schools*
Alabama	19,621	18,944	58,151	65,859	32.6%	28.8%
Alaska	853	797	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arizona	3,122	3,083	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Arkansas	7,503	7,442	16,928	46,343	44.0	16.1
California	24,878	24,564	203,604	717,546	12.1	3.4
Colorado	4,479	4,978	21,180	40,470	23.5	12.3
Connecticut	1,583	1,475	15,930	29,744	9.3	5.0
Delaware	1,350	1,348	6,577	6,243	20.5	21.6
District of Columbia	16,354	14,662	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Florida	5,825	5,354	57,165	274,862	9.4	1.9
Georgia	9,497	9,048	60,083	142,930	15.1	6.3
Hawaii	1,900	1,699	10,078	13,779	16.9	12.3
Idaho	2,698	2,511	7,703	15,201	32.6	16.5
Illinois	11,575	10,796	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Indiana	5,110	4,876	18,019	64,235	27.1	7.6
Iowa	6,845	6,581	13,049	28,592	50.4	23.0
Kansas	4,781	4,446	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kentucky	6,647	6,470	31,191	67,207	20.7	9.6
Louisiana	10,706	10,075	53,385	96,085	18.9	10.5
Maine	830	739	1,798	18,409	41.1	4.0
Maryland	3,048	2,882	18,501	60,078	15.6	4.8
Massachusetts	5,708	5,498	18,089	38,244	30.4	14.4
Michigan	4,273	3,922	21,599	131,995	18.2	3.0
Minnesota	3,108	3,012	10,460	58,198	28.8	5.2
Mississippi	5,389	5,220	23,193	101,911	22.5	5.1
Missouri	2,387	2,193	10,828	79,855	20.3	2.7
Montana	2,092	1,754	4,524	9,915	38.8	17.7
Nebraska	1,613	1,561	8,901	15,115	17.5	10.3
Nevada	1,381	1,074	3,046	17,349	35.3	6.2
New Hampshire	1,222	1,217	1,366	8,125	89.1	15.0
New Jersey	6,340	5,714	17,758	85,228	32.2	6.7
New Mexico	4,475	4,366	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
New York	15,183	14,606	56,635	337,041	25.8	4.3
North Carolina	8,645	8,276	42,037	107,214	19.7	7.7
North Dakota	2,384	2,344	2,184	8,436	107.3	27.8
Ohio	8,903	8,240	33,302	119,778	24.7	6.9
Oklahoma	7,063	7,033	30,067	62,400	23.4	11.3
Oregon	2,060	2,017	8,513	45,948	23.7	4.4
Pennsylvania	10,391	10,249	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rhode Island	865	865	6,393	10,324	13.5	8.4
South Carolina	7,114	6,879	28,378	78,604	24.2	8.8
South Dakota	1,035	827	1,353	12,666	61.1	6.5
Tennessee	8,077	7,974	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Texas	14,563	14,010	125,809	453,934	11.1	3.1
Utah	5,069	4,958	6,746	27,668	73.5	17.9
Vermont	7,135	6,747	17,709	83,255	38.1	8.1
Virginia	1,300	1,300	2,168	5,583	60.0	23.3
Washington	1,701	1,637	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
West Virginia	3,459	3,296	16,188	68,097	20.4	4.8
Wisconsin	2,392	2,325	15,079	33,634	15.4	6.9
Wyoming	625	622	1,026	6,519	60.6	9.5
Outlying areas	10,636	10,688	40,652	161,116	26.3	6.6
Overall	305,793	293,194	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Totals excluding states with missing free-lunch data	n/a	235,184	1,147,343	3,855,734	20.5	6.1

SOURCE: Data from Talent Search Performance Reports and the Common Core of Data, 1998–99.

*Defined as schools serving any students in grade 7 or higher.

Another way of estimating the percentage of eligible children served by Talent Search is to look at the number served relative to the number of low-income children in the eligible age range (table 3.22). Census reports indicated that about 27 percent of children 11 to 17 years—or just over 8 million children—were at or below 150 percent of poverty. We estimated that Talent Search serves about 4 percent of the eligible age group at or below 150 percent of poverty in any given year. If each eligible child were served in only one grade in the years between ages 11 and 17, about 28 percent of the total number of eligible children would have contact with Talent Search over the period in which they were in the eligible age group. Given that Talent Search typically serves students for more than one year (with half of participants new each year), we might assume that about 12 percent of those eligible might receive some Talent Search services during the period they are in the 6th through 12th grades.

Table 3.22—Estimates of the percent of children served by Talent Search

Estimated number of children 11 to 17 years	27,635,000
Estimated number of children 11 to 17 years at or below 150 percent of poverty	7,317,000
Percentage of children at or below 150 percent of poverty	26.5%
Percentage of children in nation receiving free or reduced-price lunch	34.4%
Number of Talent Search participants a year in grades six through 12	293,294
Percentage of potentially eligible served each year	4.0%

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99; data from U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (available at www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html).

UNMET NEED IN TARGET AREA

For a different view of the need for Talent Search services, the project survey asked whether there were any schools in the grantees' target areas whose students could benefit from Talent Search services, but which could not be served with current resource levels. Over three-fourths of Talent Search projects (77 percent) indicated this was true (table 3.23).

Table 3.23—Percent of Talent Search projects that reported other schools in their area could benefit from the program, but could not be served due to lack of resources

Type of host	Percent
All projects	77%
Public 4-year	81
Private 4-year	81
2-year	71
Community org.	80

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

CHOOSING TARGET SCHOOLS

As part of the case studies, we discussed with project personnel how the projects came to target and work with certain schools versus others. In the most general sense, the case study projects looked for the schools with the greatest number of target students not otherwise likely to receive needed services. Projects seemed to follow one of two approaches depending on the degree to which they wanted to serve particular types of students. In the first case, projects dedicated to serving students with certain background characteristics looked for schools with a concentration of those students. The project that aimed to serve American Indian students, for example, chose schools located on or near reservations.

In the second case, projects generally chose schools with the highest poverty rates within the geographic area that could be reasonably served by the host organization. Typically, projects measured poverty by the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch as determined in a manner similar to that already described in this report.⁴ This approach inevitably yielded a substantial number of students who met Talent Search's two overarching eligibility criteria (member of a low-income household and potential first-generation college student). The target schools also met significant indications of need stipulated in the grant application, including high dropout rates and low rates of enrollment in postsecondary programs among school graduates.

Case study projects also typically served a few more target high schools than middle schools. This practice seemed to reflect Talent Search's traditional emphasis on providing college admission and financial aid assistance to those students most in need of such services. In choosing middle schools, projects almost always tried to work with schools that fed into their target high schools, thus establishing the possibility that some students would remain involved with Talent Search from the

⁴Actual percentages varied. One project looked for schools where at least 25 percent of students were eligible for the school lunch program; another was working in a district where 75 percent of students qualified for the program.

6th through the 12th grade. Nonetheless, retention proved problematic in districts with open enrollment at the high school level.

Finally, projects worked with schools that were cooperative and interested in providing their students with access to the types of supplemental services offered by Talent Search. The projects we studied rarely encountered any reluctance or resistance from the schools they proposed to serve or were already serving. Most schools were enthusiastic about participating in the program. Two projects indicated that a few of the schools they proposed to serve had rejected their offer. The school administrators believed that Talent Search would not fit into their schools or noted that school counselors were already providing similar services. In addition, one project had recently taken the rare step of dropping one of its target high schools because officials would not allow Talent Search staff to serve students the way the staff wanted.⁵

SERVICE AREA AND TARGET SCHOOL CONTEXT

The characteristics of service areas and target schools varied considerably among the case study projects. Some projects chose target schools that served a relatively small area; others worked with schools that served relatively large areas. Some projects involved relatively few schools and districts; others worked with several schools and districts. The projects serving large numbers of target schools tended to have less frequent contacts with participating students, a reflection of the school-to-staff ratio. Serving multiple districts also meant that project staff had to deal with a wide range of curricula, different academic calendars, and a host of different policies and practices, such as standardized testing. Talent Search staff have to be aware of these things in order to provide appropriate academic assistance and accurate advice.

The location of a project's main office or host location did not always reflect the area(s) where participants lived. Three projects, for example, were based in a large city, but nearly all of their target schools were located in surrounding suburban districts. Two of the projects had established their Talent Search programs several years after other grantees had undertaken projects working with inner-city schools, forcing the newer projects to look farther out for students in need of precollege assistance. In contrast, one project was based at a suburban college, but its target schools were all located within the nearby urban area.

The following three examples illustrate the varying contexts of Talent Search projects' target service areas and convey some of the implications for project structure and services:

⁵The controversial service method was to pull students out of their regular classrooms, an issue we will return to in chapter 8.

- One project served 12 inner-city schools, all in a single school district and located relatively near the host institution. Services were provided at both the target schools and, because of its proximity, the host institution. Interested students could use public or private transportation to reach the campus, but, due to concerns about crossing through other neighborhoods, some students seldom took advantage of these services.
- A second project served a vast target area that spanned roughly 375 miles from east to west and over 200 miles from north to south. The area, encompassing 17 counties, included a few small or medium-sized cities, but most students lived in rural areas. The project served 36 target schools, the large share of which were combined middle and high schools. All services were provided at the target schools. To serve schools spread over such a large area, two full-time staff members worked out of remote offices, one over an hour's drive from headquarters and the other three hours away in a different direction. Even so, the second staff member still had to travel to schools in four different directions that were 125 miles away. Of the 11 schools assigned to one headquarters-based staff member, three were located 125 to 140 miles away. She and the other headquarters-based staff member each drove about 25,000 to 27,000 miles per year to and from the target schools.⁶
- A third project served two distinct areas and populations. One cluster of target schools was located in a large city school district within a 10-mile radius of the host institution. The schools in the cluster were among the lowest-performing schools in the district, and the students came from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. A second cluster of schools was located in a suburban district 30 miles away. Overall, the district was a little more affluent than the urban district; the target schools had a lower percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, lower dropout and mobility rates, and higher college enrollment rates. However, within the schools in this cluster, the project specifically aimed to serve the needs of Hispanic students, who made up about 10 to 25 percent of school enrollments. Many were enrolled in ESL, Migrant Education programs, or both, and their educational outcomes were lower than those of the majority white students. The project hired one Spanish-speaking staff member, based in a field office, to work exclusively with program participants in these schools.

⁶Covering the target area is relatively costly. Staff travel expenses to and from target schools in 1998–99 totaled about \$26,000, roughly 8 percent of total project costs and almost enough to pay the salary of an additional full-time staff member.

In some cases, the target schools served by a single grantee exhibited substantial variation. We mentioned earlier that projects often served resource-deficient schools. Visits to target schools revealed how schools' physical conditions—a direct reflection of resources—sometimes varied dramatically both within and across projects. The accompanying text box provides an example.

A final but important contextual feature of Talent Search target schools is the changes experienced by schools over time. When personnel or policies change at the school or district level, Talent Search projects often have to modify their service approaches. One project director told us that his staff members essentially have to reintroduce themselves to school administrators every year and renegotiate how they will work with students. For example, at one target middle school, staff had provided in-class services for two consecutive years, but a new principal discontinued the services. At another project, one of the target districts consolidated various schools, severely interrupting services to middle school students.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT STAFF AND ORGANIZATION

Talent Search staff members are central to the program's success. This chapter uses information from the project survey and case studies to examine several topics, including project staff levels, staffing models, staff characteristics and salaries, project budget allocations, and relations between projects and target schools.

Overview and Selected Highlights

- Projects averaged 13 years of operation in 2001. Just over half began in 1975 to 1984.
- Nationwide, Talent Search projects employ an estimated 2,548 full- and part-time staff—an average of 7.1 individuals and 5.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff per project. Project FTE staff averaged one director or coordinator, two counselors, one other professional staff member, and a support staff.
- Just over two-thirds of Talent Search projects sometimes used volunteers and just over half had work study students.
- Project directors averaged about 7 years experience, counselors about 4 years.
- Staff spent most of their time, often four days a week, in the field, visiting schools.
- The percentage of staff who are black is similar to that of participants, but differs for Hispanics and whites. Three-fourths of Talent Search staff were females.
- Almost three-fourths of Talent Search project directors have advanced degrees and about 45 percent of counselors have advanced degrees.
- Just over one-third of Talent Search directors served as director of another related project at the same time as directing the Talent Search project.
- In 2000 dollars, salaries of directors and coordinators averaged about \$40,000, those of counselors and advisors about \$27,100.
- On average, Talent Search projects allocated two-thirds of their budgets to staff salaries.
- Relations between projects and target schools were generally positive. One key to good relations with target schools was reciprocation.
- To some alumni, personal encouragement from staff was more memorable than particular services. Staff often served as role models for participants.
- Case study interviewees consistently offered favorable comments about Talent Search staff, describing them as caring, dedicated, friendly, helpful, and nonjudgmental.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND STAFF ROLES

PROJECT AGE

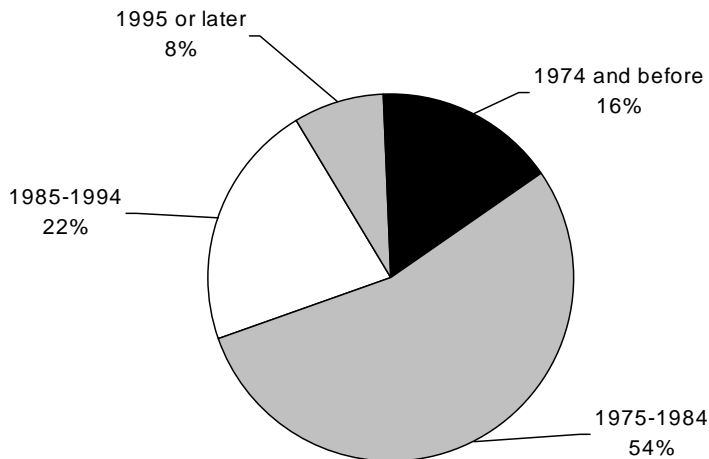
While TRIO programs have earned recognition as stable federal grant programs, the required grant award competition that occurs every four years means that all projects experience some element of uncertainty concerning their continuation beyond the current grant cycle. Nonetheless, by design, the program competition procedures foster stability in project awards by counting the achievement of self-identified project objectives as prior experience points that increase scores in the competition. Thus, despite many more applicants than awards, once a host has been awarded a grant and has launched a project, it will likely continue operations beyond the initial four- or five-year award. For example, in the last competition, which was held in 1997, only 14 of the operating projects that reapplied were not funded again.

Former program officials at two of these grantees told us that the budget section of their applications had been accidentally left out—an unfortunate oversight that led to a relatively large point deduction. Officials at 10 other defunded projects told us that their applications simply lost a few points in various sections—enough overall to put them below the cutoff score to receive a grant. Some officials attributed this to not having submitted as well-written an application as they could have; the writers may not have had enough experience or may have been too rushed at the end to smooth out the rough parts. Others, however, felt they had submitted high-quality applications and did not understand or agree with the point deductions. (See appendix B for more information on grantees that did not get renewed funding.)

Projects averaged 13 years of operation in 2001. Just over half began between 1975 and 1984; 30 percent began after 1984, and 16 percent before 1975.

Data on project age confirm the overall stability of Talent Search projects. Based on information provided by the project survey on the first year of operation, Talent Search projects averaged 13 years of operation by 2001. As shown in figure 4.1, 16 percent of Talent Search projects began in 1974 or before and were more than 25 years old. Just over half the projects (54 percent) began between 1975 and 1984. Projects hosted at public 4-year institutions were the oldest, and projects hosted at 2-year institutions were the youngest, averaging 15 and 11 years, respectively. The difference in average age reflects the increase in the number of projects hosted at 2-year colleges (see chapter 5).

Figure 4.1—Percent distribution of the first year of operation of Talent Search projects operating in 1999–2000



SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

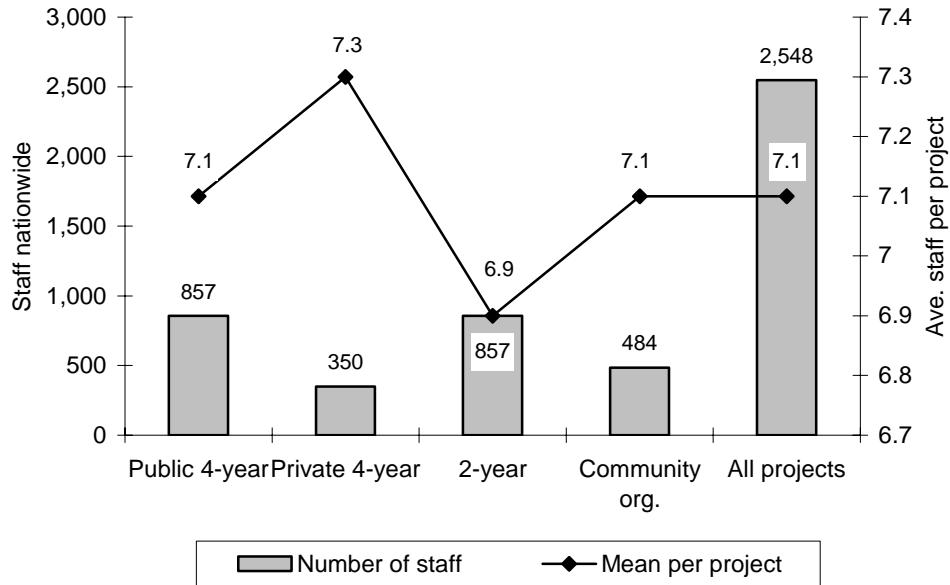
OVERVIEW OF STAFF

Nationwide, Talent Search projects employed an estimated 2,548 staff in the 361 projects operating at the time of the project survey (figure 4.2 and table 4.1).¹ This figure includes full- and part-time staff and support staff but excludes undergraduate student employees and volunteers. The count also includes graduate students who might be employed as tutors or in other capacities.

Projects averaged about 7.1 full- and part-time staff, one staff person for about every 125 participants. On average, projects hosted by community organizations were funded to serve larger numbers of participants and had higher average grant amounts, but they also had a higher participant-to-staff ratio (166:1) than other Talent Search projects. As we show later, however, projects hosted by community organizations that used volunteers tended to obtain more hours from them than did other projects.

¹This estimate is based on counts from the 93 percent of projects returning the survey form, however, the counts were adjusted upwards to reflect non-response so that the figure represents an estimate of the total staff from 361 projects.

Figure 4.2—Estimated number of staff and number per project, by type of host institution: 2000



NOTE: This estimate is based on counts from the 93 percent of projects returning the survey form, however, the counts were adjusted upwards to reflect non-response so that the 2,548 estimate represents an estimate of the total staff from all 361 projects that were operating at the time.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Table 4.1—Project staff levels and participants per staff, by type of host institution: 1999–2000

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Total number of staff	2,548	857	350	857	484
Average number of staff	7.1	7.1	7.3	6.9	7.1
FTE staff	5.3	5.6	5.4	4.9	5.8
Average number of participants per staff member	125	127	110	109	166

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000; Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99.

NOTE: In reporting these staff, projects were instructed not to include undergraduate work-study or other part-time student employees or volunteers. The figures include graduate students who might have been employed as tutors or in other roles.

Not all staff worked full time for Talent Search. On average, staff worked 30 hours per week. Using 40 hours per week as the full-time equivalent (FTE) standard, we found that projects had an average of 5.3 FTE (table 4.1). In addition to using part-time employees, at some Talent Search projects staff members were full-time employees of the host institution but only a part of their time was allocated to and paid for by Talent Search. As noted in chapter 5, 90 percent of the host organizations operated other programs for disadvantaged students, most commonly Upward Bound. Indeed, it was not uncommon for a Talent Search and Upward Bound project located at the same institution to share some staff. This was especially true for a senior project director role and for roles such as technology coordinator or tutoring coordinator. Projects indicated that there were advantages to this model in that the experience of senior staff could be utilized by both projects, and this sharing created efficiencies for roles that were not full-time for either project. Staff sharing can also contribute to coordination and synergy across projects.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AND VOLUNTEER STAFF

In addition to the staff described above, 70 percent of Talent Search projects sometimes relied on volunteers, college work-study students, or other undergraduate part-time student help. Overall, about 68 percent of projects reported that they used volunteers, 56 percent used work-study students, and 39 percent used other part-time undergraduate students (table 4.2).

Projects hosted at community-based organizations were somewhat less likely to use volunteers than other types of hosts (54 percent of projects hosted by community-based organizations reported using volunteers compared with over 70 percent of projects hosted by private 4-year institutions and community colleges). However, the community-based organizations that reported using volunteers also reported the highest number of hours worked per week by volunteers (on average, 46 total hours in a typical week provided by an average of 9 volunteers). Projects hosted at private 4-year institutions that used volunteers averaged the highest number of volunteers (an average of 28) but tended to receive few hours per volunteer (an average of 36 total hours per week).

Just over two-thirds of Talent Search projects sometimes used volunteers and just over half had work study students.

Table 4.2—Talent Search projects' use of volunteers, work-study students, and other part-time undergraduate student employees: 1998-99

	Percentage of projects using	Average number per project reporting use of this type of help	Average total hours worked per week, per project
Volunteers			
Public 4-year	67%	6	15
Private 4-year	72	28	36
2-year	73	8	17
Community org.	54	9	46
All	68	10	27
Work-study student staff			
Public 4-year	71	3	29
Private 4-year	68	3	28
2-year	60	2	18
Community org.	13	3	19
All	56	3	24
Other undergraduate student staff			
Public 4-year	53	7	42
Private 4-year	30	8	38
2-year	33	6	25
Community org.	35	4	29
All	39	6	34

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

STAFF POSITIONS

Table 4.3 provides the total number of staff and FTE staff by position. Overall, about 26 percent of FTE staff were project directors or coordinators and associate and assistant directors and coordinators. Counselors and advisors accounted for just over one-third (36 percent) of FTE staff. About 18 percent were other professionals, 15 percent support staff, 4 percent tutors, and 1 percent information specialists.

Projects typically employed one director or one coordinator, although some projects employed one of each; combined, these positions accounted for an average of 1.2 FTE per project. Projects averaged two counselors and one other professional staff member, who for example, might be responsible for organizing tutoring programs or summer workshops. Projects typically employed one support staff member. Some also had non-undergraduate tutoring staff, and a small number of projects employed an information specialist, though usually on a part-time basis. Project directors and coordinators averaged about 7.4 years of work with the project. Counselors averaged 4.2 years experience and other professionals 3.5 years.

Project FTE staff averaged one director or coordinator, two counselors, one other professional, and one support staff.

Directors averaged about 7.4 years experience, counselors about 4.2 years.

Table 4.3—Number of staff and number of FTE staff per project, percent distribution of FTE staff, and years of experience, by position: 1999–2000

Position	Mean number of staff per project	Mean FTE staff per project	Percentage of total FTEs	Mean years of experience in current Talent Search project
Directors and coordinators	1.4	1.2	22%	7.4
Associate/assistant directors and coordinators	0.2	0.2	4	7.6
Counselors and advisors	2.2	1.9	36	4.2
Other professionals	1.3	0.9	18	3.5
Data and information specialists	0.1	*	1	4.8
Support staff	1.0	0.8	15	4.8
Tutors	0.9	0.2	4	3.8

*Less than .05.

NOTE: Some projects employed both a director and a coordinator and some had a portion of a director's time plus a full time coordinator; Hence the number of directors and coordinators is greater than 1.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

STAFF MODELS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The case studies provide in-depth information on how staff were organized and functioned in different projects. Although faced with different circumstances in terms of the size of their target areas and the number of target schools and participants, most projects we visited for the case studies used variations of similar staffing models. The basic model centered on a core group of three to five staff members—typically with job titles such as advisor, counselor, or tutoring or workshop coordinator—who had similar basic duties: they worked directly with students in the field and provided the vast share of program services. They counseled and advised students at the target schools, led workshops, organized field trips, and assisted with college admissions and financial aid forms. The core staff reported directly to the project director or coordinator or, in some cases, to an assistant director or coordinator. In this model, top project officials, such as TRIO directors, project directors or coordinators, and assistant directors, usually did not provide much direct service in the field but rather oversaw the core staff and handled administrative matters.

With the core-group staffing model, the chief variations between projects centered around the number and type of both target schools and students for which core staff members were responsible. As for the number of schools, core staff typically carried roughly equivalent workloads. But workloads were a function of several factors, including the number of participants, the intensity of the services provided, and the

The chief variation in service delivery models was the number and type of target schools and students for which staff were responsible.

distances to be traveled to the schools. At one project, for example, two core staff each served seven target schools, and two other core staff each served 11 schools, but the former had to drive considerably greater distances than the latter. In addition, each school was the responsibility of a single staff member. Staff generally did not work at schools in pairs or groups.²

As for types of schools and students, projects differed in the extent to which core staff specialized in working with certain types of participants. We observed three model variations:

- In the first model, each staff member served only one type of school or general grade range of students. At one of the projects, for example, four staff served only high schools (ranging from two to four schools per staff member), and the remaining staff person served only middle schools (three).
- In the second model, all staff members served a mix of both middle school and high school students. At one project, for example, four core staff each served three to four middle schools and three to four high schools. This approach maximized both convenience (staff served clusters of schools generally located close together in a particular portion of a large target area) and continuity of service (staff served pairs of feeder middle schools and receiving high schools so that students might have the same Talent Search advisor from grade six to 12).
- The third model was a blend of the first two, with some staff specializing and others not. At one of the projects, for example, two staff members each served three high schools and one middle school, one staff member served three middle schools and one high school, and one served four middle schools. At another project, one staff member worked with two middle schools and one high school, a second staff member worked with one middle school and one high school, and the third staff member served two high schools.

In some cases, Talent Search staff members were based at a location other than the project's main office, especially when projects served large areas such that frequent travel between the main office and distant target schools would have been inefficient or impractical. At two of the case study projects with the largest target areas, at least half of the core staff members worked out of field offices or their homes so that they

²We found two exceptions to this practice. One project served three high schools with atypically broad grade ranges: one had grades 6-12, the second had grades 7-12, and the third had grades 8-12. At these schools, one staff member worked exclusively with the students in grades 11 and 12 while another worked with the younger students. The second project had assigned two core staff to work virtually full time at a four-year high school. Each followed cohorts from ninth through 12th grade, working with freshman and juniors one year, sophomores and seniors the next.

could be close to their assigned target schools. They seldom met with their project directors or other headquarters-based colleagues, relying on e-mail and the telephone to keep in touch.

Staff spent most of their time either planning or providing services, with core staff typically in the field visiting target schools at least four days each week during the school year. But staff in some projects routinely devoted one day a week, usually Friday, to record-keeping and paperwork to document which services they had provided to which students.

Staff spent most of their time, often four days a week, in the field, visiting schools.

Most staff worked exclusively for Talent Search. However, as noted, some project directors divided their time between Talent Search and one or more other TRIO programs, though in such cases most day-to-day operational responsibilities fell to an assistant director or coordinator. Some project secretaries or other administrative assistants also worked for several TRIO programs or for other TRIO programs on a part-time basis. One project employed four full-time core staff members. In addition, this project had four staff members who split their time between Talent Search and Upward Bound. At two projects hosted by colleges, part-time office assistants were work-study students.

While over-two thirds of projects reported sometimes relying on some volunteers (table 4.2), most case study projects made limited regular use of volunteers. Several projects received occasional assistance from volunteers, such as parents serving as chaperones or local business leaders or college officials delivering informational presentations, but paid staff delivered major, recurring services. An exception was a project hosted by a community-based organization in a large city. The project relied on a large number of college student volunteers from a nearby university to tutor Talent Search students on weeknight evenings. It also drew on the services of a few participants in the AmeriCorps program, who, though strictly speaking are not volunteers (they receive a stipend for their service), were another source of free labor. A second exception was a university-based project that regularly used unpaid graduate student interns, such as those working on education or counseling degrees, to assist the full-time field staff.

Most case study projects did not make extensive or regular use of volunteers.

Projects also sometimes supplemented their core staff with a group of short-term hires to help with special program components. For example, one project offered a three-week enrichment program each summer for middle school students. The director hired four or five teachers from local middle schools and high schools to lead the various academic classes and other activities on a half-time basis.

Two case study projects did not use the typical staffing model discussed above. Instead, they had implemented a somewhat atypical service plan. Rather than relying on a core group of three to five full-time staff to visit assigned target schools one to four times a month for workshops and other meetings, both projects offered tutoring in certain target schools on a daily basis. Besides the project director, these grantees had only one other full-time employee involved in service provision. The largest share of the projects' labor expenses covered teachers from the target schools

An atypical staff model used school staff as part-time tutors.

who served as Talent Search tutors and counselors after school, typically eight hours per week. In addition, at both projects, the director was heavily involved in providing services to students.

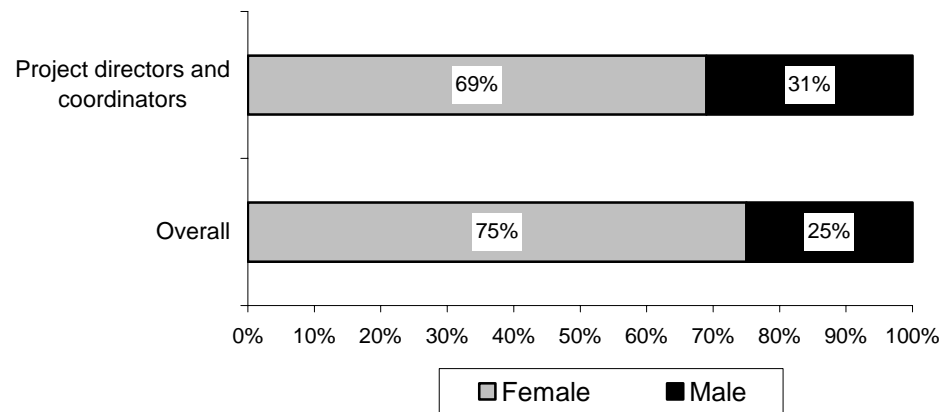
STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

STAFF GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY

Given that one of the roles of the Talent Search staff is to act as role models for participants, grant applicants have paid some attention to staff demographics, including gender and race and ethnicity. Overall, three-fourths of Talent Search staff in 2000 were female (figure 4.3). Among project directors and coordinators, a slightly smaller percentage, but still over two-thirds (69 percent) were female. Among participants, 60 percent were female (see chapter 7).

Three-fourths of Talent Search staff were females.

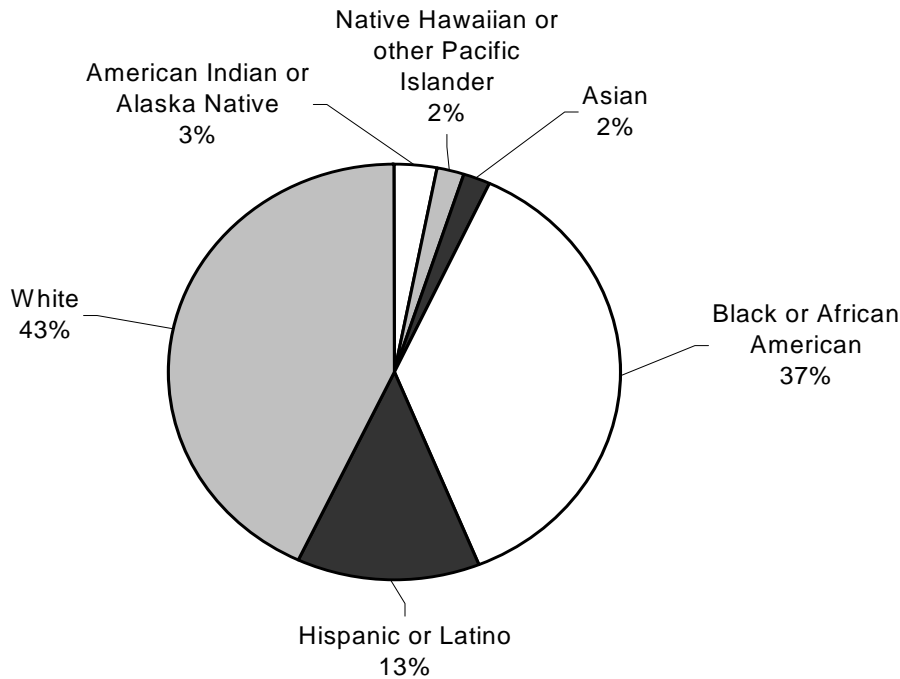
Figure 4.3—Percentage of Talent Search project staff by gender: 1999–2000



SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Talent Search staff distribution by race and ethnicity is similar to that of participants for blacks but differs for Hispanics and whites.

Figure 4.4 provides the distribution of Talent Search staff by race and ethnicity. As will be seen in chapter 7, the distribution is similar to that of black participants but differs for Hispanic and white participants. Thirteen percent of Talent Search staff were Hispanic while 22 percent of participants were Hispanic. Forty-three percent of Talent Search staff were white (compared with 32 percent of participants), and 37 percent were black (compared with 36 percent of participants). Three percent of Talent Search staff were American Indian, and 2 percent each were Asian and Pacific Islander. Among participants, 4 percent each were American Indian and Asian and 1 percent were Pacific Islanders.

Figure 4.4—Percentage of Talent Search staff by race/ethnicity: 1999–2000


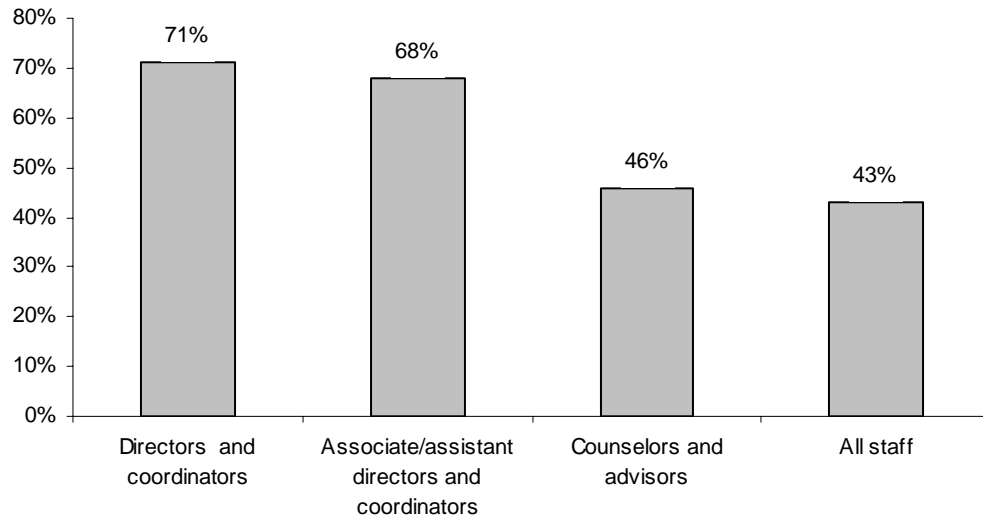
SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

STAFF EDUCATION

Almost three-fourths (71 percent) of Talent Search project directors and coordinators and over two-thirds (68 percent) of associate or assistant directors and coordinators have advanced degrees (figure 4.5 and table 4.4). Twelve percent of project directors and coordinators hold a Ph.D. or other professional degrees beyond the master's level. Among counselors and advisors, 46 percent hold master's or higher degrees. For all staff positions, 42 percent of Talent Search staff have advanced degrees. Talent Search staff employed in private 4-year institutions were the most highly educated. Overall, 60 percent of Talent Search staff in private 4-year institutions hold advanced degrees.

Almost three-fourths of project directors and about 45 percent of counselors have advanced degrees.

Figure 4.5—Percentage of Talent Search staff with advanced degrees, by selected position: 1999–2000



SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Table 4.4—Percentage of Talent Search staff by highest level of education, by type of host and by position: 1999–2000

	Less than bachelor's	Bachelor's	Master's	Ph.D. or other professional
Type of host				
Public 4-year	15%	42%	39%	4%
Private 4-year	9	32	54	6
2-year	19	38	41	2
Community org.	21	48	27	4
All projects	17	40	40	3
Position				
Directors and coordinators	*	29	59	12
Associate/assistant directors and coordinators	*	32	65	3
Counselors and advisors	4	50	44	2
Other professionals	8	53	38	1
Data and information specialists	58	37	0	5
Support staff	74	20	5	0
Tutors	24	45	30	1

*0 or less than .5 percent.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

STAFF SALARIES

Table 4.5 displays data on staff salaries for 2000—specifically, the mean, median, and 75th percentile by position categories for staff working more than 37 hours per week. Directors and coordinators averaged about \$40,000 and associate and assistant coordinators about \$36,000. Counselors and advisors averaged about \$27,000. Projects hosted by private 4-year institutions recorded the lowest average salaries (data not shown).

In 2000 dollars, directors and coordinators averaged about \$40,000.

Table 4.5—Talent Search mean, median, and 75th percentile salaries, by position: 2000

Position	Salary for staff working 37 or more hours		
	Mean	Median	75th percentile
Directors and coordinators	\$39,919	\$37,926	\$46,488
Associate/assistant directors and coordinators	\$35,782	\$35,124	\$41,839
Counselors and advisors	\$27,106	\$26,860	\$30,888
Other professionals	\$28,747	\$27,376	\$32,025
Data and information specialists	\$20,049	\$18,285	\$22,727
Support staff	\$21,442	\$20,661	\$24,711
Tutors ^a	\$27,829	\$27,893	\$29,184

NOTE: Staff salaries are reported in 2000 dollars.

^aVery few staff in this category worked 37 or more hours.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

USE OF LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Almost half (46 percent) of Talent Search projects reported that someone on their staff sometimes used languages other than English to communicate with participants (table 4.6). Projects hosted by community-based organizations were more likely to report the use of other languages (70 percent) than projects hosted at any other type of institution.

Spanish was used most frequently; 42 percent of all Talent Search projects communicated with participants in Spanish. Spanish was also the language used most frequently by each of the host types considered individually: 65 percent of projects hosted by community-based organizations, 44 percent of projects hosted by private 4-year institutions, 39 percent of projects hosted by public 4-year institutions, and 30 percent of projects hosted by 2-year institutions.

At almost half of all projects, someone on staff used a language other than English to communicate with participants.

Table 4.6—Percentage of Talent Search projects where staff sometimes use a language other than English to communicate with participants, and the languages used, by host type: 1999–2000

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Use language other than English	46%	42%	47%	36%	70%
Percent of all projects that use:					
Spanish	42	39	44	30	65
Other	9	9	8	9	8
Chinese	3	2	0	0	12
American Indian language	3	1	0	4	*

*0 or less than .5 percent.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

PROJECT DIRECTORS' AND COORDINATORS' EXPERIENCE AND COMMITMENT TO PROJECT

Almost half of all directors and coordinators had also headed up some other program serving disadvantaged persons.

This section presents information concerning Talent Search project directors and coordinators. Almost half (46 percent) of Talent Search project directors and coordinators had served in their position for six years or more (table 4.7). Almost three-fourths (74 percent) had served in their current position for at least two years. In addition, 35 percent had also served (or were currently serving) as the director or coordinator of an Upward Bound project, 24 percent had headed or were simultaneously heading a Student Support Services project.

Table 4.7—Talent Search project directors' and coordinators' experience directing or coordinating Talent Search and similar programs, as of 1999–2000

Director or coordinator of	Percent who had served				
	11 years or more	6–10 years	2–5 years	Fewer than 2 years	Never
This Talent Search project	18%	28%	28%	26%	*%
Other projects or agencies serving disadvantaged persons	10	10	17	10	52
An Upward Bound project	10	6	9	10	66
Student Support Services	6	6	6	6	76
Another Talent Search project	3	1	4	4	89
An EOC project	2	1	1	2	93

*0 or less than .5 percent.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Many Talent Search project coordinators and directors had also held other positions in Talent Search and similar programs (table 4.8). For example, nearly half (46 percent) had served in another capacity at their current Talent Search projects, and 29 percent had served in another capacity at an Upward Bound project.

Table 4.8—Talent Search project directors' and coordinators' experience serving in capacity other than director or coordinator for Talent Search and similar programs, as of 1999–2000

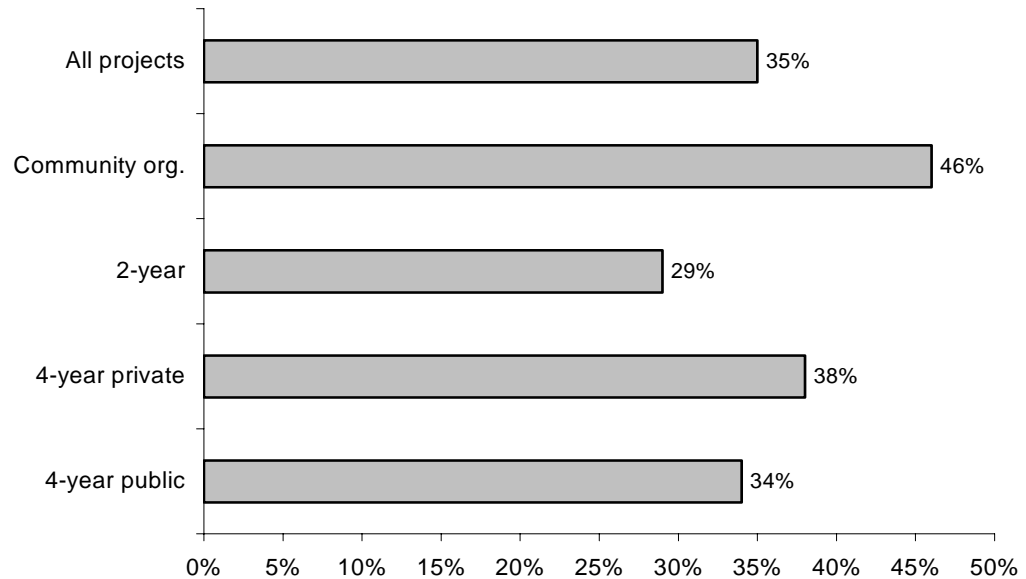
Project	11 years or more	6–10 years	2–5 years	Fewer than 2 years	Never
This Talent Search project	4%	10%	17%	15%	53%
Other projects or agencies serving disadvantaged persons	6	9	21	10	53
An Upward Bound project	3	5	12	9	71
Student Support Services	1	4	8	7	80
Another Talent Search project	1	1	3	4	90
An EOC project	<1	1	3	2	93

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

As discussed in chapter 2, with the expressed intent of fostering increased cooperation among projects serving economically disadvantaged students, Congress amended the TRIO legislation in the early 1990s to allow for less than full-time project directors. This practice also allows projects to economize and stretch resources. In 2000, just over one-third of all project directors and coordinators (35 percent) reported that they also currently served as directors or administrators of other student programs at their host institution (figure 4.6). In terms of host type, directors and coordinators of projects hosted by community-based organizations were the most likely also to serve as the director of another student program (46 percent). Directors and coordinators of projects hosted by 2-year institutions were the least likely to serve (29 percent) in the same capacity for another program at their host institution.

Just over one-third of directors simultaneously served as director of a related program at their host organization.

Figure 4.6—Percentage of Talent Search project directors and coordinators who also served as directors or administrators for other student programs at the host institution or organization, by host type: 1999–2000



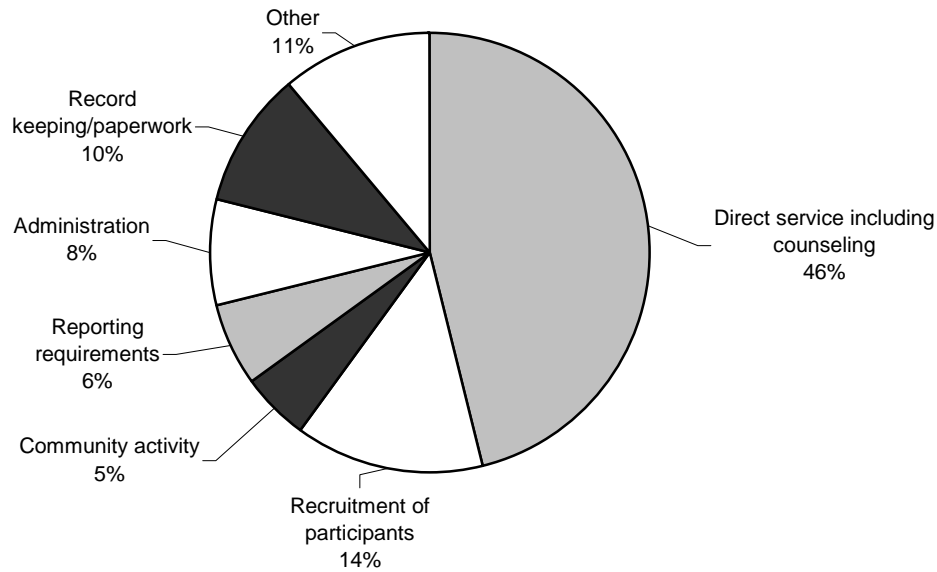
SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

TIME ALLOCATION OF STAFF

We asked project survey respondents for estimates of the total time allocation for all staff as well as for project directors and coordinators. In the question on the project director's time allocation, we asked for a comparison of the time actually spent versus the time project directors would ideally like to spend. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 summarize the information.

Respondents estimated that, on average, staff spend about 46 percent of their time in direct service.

In the allocation of total staff time (figure 4.7), respondents estimated that staff spent about 46 percent of their time in direct service, including counseling, and another 14 percent in participant recruitment. Respondents also reported that staff spent about 16 percent of their time on record-keeping and on paperwork and reporting requirements combined and another 8 percent on administration. Five percent of staff time went to community activity.

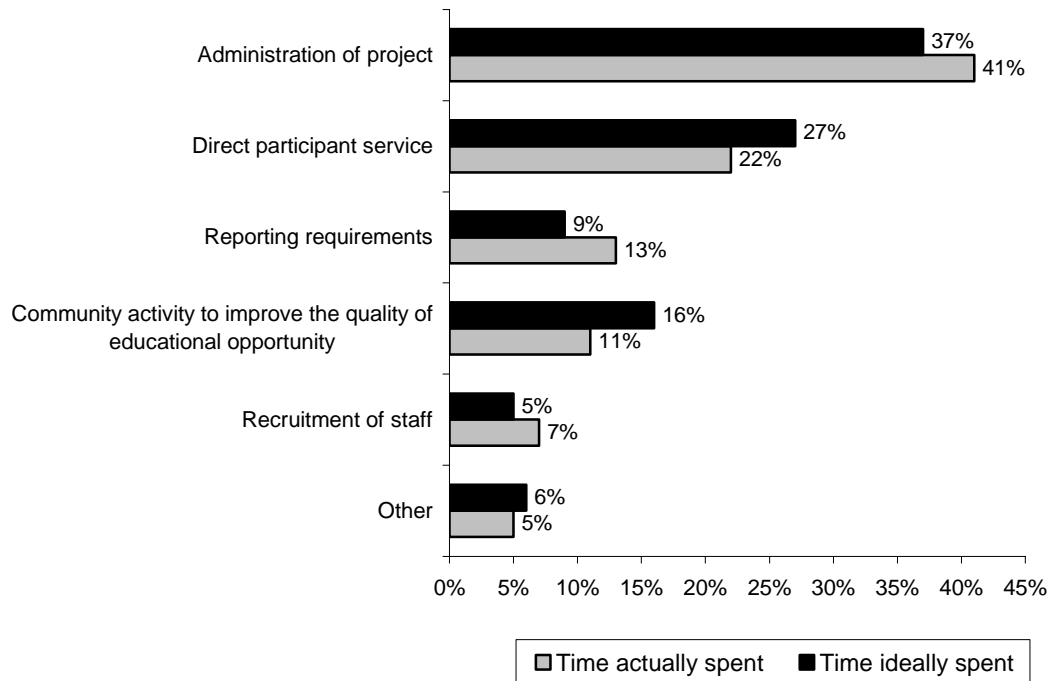
Figure 4.7—Estimated average time allocation of total project staff: 1999–2000


SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Figure 4.8 shows that the way Talent Search project directors spend their time is fairly close to how they would ideally like to spend their time. Project directors reported spending just under one-fourth of their time (22 percent) on participant service and the rest on administration, record-keeping, community work, recruiting staff, and other activities. Ideally, they would like to spend a little less time on project administration and reporting requirements and a little more time both on direct participant services and on community activities that would improve the quality of educational opportunities. On average, project directors reported spending slightly more of their time on project administration and reporting requirements than they would ideally like to spend on those activities.

Project directors would ideally like to spend slightly more time in direct service.

Figure 4.8—Project directors' and coordinators' estimated actual and ideal time allocation among various activities: 1999–2000



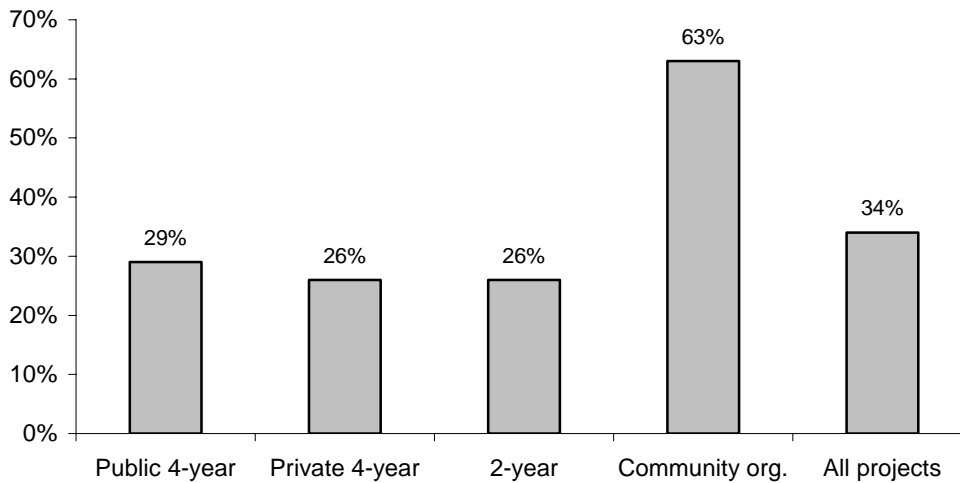
SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

USE OF EXTERNAL REVIEW BOARDS

About one-third of all projects have external boards that provide support to the project.

About one-third of all Talent Search projects (34 percent) worked with an external group that provided support to their project (figure 4.9). A greater percent of projects hosted by community-based organizations (63 percent) worked with an external board than than was the case for projects hosted by educational institutions (26–29 percent). The external groups that support Talent Search projects were composed of a variety of participants. For projects overall, by far the largest group was current or former Talent Search participants. Other members included representatives of the host institution or agency, representatives of the target community, other educators, businesspersons and professionals, representatives of other groups, financial aid or admissions officers, and others (data not shown).

Figure 4.9—Percentage of projects that reported having an external board providing advice and support to the project: 1999–2000



SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

TALENT SEARCH OPERATING BUDGET

To assess the degree to which funds from other sources supplement Talent Search federal funds, the project survey collected information on total project funding from all sources in a given year. We looked at both fiscal contributions and in-kind contributions. Based on the 1998–99 reported allocation, table 4.9 provides the estimated average allocations in 2000 dollars for fiscal contributions and the percent distribution of funds. On average, Talent Search funds accounted for 96 percent of the total fiscal contributions. Foundation and corporate support represented the next greatest amount of funds, about 2 percent of the total, providing an average of about \$17,000 per project.

About 96 percent of Talent Search project budgets came from the federal grant.

Table 4.10—Estimated total costs of Talent Search by source of support: 2000 dollars

Source of funds	Mean	Total	Percent of total
Talent Search funds	\$265,139	\$95,334,329	95.5%
Foundation or corporate support	\$17,272	\$2,676,243	2.7
Other	\$6,998	\$969,679	1.0
State funds	\$2,534	\$399,000	0.4
Local funds	\$1,446	\$218,604	0.2
Private donations	\$1,041	\$158,683	0.2
Other federal funds	\$413	\$60,390	0.1
Sum	\$294,843	\$99,816,928	100.0

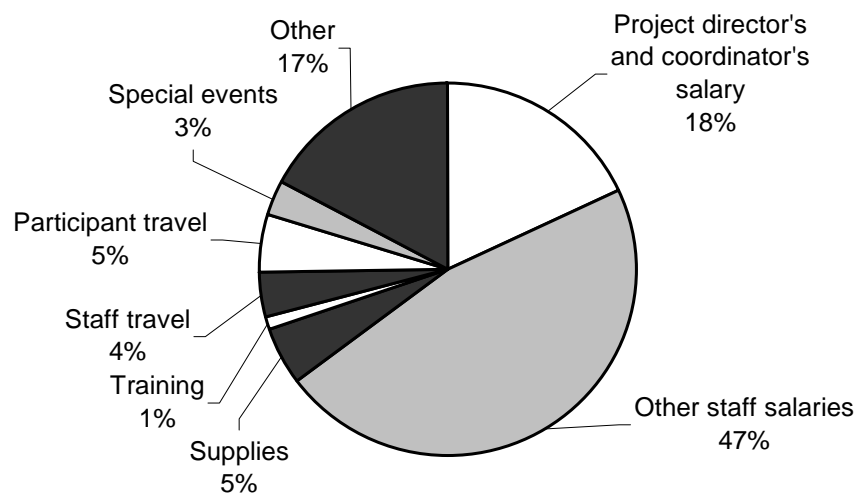
NOTE: Data were reported for 1998–99 and are expressed in the table as 2000 dollars based on consumer price index of ratio of .968.

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

On average, projects allocated two-thirds of their budgets to staff salaries.

We also asked projects to estimate in-kind contributions that they might have received in the form of facilities, personnel time, and other contributions. On average, projects estimated that they received about \$25,600 in-kind contributions for facilities, \$12,800 for personnel, and \$8,700 for other costs (data not shown).

On average, Talent Search projects allocated two-thirds of their budgets to staff salaries—47 percent to staff salaries and 18 percent to project director and coordinator salaries. Projects distributed the remaining one-third among participant and staff travel, supplies, special events, training, and other costs (figure 4.10).

Figure 4.11—Allocation of Talent Search grant money by budget category: 1998–99

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

STAFF RELATIONS, TURNOVER, AND OTHER ISSUES

Using information from the case studies, the remainder of the chapter discusses staff relations, turnover, and other issues. Internal relations are the relationships among and between participants and project staff. External relations are the relationships between the projects and outside entities, such as target schools, host institutions, and other organizations. Both are important for smooth and effective project operation. During our site visits, we explored the nature of internal and external relations through interviews and observations.

STAFF AUTONOMY AND CREATIVITY

Across all the projects, staff involved in service delivery generally operated with a degree of independence and autonomy. In some cases, they were allowed to negotiate with target school officials each year to devise a unique service plan for each grade level, such as the number and subjects of workshops to be offered. Other projects had developed fairly specific curricula for various grade levels, but staff were free to cover the subjects in whatever order they liked and to develop their own materials. Directors encouraged key staff to be creative in delivering services and meeting program objectives; they required staff to track service contacts continuously for end-of-year reporting purposes, but they seldom visited target schools to monitor staff performance.

Staff usually had a degree of autonomy in planning their programs and creativity was encouraged.

ROLE MODELS

The case study projects often followed a policy of seeking staff whose backgrounds were similar to those of the students they would be serving and who had overcome challenges similar to those facing the students. In addition to seeking out staff who had been first-generation college students, projects sometimes considered whether their personal background characteristics would help them to serve as natural role models, to build comfortable relationships between participants and staff. Indeed, some staff were motivated to work in Talent Search as a way to help students like themselves. With similar backgrounds, staff could go beyond saying, "You can make it," to send the more personal message, "If I made it, so can you."

Staff often served as role models for participants.

For example, projects that served substantial numbers of language minority students or students whose parents were not native English speakers typically employed one or more bilingual staff members to expedite communication with students and their parents. The project that served a community of Asian immigrants employed a staff member whose first language was Laotian and who spoke two or three other Southeast Asian languages. Similarly, three projects with substantial shares of Hispanic students employed one or more Spanish-speaking staff members.

STAFF TURNOVER

Among the mature projects we visited for the case studies (we did not include projects that were newly funded in the 1998 cycle), staff turnover was generally not

Staff turnover was not cited as a serious problem by the projects we studied.

viewed a serious problem. Four of the directors had worked at their projects for over 20 years. Several projects had one or two relatively new staff members, but the other staff commonly counted between four and eight years of experience on the job.

Only one of the case study projects appeared to have a relatively high staff turnover rate. At the time of our visit, the director had been with the program for three years, and none of the four core staff members had served for longer than two years. Before the current director's arrival, according to a former long-time staff member, the project went through three directors in about seven years. Of the current core staff, one was leaving at the end of the year to attend graduate school, another was openly looking for a junior college teaching job, one was about to begin maternity leave, and the fourth said that he was unlikely to stay longer than one more year.

Two implications of staff turnover, when it does occur, were clear. First, if students participated in a program for several years, they would likely have to deal with two or three Talent Search advisors. (Target school officials, too, would have to deal with new project staff.) Second, the remaining staff might have to spend more time than they would like in recruiting and training new staff—time that might otherwise be spent on program services. But these implications do not necessarily equate to serious problems or challenges. Services at the one high-turnover project cited above did not by any means appear to be less efficient or of lower quality than at other projects we studied. Although most project directors would probably prefer to have a highly stable core staff, they realized that, in view of the salaries that projects could afford to pay, some degree of turnover was inevitable. It was not uncommon for new hires to be relatively young and to have just completed their education. They often took a Talent Search job as the first in their professional career, with plans of moving on after a few years.

STUDENT–STAFF RELATIONS

Various interviewees—students, alumni, parents, target school staff, and host institution officials—consistently offered favorable comments about the Talent Search staff who worked directly with participants. Staff were described in terms such as caring, dedicated, friendly, helpful, understanding, and nonjudgmental. Participants viewed Talent Search staff as a resource they could rely on, whether for homework assistance, course selection, or many other concerns. A mother whose three children had gone through Talent Search described the program as “a big extended family...the counselors really care about what happens to the kids.”

When alumni reflected on their experiences in Talent Search, they often remembered more about the personal encouragement that Talent Search staff provided than about the details of particular services; they remembered the person more than the program. One alumna, for example, recalled fondly that although she knew nothing about college or financial aid, her Talent Search advisor helped her through all aspects of the college preparation, search, and application process. “If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here now. He was my ticket. He opened the door to a college

Students, alumni, parents, and target school staff consistently made favorable comments about Talent Search staff.

To some alumni, personal encouragement from staff was more memorable than particular services.

education.” In several projects, we heard about students and staff who kept in touch with one another after graduation and well into college—and not just the students who attended the Talent Search project’s host college.

Students consistently felt that Talent Search staff related to them more closely and on a different level than their teachers and other school staff. Their comments indicated that program staff were “more like friends” but also took on some characteristics of a caring parent. Consider the following remarks drawn from a few different projects: “He’s a great guy. He’s really funny. He’s like one of us.” “He speaks our language. He’s *down* with us.” “If you don’t have a father, he’s like your father.” “She talks to you like your mom, and she never forgets your name. She’s the best tutor and teacher you could have.” “He talked to me almost like I was his daughter.”

A certain level of understanding came about because many staff hailed from similar backgrounds as the participants and had overcome similar obstacles to educational success. In addition, as some students noted, Talent Search staff were often considerably closer to their age than were school staff. And, of course, the ability to connect closely with students varied somewhat between staff due to interpersonal skills, longevity, and service schedules—those who had worked in schools longer and saw students most often got to know the students best and were able to develop closer relations.

Students often related well to staff because of their similar backgrounds.

RELATIONS AMONG STAFF

Almost without exception, the staff members we interviewed exhibited respect for one another and got along well. They often shared ideas for workshops or other services. Several project directors had much praise for their staff. The director of a project that relied heavily on target school teachers as part-time Talent Search staff referred to them as “angels.” “She’s my angel in that school.” “They’re my two angels in this school.” She felt that they served as the students’ guardian angels, watching over and helping them during the school day.

RELATIONS WITH TARGET SCHOOLS

Relationships between Talent Search projects and their target schools were generally positive. School staff spoke highly of Talent Search staff. Guidance counselors, for example, appreciated what the program did for participants, giving them far more personal attention than the counselors themselves could have provided. One key to good relations with target schools was reciprocation. One project, for example, regularly provided its target schools with a variety of resources, ranging from computerized and hard-copy educational and instructional materials to use of a fax machine it had installed for its own staff. In return, the schools provided Talent Search staff with other resources, including office space, the use of office machinery, and easy access to student files. Another important element, according to staff from the same project, was that Talent Search staff worked to support the schools’ guidance counseling departments rather than providing services that would show them up or make them appear ineffective. In some target high schools, the Talent

Relations between projects and target schools were generally positive. One key to good relations was reciprocation.

Search staff blended into the schools' guidance departments, essentially becoming an "extra counselor"—one specializing in college preparation.

TALENT SEARCH AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Much of what Talent Search does for students—such as provide information on college admissions requirements and financial aid—could theoretically fall under the purview of school guidance counselors. What did students and others say about assistance provided by counselors? First, across all the projects we studied, accessibility of school-employed counselors was a major issue.

Talent Search was seen as filling a needed gap that high school counselors could not meet with existing resources.

- At one suburban high school we visited, the regular full-time counselors were each responsible for over 500 students, whereas the two Talent Search advisors who worked in the school almost full time each had a caseload of about 150 students.
- At a project based in the heart of a large city, counselors' positions at local schools had been reduced for budget reasons, often to the point where students could not realistically expect to receive any precollege assistance from them. For example, one target high school, with an enrollment of 3,000, had just one college counselor, and he worked there only on a half-time basis.
- A liaison to the program at one target high school said that students might receive some information and assistance from guidance counselors, but with only two counselors for the school's 550 students, "Getting in to see one [takes] an act of God." Moreover, one of them was about to retire and the district did not plan to replace him.³

A second issue related to school-provided counseling services was that counselors were perceived as doing little outreach, instead serving primarily those students who stopped in to see them or just those who seemed to show the most potential for college. At one project, a former staff member said that the types of students served by Talent Search—low-income and first-generation college students, many of them minorities—typically are not pushed by their parents to see their school counselors. As a result, they often "fall through the cracks," and counselors end up serving the most motivated students and those seen as the brightest and with the greatest potential. At another project, parents and Talent Search participants perceived school counselors as making time only for the students with the highest GPAs; average students, they felt, were on their own.

³It is not surprising that target school counselors were very busy, because "a high ratio of students to school counselors in the target schools" is one of five specific criteria that applicants must address in the "need for the project" section of the Talent Search grant application.

A third issue related to school counseling services pertained to comfort and familiarity. One alumnus said that he had four guidance counselors in four years and felt that he never knew them, nor they him. Program participants from one target high school said that they were a lot closer to their Talent Search advisor than to their guidance counselors. They found him easy to relate to; he was younger and “more like a friend” and could “speak their language.” They also perceived their Talent Search advisors as having more credibility; as one student said, with them “it’s more than just talk.”

Finally, some students and program alumni commented on receiving better advice and assistance from Talent Search than from their school counselors.

- Participants at one project said that when it came to information about scholarships, they relied exclusively on their Talent Search advisor, who had developed expertise in that area.
- At another project, an alumna said that counselors were focused on high school issues, not college and the future, and that her Talent Search advisor knew more about college than the counselors. An alumnus recalled that a school counselor had told him that he needed only two years of mathematics—but the two years of mathematics turned out to be the requirement for high school graduation, not for admission to a university.

Occasionally, counselors themselves described some of these same concerns. In a small rural high school where the counselors also worked as teachers, the counselors told us that they were overwhelmed with paperwork—registration, schedules, record-keeping, and so on—and did not have the time to provide students with substantive advising. A counselor from a target high school at another project said that his school was down to 3.5 FTE counselors from six as a result of budget cuts but that school enrollment had not dropped. As a consequence, he and his colleagues could not do as much as they could in past or would have liked to do at the time of the case study. He went on to say that Talent Search staff are able to provide more “follow-through” than counselors and that the school certainly could not provide the type of field trips to colleges that Talent Search provided.

One counselor, though, in trying to assure us that he and his colleagues would continue to play an important role at the school even in the absence of Talent Search, unintentionally highlighted a potentially important difference between the program and school counselors. “If Talent Search went away,” he said, “we [the counseling staff] would still be here. We would still go out to classes and make contact with every senior in the first quarter of that year.” But Talent Search staff operated under the belief that contacting students at the start of 12th grade would be far too late for most of their target program participants.

It was clear, especially from students’ comments, that Talent Search staff had largely—and in some cases entirely—supplanted school counselors as a source of precollege assistance. When we asked high school students at one project about

getting help and information from their counselors, one girl responded sardonically, “We have counselors?” An alumnus of a different Talent Search project said, “I didn’t even know who my high school counselor was.” At a third project, a participant told her mother, “We don’t need a senior counselor, we have our Talent Search advisor.” Finally, the alumnus who received incorrect information on required mathematics credits said of his counselors, “Eventually, I just stopped talking to them.”

CHAPTER 5

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Using information from the project survey, performance reports, and case studies, this chapter takes an in-depth look at Talent Search participants. We describe their characteristics and discuss how they are recruited into the program and how their needs are assessed.

Overview and Selected Highlights

- About 60 percent of Talent Search participants were female. This is similar to the proportion in other TRIO programs.
- Two-thirds of Talent Search participants were members of racial/ethnic minority groups.
- In 2000, almost 70 percent of Talent Search participants were in the traditional age range for high school students—14 to 18 years—and about 30 percent were middle school age. Almost one-fourth of Talent Search participants were in the 12th grade.
- Overall, about 5 percent of Talent Search participants had limited English proficiency.
- About half of all participants each year are new. Thus, recruitment is an important and ongoing activity for Talent Search projects.
- Overall, about 80 percent of individuals targeted apply and about 90 percent of those who apply become participants. Some projects targeted children from immigrant families or minority groups underrepresented in postsecondary education.
- The most common disqualification for participation is enrollment in another pre-college program.
- Staff typically described the target group as students “in the middle” with regard to academic performance. Very low-achieving students were often seen as too difficult to serve with the available resources.
- Key challenging factors facing participants included poverty, school quality, geographic isolation, rising educational achievement standards, and low self-esteem.
- It seemed that many participants at case study sites had some college aspirations prior to applying for Talent Search. Staff encourage students to aim high but also to set realistic, achievable goals. A key strategy for solidifying or raising educational aspirations was to focus on occupations and careers.
- Projects typically do individual needs assessments and develop individual service plans.

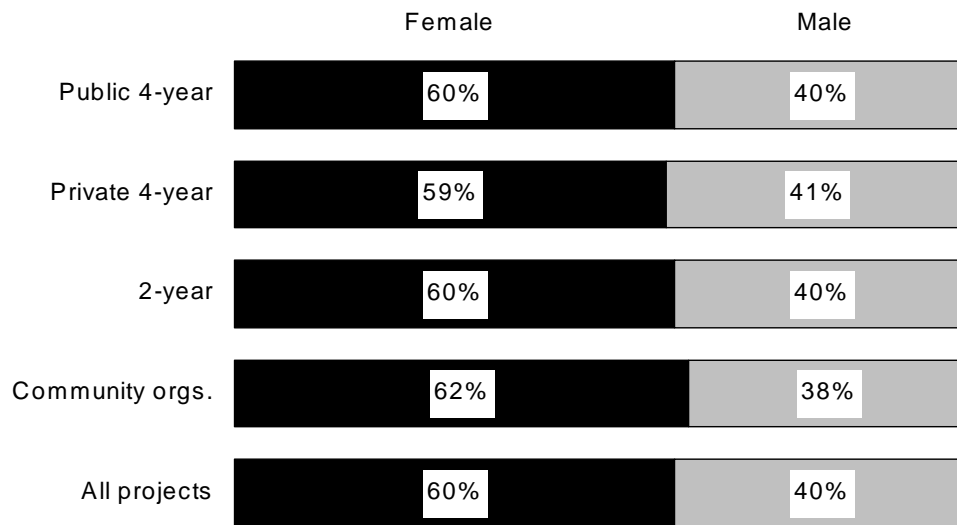
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY

Talent Search performance reports for 1998–99 indicated that about 60 percent of participants were female, a proportion very consistent across all types of host institutions (figure 5.1). Other studies of TRIO programs (Upward Bound and Student Support Services) in the 1990s likewise found that more females than males participate in the programs (Moore et al. 1997; Cahalan and Muraskin 1994).

About 60 percent of participants were female, similar to the proportion in other TRIO programs.

Figure 5.1—Distribution of Talent Search participants by gender: 1998–99



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

Two-thirds of Talent Search participants were members of ethnic minority groups (table 5.1). Projects reported large differences in the distribution of participants' race and ethnicity by type of host organization. Almost 40 percent of participants in Talent Search projects hosted by community-based organizations were Hispanic, compared with 12 percent of participants in projects hosted by 2-year colleges and 22 percent of participants in all projects. A larger proportion of participants hosted at private 4-year institutions were black (45 percent) than was the case for all projects (36 percent). This finding may be related to the relatively large number of private Historically Black Colleges and Universities operating Talent Search projects (see chapter 3).

Two-thirds of Talent Search participants were members of racial or ethnic minority groups.

Table 5.1—Participant race/ethnicity: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
American Indian or Alaska Native	4%	4%	1%	6%	4%
Asian	4	4	2	3	5
Black or African American	36	39	45	32	30
Hispanic or Latino	22	20	21	12	39
White	32	32	30	44	19
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	1	0	2	1
More than one race reported	1	1	1	1	1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

PARTICIPANT AGE

As discussed in chapter 2, Congress twice amended the Talent Search authorizing legislation to lower the minimum age for Talent Search participation—from 14 years of age to the current 11 years of age. At the other end of the age spectrum, the Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program, created in 1972, about six years after Talent Search’s inception, focuses on serving adults. The legislation states, however, that if no EOC project is operating in an area, Talent Search may still serve individuals over age 25. At the end of the 1990s, 69 percent of Talent Search participants were in the high school age group of 14 to 18 years, one-quarter were in the middle school age group of 11 to 13 years, and 6 percent in older age range (table 5.2). On average, projects hosted by community-based organizations served a lower percentage of middle school participants and a slightly higher percentage of people over age 18 than did projects hosted by educational institutions. Overall, 1 percent of Talent Search participants were over 27 years of age.

In 2000, about 70 percent of Talent Search participants were in the traditional age range for high school students—14 to 18 years.

Table 5.2—Participant age, by type of host institution: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
11-13 years old	25%	24%	29%	29%	18%
14-18 years old	69	70	69	67	73
19-27 years old	5	5	2	3	7
28 years and older	1	1	0	1	1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

Just less than one-fourth of Talent Search participants were in the 12th grade.

PARTICIPANT GRADE LEVEL

Consistent with Talent Search's age distribution, almost two-thirds of Talent Search participants were enrolled in grades nine through 12, with just under one-fourth in the 12th grade (table 5.3). Just below one-third were enrolled in middle school. Two percent were high school dropouts, and an additional 2 percent were high school or GED graduates. Postsecondary dropouts accounted for 1 percent of participants. Projects hosted by community-based organizations were less likely to serve middle school students and more likely to serve 12th-graders than were projects hosted by postsecondary institutions.

Table 5.3—Participant grade level, by type of host institution: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
6th–8th grades	30%	30%	34%	35%	24%
9th–11th grades	43	46	45	45	37
12th grade	22	20	17	16	33
Secondary school dropout	2	2	1	2	2
High school (GED) graduate	2	2	2	2	3
Postsecondary dropout	1	1	0	0	2

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

SERVING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

As discussed in chapter 2, Talent Search projects have been strongly encouraged to establish middle school components. There has been an increasing emphasis on early recruitment into the program and retaining students when they progress to high school and through graduation. Table 5.3 showed that nationwide, middle school students account for about 30 percent of all Talent Search participants. Table 5.4 provides more detail; it shows that projects serve varying percentages of middle school students. For example, in 1998-99, at 161 projects (out of 349 in the analysis) middle school students accounted for less than 30 percent of participants, including 27 projects where middle school students accounted for less than 10 percent of participants. Table 5.4 also supports a statement made earlier—that projects typically serve far more high school students than middle school students. At only 19 projects did high school students account for less than 30 percent of participants.

Table 5.4—Number of Talent Search projects serving various percentages of middle school and high school participants: 1998–99

	All projects (n=349)	Host institution			Community org. (n=65)
		Public 4-year (n=118)	Private 4-year (n=46)	2-year (n=120)	
Percentage of participants in middle school (grades 6-8)					
None	3	0	0	1	2
Less than 10 percent	27	6	0	9	12
Less than 20 percent	80	29	8	16	27
Less than 30 percent	161	55	16	49	41
Percentage of participants in high school (grades 9-12)					
None	1	0	1	0	0
Less than 10 percent	7	1	1	4	1
Less than 20 percent	10	2	2	5	1
Less than 30 percent	19	5	4	7	3

SOURCE: Analysis of Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99.

NOTE: Grade 9-12 does not include secondary school dropouts. Categories are not mutually exclusive—total number of projects for “fewer than 30 percent” includes projects from the other three categories.

OTHER GROUPS SERVED

The project survey also asked for the number of participants who were veterans, physically or mentally disabled, and former welfare recipients or participants in a welfare to work program. However, there were few participants in these categories—about 1 percent or less nationwide. In contrast, about 60 percent of 1998–99 participants in the Education Opportunity Centers program were former welfare recipients (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs, 2001).

Very few participants (1 percent or less) were members of special groups such as veterans, mentally or physically disabled, or former welfare recipients.

PARTICIPANTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

APR data for 1998–99 showed that overall about 5 percent of Talent Search participants had limited English proficiency (data not shown).¹ The proportion varied from 3 percent in projects hosted by community-based organizations, to 6 percent in projects hosted by private 4-year institutions. About 5 percent of participants in projects hosted by public 4-year institutions and 2-year colleges had limited English proficiency.

About 5 percent of participants had limited English proficiency.

¹The performance report instructions define a person with limited English proficiency as an individual whose native language is not English and who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding English to prevent that individual from learning successfully in classrooms in which English is the language of instruction.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY STATUS

As discussed earlier, Talent Search eligibility requirements differ somewhat from those of the other TRIO programs. As with the other TRIO programs, two-thirds of Talent Search participants must come from low-income households and come from families in which neither parent has a bachelor's degree (first-generation college students). However, unlike the other TRIO programs, the other one-third of Talent Search participants need not meet either of these requirements. For the other TRIO programs, the other one-third must come from low-income households, be first-generation college students, or be disabled.² As seen in table 5.5, Talent Search projects almost meet the more stringent requirements applicable to programs such as Upward Bound and Student Support Services. Almost three-fourths of participants were reported to be both from low-income households and potential first-generation college students, while 7 percent were low-income only and 14 percent were first-generation only. Five percent did not fall into either category.

Table 5.5—Participant distribution by eligibility status and type of host institution: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Low-income and potential first-generation college student	74%	75%	75%	73%	73%
Low-income student only	7	7	8	5	8
Potential first-generation college student only	14	13	13	17	13
Other (none of the above)	5	5	5	5	6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

PARTICIPANT TARGETING AND RECRUITING

Participant targeting and recruitment is a significant activity that Talent Search projects must undertake every year. A new Talent Search project must establish relationships with target schools and then maintain and develop those relationships over the life of the project. After the establishment of target school relationships, Talent Search projects must recruit new participants on an annual basis. To become

²In addition, for the Student Support Services program one-third of the disabled students must come from low-income households or be a potential first-generation college student.

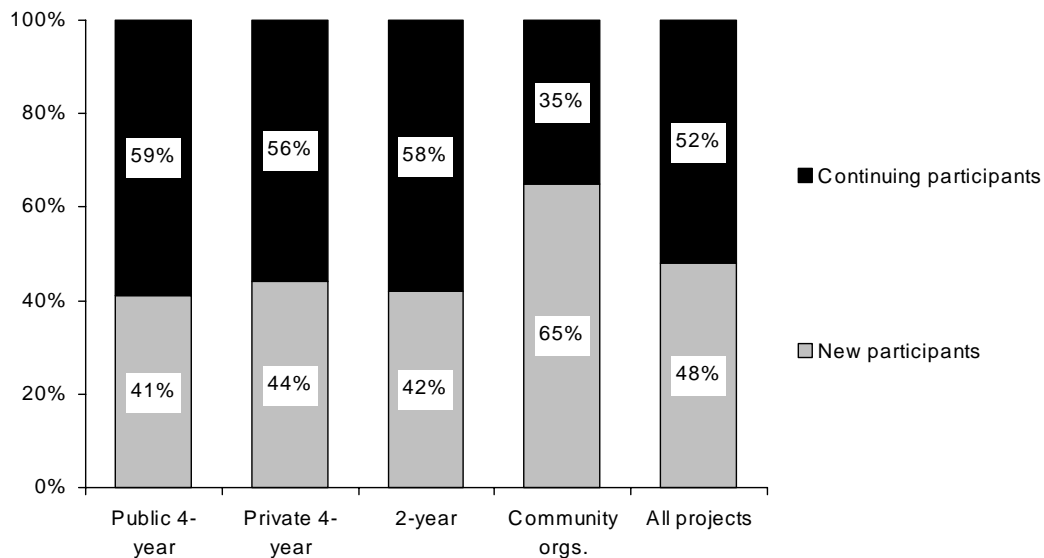
Almost three-fourths of participants were both low-income individuals and potential first-generation college students.

Participant recruitment is an important, ongoing activity. About half of all participants each year are new.

a participant in the voluntary program, students must submit an application that requires parental or guardian consent. The application also includes disclosure of financial and educational information to determine eligibility.

The performance report data reveal that in 1998–99, just under half of all Talent Search participants (48 percent) were classified as new participants—that is, it was their first year in the program (figure 5.2). Projects hosted at community-based organizations reported the largest percent of new participants (65 percent). This finding is consistent with the fact that in projects hosted by community-based organizations, high school students (especially 12th-graders) account for a higher proportion of participants than in projects hosted by postsecondary institutions.

Figure 5.2—Distribution of Talent Search participants between new and continuing participants: 1998-99



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

PARTICIPANT TARGETING, APPLICATION, AND PARTICIPATION

To understand the Talent Search targeting and recruitment process, the project survey asked questions about the number of individuals in different grade levels targeted for, applying for, and enrolling in the program. Overall, about 80 percent of the targeted number submitted applications and about 90 percent of those became participants (table 5.6). While annually Talent Search projects target more students than they serve, the distributions of the number targeted, applying, and participating are fairly similar across the grade groupings. At the middle school level, however, a slightly lower percentage of applicants (85 percent) became Talent Search

Projects reported that overall about 80 percent of those targeted apply and about 90 percent of those who apply become participants.

participants, and at the 12th-grade level, the program served almost all applicants (98 percent).

Table 5.6—Percent of individuals targeted who apply to Talent Search, and percent of applicants who become participants, by grade level: 1998–99

Grade level	Percent of the number targeted who apply	Percent of applicants who become participants
6th, 7th, and 8th grades	82%	85%
9th, 10th and 11th grade	83	90
12th grade	79	98
Secondary dropouts	86	92
All other	77	98
Total	81	91

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

TYPES OF STUDENTS TARGETED AND DISQUALIFIED

Do Talent Search projects focus on targeting students with specific characteristics other than the formal eligibility criteria? Conversely, do projects report characteristics that would disqualify a student from program participation? Tables 5.7 and 5.8 summarize answers to these questions.

Projects place most emphasis on recruiting middle achievers and low achievers with college ability.

The groups most frequently rated as receiving little or no emphasis in targeting were persons in drug rehabilitation and similar programs, veterans, females, and those with specific subject area interest or strength such as math/science (table 5.7). The groups most frequently rated as receiving much or very much emphasis were middle achievers, low achievers with college ability, all students in specific schools or programs, and racial and ethnic minorities (table 5.8).

Table 5.7—Percent of Talent Search projects that emphasize targeting persons with specified characteristics

Characteristic	None or very little emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Much or very much emphasis	Not applicable
Persons in specific service programs such as drug rehabilitation	73%	5%	5%	16%
Veterans	67	8	4	22
Females	59	19	18	4
Specific subject-area interest/strength (e.g., math/science)	58	22	16	4
Non-English speaking or English as a second language	55	19	16	11
Persons with disabilities	52	29	15	4
Males	46	20	30	5
Low achievers	40	38	19	3
Urban	36	12	34	19
Rural	35	11	37	18
High achievers or gifted and talented	31	34	31	4
All students in specific schools or programs	30	18	47	3
At risk due to fragile family situation	30	32	34	6
Racial and ethnic minorities	29	25	40	4
Students who dropped out of school	29	33	34	3
Low achievers with college ability	21	26	50	3
Middle achievers	13	35	50	2

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Consistent with Talent Search regulations that prohibit duplication of services, projects most frequently indicated “enrollment in another precollege program” as a reason for disqualifying potential participants (table 5.8). The least frequently checked factors for disqualification were “pregnancy or parenthood” and “high achievement or ability test scores” (1 percent each). Just under one-fourth of projects indicated that factors such as low grades, a record of disciplinary actions, emotional problems, or a history of drug or alcohol abuse would disqualify someone from participating.

Enrollment in another precollege program is the most common factor that would disqualify individuals from participating in Talent Search.

Table 5.8—Percentage of Talent Search projects that disqualify individuals from participating in the program for various reasons

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Enrollment in other precollege program	42%	45%	51%	46%	23%
Gang activity	24	24	33	25	18
No specific interest in college	22	26	21	26	10
Family income too high	23	26	26	25	13
Record of disciplinary actions	21	23	23	21	18
History of behavioral or emotional problems	21	25	21	23	12
History of alcohol or drug abuse	21	23	23	21	15
Grade point average below a specified minimum	21	22	18	25	15
Not first generation in family to attend college	19	19	21	25	8
Low achievement or ability test scores	13	12	15	16	10
English language proficiency below a specified minimum	4	4	8	3	3
Grade point average above a specified maximum	2	2	0	3	2
Pregnancy or parenthood	1	0	0	1	2
High achievement or ability test scores	1	1	0	1	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

PARTICIPANT TARGETING IN THE CASE STUDY SITES

While all the projects we visited were strongly dedicated to serving disadvantaged students (defined as individuals from low-income households and potential first-generation college students), some projects also focused on serving students with additional other background characteristics such as ethnic background.

Some projects targeted children from immigrant families or minority groups underrepresented in postsecondary education.

- One case study project made a special effort to recruit children from a growing local population of Southeast Asian immigrant families. Although such students were small numeric minorities in their schools, they represented about half the participants in the Talent Search project. Project staff felt that the students' and their families' cultural backgrounds put the students at a higher risk of failure in school compared with other racial and ethnic groups. Staff observed among the immigrant population a relatively high rate of marriage and pregnancy among girls still in high school; a strongly patriarchal family structure; a deeply ingrained hesitancy to speak up in settings such as classrooms; and limited English proficiency—all factors that decreased the chance that students from the subgroup would complete high school and pursue postsecondary education.

- Another project targeted students who claimed American Indian heritage.³ Project staff reached the target population by recruiting almost exclusively from within the target schools' Indian education programs. Aware, however, of program guidelines that prohibit discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, the project did not turn down applicants from other racial and ethnic groups. Almost 20 percent of participants, in fact, were non-Indians, typically friends of the Indian students or their classmates in Indian studies courses.
- Two of the case study projects were operated by historically black colleges. Both projects worked almost exclusively with African Americans, reflecting the host institutions' missions. Some black students' affinity for the institutions may have helped make their Talent Search programs more appealing. Sources at one of the projects said that many students aspired to attend the host institution and saw Talent Search as a potential pipeline into the college.
- One city-based project took on several schools in a suburban district in order to serve a growing population of Hispanic students, many of them the children of former migrant farmworkers who had settled in the area. The students constituted a disadvantaged minority group in a mainly white and relatively affluent area.

Another background factor of interest to projects was academic performance. Staff typically described their general target group as students “in the middle,” those with academic potential who might not be able to realize their potential without the assistance and encouragement provided by Talent Search. Staff in these projects usually viewed very high-achieving students as likely to gain admission to college without the assistance of Talent Search and already potentially benefiting from other special services or attention in their schools. At several projects, we met or learned about participants who ranked near the top of their high school class, took Advanced Placement courses, and so on. For such students, Talent Search projects hoped to influence outcomes beyond just gaining admission to college—for example, directing students to more prestigious colleges than they might have otherwise considered. One project staff member said that his goals in serving a particular straight-A student included helping her to relax, have fun, and deal better with family pressure to succeed.

On the other hand, staff often saw very low-achieving students as too difficult to serve within the limits of project resources; staff felt that they could not provide the intensive assistance that would be necessary to get such students to a point where college was a reasonable possibility. At least three of the projects we studied, in fact, imposed minimum GPA standards ranging from 2.0 to 2.5 for both applicants and

Staff typically described the target group as students “in the middle” with regard to academic performance.

Very low-achieving students were often seen as too difficult to serve with the available resources.

³This category included not only “full-blooded” Indians but also students who were officially “enrolled” as members of a tribe (those with a minimum of 25 percent Indian blood) or those who were tribally “affiliated” (those with less than 25 percent Indian blood).

participants. The rationale behind the GPA policy was that students needed to perform at a level that would enable them to meet the minimum admission requirements for college and remain in good academic standing once they enrolled. In addition, the director of a project that had asked target school counselors to refrain from referring students with GPAs under 2.0 said, “The really at-risk students need a five-day-a-week program, which we can’t provide.” Other projects, though, did not use hard-and-fast rules concerning students’ grades; they determined participation on a case-by-case basis, considering whether low-achieving applicants had the ability and dedication to improve their academic performance to a sufficient level. Of course, as described in the chapter 8, some projects provided academic support to make improvement possible.

Most projects did not have reservations about accepting middle school students who did not yet have some aspirations for pursuing a postsecondary education. But some projects hesitated to take on high school seniors who, even if they had exhibited a strong interest in going to college, had not already completed some of the steps necessary to get there, such as enrolling in college preparatory courses.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT METHODS

Recommendations of school guidance staff or teachers, class presentations, referrals from current participants, and informal networking were the most frequent means of recruitment.

To recruit their targeted participants, Talent Search projects turned to a variety of recruitment methods (table 5.9). The most frequently used methods included recommendations by a guidance counselor or other school staff (97 percent), presentations in school classrooms (96 percent), recommendations by teachers (96 percent), referrals by current participants (94 percent), and word of mouth or informal networks (94 percent). Incentives, such as cash, movie tickets, or donated prizes, were the choice of fewer projects (28 percent) than any other method of recruitment. Projects’ preferred recruitment methods did not differ notably by host type, except that projects hosted by private 4-year institutions reported the use of incentives more frequently than average.

The majority of Talent Search projects (56 percent) described their recruitment strategy as “reaching as many participants as possible and then screening for those that meet eligibility requirements” (table 5.10). The smallest share (13 percent) of projects described their recruitment strategy as “recruit[ing] a number of eligible participants up to the number of program openings.”

Table 5.9—Percent of Talent Search projects using selected recruitment methods: 1999–2000

Recruitment method	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Guidance counselor or other school staff recommendation	97%	96%	95%	98%	98%
Classroom presentations in schools	96	94	95	98	97
Teacher recommendation	96	96	95	98	95
Current participants	94	93	97	94	92
Word of mouth, informal network	94	93	90	95	95
Parent recommendation	86	85	90	88	85
Presentations and programs at community-based organizations	79	77	72	79	87
Field trips and campus visits	74	68	82	75	78
Assembly presentations in schools	73	77	69	68	78
Newspaper stories or advertisements	59	60	59	63	48
Radio announcements, programs, or advertisements	47	48	56	47	40
Incentives such as cash, movie tickets, or donated prizes	28	24	41	27	28

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Table 5.10—Talent Search recruitment strategy with regard to eligibility: 1999–2000

Strategy	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Reach as many potential participants as possible, then screen for those who are eligible	56%	96%	63%	56%	54%
Target recruiting efforts at only those most likely to meet project's eligibility requirements	28	1	26	22	32
Recruit a number of eligible participants up to the number of program openings	13	1	0	21	8
Other	3	3	3	1	5

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

While most projects responding to the survey reported the use of several recruitment methods, the case studies revealed that projects typically emphasized one or two primary methods of recruitment. Some relied primarily on direct appeals to selected students, and others worked primarily through school staff referrals. Others used a combination of the two methods. For example, by using direct appeal, staff members made short presentations in classrooms and distributed brochures and applications to students who expressed an initial interest in Talent Search. Other

Some projects placed emphasis on direct appeals to students; others recruited through school staff referrals.

projects relied primarily or exclusively on referrals from school counselors, teachers, or both. Project staff typically met with key school staff at the beginning of the school year to remind them of the program's objectives, indicate the types of students they were looking for, and perhaps provide a rough estimate of the number of available openings. Staff would then wait for the submission of names or applications. Recruitment duties typically fell to the same staff member(s) who provided services at given target schools; only one project had an in-house recruitment specialist who did not regularly work with participants.

Most projects tended to fill their openings for new students at the start of the school year, adding few participants over the course of the year. One project was 100 students short of its approved participant level at the time of our visit in mid-spring, but the director was confident that the project would reach its target by the end of the program year. Mindful of the requirement for a least two-thirds of project participants to be both low-income individuals and potential first-generation college students, project staff took care not to admit students who did not meet both criteria until they were certain that they would meet their two-thirds target number.

Talent Search project staff did not always have access to students' family income information prior to students' submitting an application.

In some cases, even though project staff knew roughly how many of a school's students were eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch (and thus stood a fair chance of meeting the Talent Search program's dual eligibility criteria), they had no way of knowing before the submission of student applications which particular students were eligible for program participation. Staff in two projects told us that, for confidentiality reasons, districts would not release the names of students qualified for the school lunch program. In the past, school officials used to permit Talent Search staff from one of the case study projects to look at the lists, although the staff could not keep or copy the lists. Under recently tightened rules in the school, however, Talent Search staff can no longer review the lists. However, the school staff members were able to use the lists to consider which students to refer to the program.

APPLICATION AND PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Talent Search projects require and consider several factors when formally admitting participants. Eighty-nine percent of all Talent Search projects require a signed agreement from the applicant, and 85 percent require a signed agreement from the applicant's parent or guardian before admitting participants to the program (table 5.11). Although only 5 percent of projects require the recommendation or referral of another adult or agency for admission, 82 percent of Talent Search projects consider recommendations and referrals when admitting participants to the program.

Table 5.11—Percent of Talent Search projects that require or consider specified items when formally admitting participants: 1999–2000

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Required					
Signed agreement by applicant	89%	89%	92%	91%	85%
Signed agreement from parent or guardian	85	86	90	84	79
Income level	55	56	63	47	63
Other	50	46	67	42	67
Recommendation of high school teacher or counselor	20	25	26	16	15
Minimum grade point average	14	12	23	16	8
Recommendation or referral of other adult or agency	5	5	10	4	3
Considered					
Recommendation or referral of other adult or agency	82%	84%	77%	87%	76%
Recommendation of high school teacher or counselor	73	71	67	79	69
Minimum grade point average	47	49	44	48	43
Other	41	38	33	50	33
Income level	40	41	32	49	29
Signed agreement from parent or guardian	11	11	8	14	11
Signed agreement by applicant	8	8	5	7	10

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Once they admitted applicants, projects might identify minimum requirements to be considered for ongoing program participation. The requirement identified most frequently by all Talent Search projects and by each host type is “having a specified number of service contacts.” For example, a project might require that a participant attend at least one or two workshops per year. Seventy percent of all projects reported the service contact item as a minimum requirement for participation (table 5.12). The item listed least frequently was a minimum requirement for program participation is “remaining in the Talent Search program for a specific length of time” (26 percent of all projects).

Table 5.12—Percent of Talent Search projects that reported various requirements as a minimum for ongoing participation

Requirement for being considered a participant	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Having a specified number of service contacts	70%	72%	64%	69%	72%
Attendance at specific events or activities	33	35	35	33	29
Remaining in Talent Search for a specific length of time	26	25	22	28	28
Other	8	7	0	9	12

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR TARGETED STUDENTS

Key challenging factors facing participants included poverty, poor school quality, geographic isolation, and low self-esteem.

While family income and education define Talent Search's eligibility requirements and program orientation, the circumstances of students and their schools varied across and within projects. Staff in case study sites mentioned several factors as specifically challenging for projects to address and for students to overcome.

- **Poverty.** Schools and families differed in degree of poverty. Some Talent Search students came from very poor families and lived in areas of widespread rural or urban poverty. Under such circumstances, concerns about short-term basic needs (food and shelter) could take precedence over concerns related to college preparation. In some cases, students in poor target communities were exposed to drugs and violence.
- **School quality and practices.** Some of the most frequently mentioned background or contextual factors pertained to the students' schools. Staff described some schools as lacking the funds necessary to provide students with a well-rounded, high-quality education that would prepare them properly for postsecondary studies. A couple of projects worked with schools that either had been taken over by the state because of continuing poor performance or were at serious risk for state takeover in the near future. A source at one project said that the presence in target schools of so many students who were alienated and disengaged from the educational process detracted from the ability of serious students, such as those in Talent Search, to maintain focus on their own studies.
- **Poor academic achievement.** Some students who joined Talent Search were performing below the level they were capable of and

were not earning the grades that they would need for college admission. At some schools, poorly performing students came from low-income families, were members of racial/ethnic minority groups, and were sometimes not considered “college material.” As a result, they were directed toward vocational classes or the basic high school curriculum; they were not encouraged to take college preparatory courses.

- **Rising educational requirements.** Some of the case study projects were located in states that had adopted high-stakes testing and required students to pass the tests as a condition of advancing to the next grade or graduating from high school. Some Talent Search staff expressed concern that some Talent Search students might have trouble with the examinations. At one project, the local state university was beginning to toughen its open admission policy, potentially making it more difficult for some students to gain admission.
- **Immigrants, language, and cultural traditions.** A few projects served several students from recent immigrant families, particularly Asians and Hispanics. Limited English proficiency was sometimes an issue for these students and their parents, but cultural values and traditions were also an issue. Some students had to deal with parents whose ideas about what their children should do after high school did not include enrollment in college.
- Culture was also an issue with one nonimmigrant minority group—American Indians. The director of a project that served American Indians described a kind of cultural ambivalence toward education that stems from a concern over youth losing touch with their cultural heritage—“the more education you have, the less Indian you become.” In addition, the director described many American Indian parents as more permissive than those from other backgrounds, allowing their children to explore different paths in life and not actively directing them toward a college education.
- **Geographic isolation and limited postsecondary options.** In projects that served large rural areas, Talent Search staff often mentioned that students were isolated and had little direct exposure to things that urban dwellers probably took for granted, including a diverse economy that supported people employed in a wide variety of occupations; cultural institutions, such as museums and theaters; and college campuses. Students living in these circumstances reportedly had a relatively narrow frame of reference about what was possible for them to accomplish in life.
- **Lack of role models.** Beyond an absence of college-educated parents or other college-educated family members, some students

had few local role models to inspire them toward educational achievements. They rarely saw others like themselves who had gone to college, earned a degree, and taken up a profession for which postsecondary education was a requirement.

- **Low self-esteem or self-confidence.** Some students reportedly did not see themselves as capable of academic achievement and doing what was necessary to gain admission to college.
- **Minority status and racial prejudice.** Staff at some case study projects noted that when students belonging to racial and ethnic minorities looked ahead to college, they sometimes saw campuses as dominated by whites and thus worried that they would not fit in. The occasional derogatory or stereotyping comments would further compound their discomfort. A former staff member at one project said that overt racism is less common now than in the 1960s but nonetheless still exists.

PARTICIPANTS' EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

Pursuing a postsecondary education can be seen as a potentially lengthy process that starts long before enrollment. Early on, students need to develop an interest in going on to college and to see college as a potentially useful, interesting, and fulfilling experience. They need to form a desire and intention to attend college and to make higher education a personal goal. They need to know what it takes to get to college, such as admissions requirements. And they need to take actions that will get them where they want to go, such as performing well in high school and completing college applications. Helping students through this process is the role of Talent Search.

All the case study projects dealt with students at various points in the process of working toward college admission. We developed the impression that many students had some aspirations to go to college even before joining Talent Search.⁴ The strength of those aspirations varied, of course; some new participants were firmly intent on pursuing a college degree, and others were less seriously committed to that goal. Talent Search staff, however, generally did not face the potentially difficult challenge of persuading students that they *should* go to college; rather, they took on the task of convincing or reassuring students that they *could* go to college. (Indeed, helping students to achieve their pre-existing college aspirations has always been a focus of Talent Search.) The students in question were motivated and typically joined the program so that they could have access to information on what college was like and receive advice on how to get there—assistance that would help them achieve their preexisting goals.

⁴Our impression is consistent with the national survey findings from NELS:88-94 and other recent surveys indicating that most middle school students state that they hope to obtain a college degree.

At case study sites, staff often tried to help participants achieve their pre-existing college aspirations.

Students' educational aspirations, before and after joining Talent Search, also varied in terms of the types of postsecondary institutions they wanted to attend and the academic degree they ultimately wanted to pursue. Some students interviewed during the case studies, for example, said that they had initially assumed they would attend only a community college after high school. They figured that a 4-year college would be too expensive or too academically difficult. In such cases, Talent Search staff aimed to broaden students' horizons and raise their aspirations for postsecondary education. This does not mean that projects steered participants away from 2-year colleges. (Indeed, staff in some projects said that, for some participants, a community college was probably the best place to begin their postsecondary education.) Rather, they encouraged students to aspire to a 4-year degree and, if they first attended a 2-year college, to set a goal of later transferring to a 4-year institution. Finally, project staff occasionally had to deal with students whose educational aspirations were unrealistically high—for example, a high school junior who wanted to attend a fairly selective university but had not taken or done well enough in the right classes to meet the entrance requirements. In these cases, Talent Search staff worked with students to help them set realistic, achievable goals.

Talent Search projects encourage students to aim high but also to set realistic, achievable goals.

At all the projects we studied, a key strategy for solidifying or raising students' educational aspirations was to focus on occupations and careers. By encouraging students to express interest in a profession, project staff could tell participants what types of college degrees would be necessary or useful for pursuing that line of work. When students expressed interest in a job that does not require a college degree, staff would try to point them toward another job that does require a college degree. For example, if a student expressed a goal of becoming a professional baseball player, he or she would be encouraged to consider a back-up career in case baseball did not work out; the student and the counselor could then discuss the educational requirements of the second-choice job.

A key strategy for solidifying or raising educational aspirations was to focus on occupations and careers.

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND SERVICE PLANS

Consistent with the fact that Talent Search now emphasizes serving students over several years from middle school to high school graduation, project grant applications must describe the plan to assess each participant's needs for services provided by the project. The case study projects used a variety of methods, and went to varying extents, to determine the needs of Talent Search applicants and participants. In an apparently very common practice, individual students described their own needs by using checklists. Table 5.13 presents two examples of self-assessments that reflect the wide variety of projects' self-assessment items. Some projects did relatively little beside review these checklists. At one project we visited, for example, staff also reviewed students' school transcripts. Staff there and at one other project explained that they could not afford to provide individualized services; thus, detailed needs assessments would have been a wasted effort. They had developed fairly specific curricula for different grade levels, basing their service plans on an understanding of what students generally need at different ages.

Projects do individual needs assessments and develop individual service plans.

At some projects that did attempt to provide some individualized services, such as tutoring, the needs assessment process tended to be more extensive. One project that emphasized academic assistance described interviewing referred students, talking with their teachers and counselors, and looking at tests or portfolios for possible patterns revealing particular weaknesses. Thereafter, students filled out a form annually to reflect on their general level of accomplishment during the past year, to identify general areas of academic need for the coming year, and to establish individual education goals. Another project administered a standardized achievement test to new participants to assess their academic strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, one project relied on student self-assessment forms and discussions with program liaisons at the target schools for gauging individual students' needs for Talent Search services in general. But when it came to deciding on a service plan for particular schools each year, staff gave substantial weight to the judgments and requests of their school liaisons. For example, the liaison at one school might say that the eighth-graders there needed to work primarily on self-esteem, whereas a different school's liaison might say that the eighth-graders there needed to work mostly on study skills. Thus, needs assessment was more individualized than at the projects that implemented fairly standardized curricula across target schools but less person-specific than at the projects that provided more one-on-one services.

Table 5.13—Examples of the forms that two Talent Search projects used to assess students' needs	
<p>Example 1: Following is a sample of the 35 items that appeared on one project's separate needs assessment form.</p>	<p>Example 2: The items below constituted one section of a different project's basic application form.</p>
<p>Middle School Assessment Questions</p> <p>For each statement, circle A for agree, B for disagree, or C for don't know.</p> <p>Values</p> <p>A B C - Staying in school is important to me.</p> <p>A B C - I know what values are, such as honesty, integrity, loyalty, love.</p> <p>A B C - I know how to use my values to make choices.</p> <p>Goal Setting</p> <p>A B C - I know how to set goals.</p> <p>A B C - I have already set many goals for myself.</p> <p>A B C - One of my goals is to go to college.</p> <p>Study Skills</p> <p>A B C - My teachers say I am doing well in all of my classes.</p> <p>A B C - I can take a good set of notes.</p> <p>A B C - When I read, I can understand and remember what I read.</p> <p>A B C - I write down my assignments daily.</p> <p>A B C - I know how to prepare for tests.</p> <p>A B C - I ask questions when I don't understand something.</p> <p>A B C - I know how to create a good study environment.</p> <p>A B C - There are often times I need help with my school work.</p> <p>Career Awareness</p> <p>A B C - I know what I want to be when I grow up.</p> <p>A B C - I would like to learn more about different careers.</p> <p>A B C - I am unsure how to pick a career that I would like.</p> <p>College Knowledge</p> <p>A B C - I think college sounds fun, but I don't know much about it.</p> <p>A B C - I understand the purpose of financial aid.</p> <p>A B C - I know what words like tuition, bachelor's degree, etc., mean.</p>	<p>Academic and Career Needs</p> <p>Please check which of the following services you would like to receive from Talent Search:</p> <p>Academic Needs—assistance with:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Study Skills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Computer Skills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Test Taking Skills (SAT, PSAT)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Time Management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Reading</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Math</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Writing</p> <p>Career Exploration</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Explore Different Careers (Career Survey)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Hear Speakers on Different Opportunities</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend a Career Fair</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Participate in Job Shadowing/Internships</p> <p>College Information</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> College Admissions Counseling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Financial Aid Counseling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> College Visitations and Fairs</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)</p>

SOURCE: Talent Search project officials.

CHAPTER 6

TALENT SEARCH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

In describing the services and activities provided by Talent Search projects, this chapter begins at a general level and moves toward greater detail—from a focus on national statistics to a discussion of project-level variation in service plans. It provides a general overview of the many different types of services offered by Talent Search, addresses services for particular groups such as dropouts and parents, presents some general observations about the nature of Talent Search services, and describes and explains service variation between and within projects.

Overview and Selected Highlights

- From 82 to 98 percent of Talent Search projects offered test-taking and study skills, academic advising/course selection, and tutoring, and 61 percent offered assisted (computer) labs.
- Over 90 percent offered college orientation activities, college campus visits, cultural activities, referrals, and counseling, 80 percent offered family events, and 65 percent offered mentoring.
- Large majorities (71 to 98 percent) of projects provided various financial aid services, including: individual financial aid counseling, financial aid workshops for participants and/or parents, assistance with the aid applications, and scholarship searches.
- About 82 percent of projects provided some participants with waivers to cover the cost of SAT/ACT registration fees, and 78 percent provided waivers for college application fees.
- About 60 percent of all projects offered a summer component. Middle school students were the most commonly targeted group for this service.
- At case study projects, services for dropouts were generally limited. Staff saw dropouts as difficult to serve and preferred to stress dropout prevention by working with students.
- Generating parent involvement was seen as challenging; case study projects were trying, but felt they had not been very successful.
- Talent Search is generally a non-intensive program. For example, about 48 percent of high school students spent less than 10 hours in program activities during 1998-99.
- Most services are provided at target school, during the school day, but pulling students out of their regular classes to participate in Talent Search was sometimes problematic.
- Talent Search service plans varied greatly, both between and within projects, in terms of types of activities, frequency, delivery methods, and target groups. Factors affecting diversity include target area size, target school receptivity, and perceptions of needs.

OVERVIEW OF SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Drawing on national data, this section focuses on six categories or types of services: academic support services, personal and career development services, financial aid services, fee waivers, use of computer technology, and summer services. The first two categories include the 10 major services that projects report on in their annual performance reports (APRs).

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Nearly all projects provided testing-taking and study-skills development services, as well as academic advising services.

Academic support services are intended to guide students to the appropriate courses and to help them perform well in courses and on examinations that are important for successfully pursuing a postsecondary education. Our project survey asked about the provision of four such academic services: tutoring, assisted (computer) labs,¹ test-taking and study-skills development, and academic advising/course selection. The results showed that virtually all projects (98 percent) offered test-taking and study-skills development activities and that an almost equally large proportion of projects (94 percent) advised students on academic requirements and course selection (table 6.1). Large majorities of projects also provided each of the other two types of academic support services. Furthermore, almost half of all projects (49 percent) provided all four of the academic support services we asked about, whereas 13 percent provided two or fewer of the services. The mean number of academic support services offered by projects was 3.3. Finally, the percent of projects offering various academic support services was generally similar for projects operated by different types of host institutions.²

Table 6.1—Provision of academic support services

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percentage of projects providing:					
Test-taking and study-skills development	98%	99%	100%	97%	97%
Academic advising/course selection	94	91	100	94	95
Tutoring	82	82	91	78	82
Assisted (computer) labs	61	61	68	61	58
Percentage of projects providing:					
All four of the above	49	44	65	47	50
Three of the above	39	45	29	38	35
Two of the above	11	9	6	13	12
One or none of the above	2	1	0	2	3

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

¹This type of service is defined in the APR as academic support or tutoring provided through a learning or computer center and can include computer-assisted instruction.

²APR information on academic support services, including the percentages of students receiving those services, is presented in appendix C.

Just because the large majority of projects provided some academic support services does not necessarily mean that the projects considered those services a high priority compared with other services. In fact, when asked to rate the priority they currently placed on tutoring, only 34 percent of projects rated it as high. In comparison, many more projects (51 percent) rated college campus visits a high priority (table 6.2).

Table 6.2—Projects’ ratings of current priorities for working with various participants and providing various services, and how likely they would be to increase their emphasis on these groups and services if they had more resources

	Current priority level			Likelihood of increasing emphasis if project had more resources		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Participants						
Senior high component	65%	27%	8%	80%	14%	6%
Work with dropouts or returning students	22	41	38	52	38	10
Serving more target schools	16	19	65	52	29	19
Work with parents	14	45	41	68	28	4
Work with welfare recipients or former welfare recipients	9	22	69	29	39	31
Work with veterans	5	8	88	15	21	64
Services						
Workshops	56	36	8	77	19	4
Campus visits	51	43	6	80	14	6
Time for Talent Search counselors to meet one-on-one with participants	48	38	14	88	7	5
Tutoring services	34	29	37	72	22	6
Use of technology to facilitate college admissions and financial aid	28	41	31	78	17	5
Provision of mentors	6	28	66	49	41	10

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

APR data suggest that a greater proportion of Talent Search projects were providing academic support services at the end of the 1990s than at the beginning of the decade. A review of APRs for the 1990–91 program year found that 57 percent of projects provided “tutorial assistance,” 20 percent provided “computer-assisted instruction,” and 15 percent helped students with study skills (Eisner 1992). Mathematica Policy Research’s comparison of 1998–99 APR data with that reported by Eisner showed that academic support services (particularly tutoring and study skills) are now provided to a substantially higher percentage of participants than a decade ago (U.S. Dept. of Education May 2002).

Projects appear to be providing more academic support services than a decade ago.

Based on discussions with ED officials and Talent Search project staff around the country, we concluded that academic support services were a subject of widespread interest; therefore, we selected some of the case study sites specifically because of their strong focus on these services. Even though appendix A discusses academic support services in detail, we provide some examples below of how the case study projects were providing these services.¹

Test-taking and study-skills development

- Two or three times each year, Project T invited participants to attend test-taking workshops held at the host college. High school students focused on college entrance examinations (ACT and SAT). The workshops were videotaped for the benefit of interested students who could not attend.
- Project C's curriculum featured a series of workshops at target schools for students in different grade levels. In seventh grade, students learned how to manage their study time; in ninth grade, they learned about general test-taking skills; in 10th grade, they focused on critical thinking; and in 11th grade, they focused on taking the ACT or SAT.

Academic advising/course selection

- At Project B, we observed a Talent Search counselor providing academic advising and course-selection services on a drop-in basis during lunch period to three high school seniors. All three students needed to register for college courses at the host institution. The counselor mentioned the minimum unit requirement for full-time enrollment, explained the concepts of subject-area majors and minors and the difference between undergraduate and graduate courses, pointed them toward appropriate courses in their areas of interest, and, for one student, helped make arrangements to take an English placement test.

Tutoring

- Project N offered individualized tutoring and homework assistance after school four days a week at the host institution. Middle and high school students could attend as often as they liked. On a typical day, six to eight students showed up. The tutors were college students.

¹As explained in chapter 1, we do not reveal the identity of the projects we studied.

- Project H provided tutoring services four days a week for one or two hours a day at each of its four target high schools. The tutors were teachers from the same schools. Students attended on an as-needed basis, but those struggling in school were encouraged to participate regularly.

Assisted (computer) labs

- At Project M, computer labs were a new but regular part of the services (along with tutoring and counseling) offered to middle school students after school three days a week. Students wore headphones and worked individually on a variety of self-paced learning programs to improve their reading, writing, and mathematics skills. On the day we observed a session, sixth graders were working on onomatopoeia; seventh graders on vocabulary, spelling, and reading comprehension; and eighth graders on prefixes and suffixes.

PERSONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Personal and career development services is a broad, diverse category. It includes seven types of services that are designed to help move participants along the path toward a postsecondary education: counseling, mentoring, cultural activities, college orientation activities, visits to college campuses, family services, and referrals. Personal and career development services encompass most of the major nonacademic services that Talent Search projects offer, with the exception of financial aid services, as discussed later.

The project survey found that five of the seven personal and career development services were provided by more than 90 percent of projects nationwide: college orientation activities, college campus visits, cultural activities, referrals, and counseling (table 6.3). A substantial majority of projects also provided the remaining two services, family activities and mentoring. In addition, 79 percent provided six or seven personal and career development services, with the mean at 6.1. Finally, there was no substantial or systematic variation in the provision of personal and career development services between projects operated by different types of host institutions.²

Most projects provided several types of personal and career development services.

²APR information on personal and career development services is presented in appendix C.

Table 6.3—Provision of personal and career development services

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percent of projects providing:					
College orientation activities	98%	99%	97%	97%	98%
Visits to college campuses	96	97	91	96	97
Cultural activities	93	94	91	97	87
Referrals	92	93	97	87	95
Counseling	91	91	97	88	95
Family activities	80	84	79	78	78
Mentoring	65	63	65	65	68
Percent of projects providing:					
All seven of the above	44	43	38	44	48
Six of the above	35	38	44	33	30
Five of the above	15	14	15	14	18
Four of the above	4	3	3	7	2
Three or fewer of the above	1	1	0	2	2

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

The project survey also shed a little light on the value and priority that Talent Search projects placed on two types of personal and career development services: mentoring and campus visits. Mentoring was a relatively low-priority function. Six percent of projects reported that they placed a high priority on providing mentors, whereas 66 percent indicated that they placed a low priority on providing mentors. Asked how they would react to having more resources, about half (49 percent) indicated a high likelihood of increasing their emphasis on mentoring (table 6.2). It should also be noted that mentoring was not added to the list of Talent Search services until the most recent legislative reauthorization.

Campus visits were a high-priority service.

In contrast, projects assigned a relatively high priority to college campus visits. About half (51 percent) of all projects placed a high priority on campus visits, and four-fifths (80 percent) reported that they would be highly likely to increase their emphasis on visits if more resources were available. In addition, given an opportunity (in another survey question) to list up to five program activities that they thought contributed most to achieving their performance objectives, 38 percent of responding directors mentioned campus visits—the second-most frequently listed service. In our case studies, students frequently described campus visits as a particularly memorable, enjoyable, and worthwhile experience that not only helped give them a general sense of what college was like but also helped them narrow their choices of the institutions they might attend.

Finally, whereas the preceding discussion focused on aggregate data for groups of Talent Search projects, the case studies illuminated some of the diverse ways that individual projects provided various personal and career development services.³

College orientation activities and visits to college campuses

- Project X offered all students opportunities to visit at least two college campuses each year. Middle school students visited colleges in the metropolitan area where they lived; high school students had the chance to visit at least one university located farther away.
- Each year, Project O arranged for interested high school students to shadow college students (often Talent Search alumni) at the host institution for a day. Participants would also sit in on classes, eat lunch in a dormitory dining hall, and attend workshops on the transition to college.

Cultural activities

- At Project S, a subset of high school students who were participating in a more intensive service component could take after-school classes in dance, music, or poetry reading at the host institution's offices. Staff also arranged opportunities for the same students to perform in public.
- Project O tried to offer one field trip each year to students at each target school. Sometimes the trips involved visits to local history or science museums. Space in the passenger vans was limited, with spots filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Some of the project's more intensive services, including a senior retreat and a college study tour, also included cultural experiences such as attending a stage play or musical.

Counseling

- At Project A, we observed a workshop held at a target high school that focused on the Myers-Briggs personality-type indicator. The Talent Search counselor explained the background of the instrument and told the 12 participants that the results would increase their self-awareness and help them discover normal differences in people with respect to energy level, information gathering, decision-making, and

³Family services are described in the section entitled "Services for Nonstudents and Nonparticipants."

lifestyle. Students discussed the extent to which their personal assessments seemed accurate.

- At Project I, we observed a Talent Search counselor leading a pull-out counseling session for six high school students. The students spent the first 20 minutes in an exercise on values. The students had a chance to bid an imaginary \$2,000 silently on various life experiences and outcomes, such as to be a famous rock star, to help underprivileged children, to live a long life, to travel around the world, and to have a great relationship with their parents. The counselor then led a discussion of what the students had bid on and why.

Mentoring

- Project T arranged for group mentoring sessions in which individuals from the host college and professionals from the community would talk about their career choices and experiences with small groups of interested participants.

Referrals

- At Project P, we met some alumni who had been referred to an Upward Bound Math/Science program for an academically enriching summer experience. At Project M, dropouts were usually referred to alternative schools or other programs that could help them prepare for the GED examination.⁴

FINANCIAL AID SERVICES

As described in an earlier chapter, a statutory goal of the Talent Search program is to provide information and assistance related to financial aid. Project staff try to ensure that students are aware of and apply for important sources of aid (grants, scholarships, loans) so that their access to a postsecondary education is not limited by a lack of funds. Virtually all Talent Search projects provide financial aid related services to their participants in one way or another. And although financial aid information and assistance were an implicit or explicit part of some of the services discussed in the preceding section—for example, a college visit might include discussions with financial aid officials; family activities might include a workshop on applying for scholarships—we sought more detailed information through separate items in the project survey.

⁴Additional information on referrals is presented in appendix C.

The results show that virtually all projects (more than 95 percent) provided individual financial aid counseling, financial aid workshops, and assistance in completing hard copies of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (table 6.4). Furthermore, 56 percent of projects provided all seven of the financial aid services listed in our project survey, and 28 percent provided six; the mean was 6.3.

Projects provided financial aid services in several different ways.

Projects operated by the four types of host institutions showed relatively little variation in the provision of financial aid services. One exception was that projects hosted by private 4-year colleges were distinctly less likely to offer assistance with FAFSA on the Internet than were each of the other types of projects. The reasons, however, are unclear.

Table 6.4—Provision of financial aid services: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percent of projects providing					
Individual financial aid counseling for participants	98%	98%	97%	99%	97%
Participant financial aid workshop	97	100	90	95	98
Assistance with pencil-and-paper FAFSA	96	96	90	97	97
Scholarship searches	94	98	92	90	98
Parent financial aid workshop	87	94	74	81	95
Individual financial aid counseling for parents	84	86	82	80	92
Assistance with Internet-based FAFSA	71	69	54	77	76
Percent of projects providing					
All seven of the above	56	57	36	57	68
Six of the above	28	31	36	24	25
Five of the above	9	9	15	10	3
Four of the above	3	2	5	5	2
Three or fewer of the above	3	1	8	5	2

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

APR data from 1998–99 showed that, on average, projects nationwide had a goal of assisting 90 percent of “college ready” students⁵ in applying for financial aid (U.S. Dept. of Education May 2002).

⁵Participants who are “college ready” include high school seniors and individuals who graduated from high school or received a GED but have not enrolled in college.

*Financial aid services
differed by grade level.*

The case studies offer some sense of how projects may structure their financial aid services. Until students reached the point of needing to fill out applications, the information provided on financial aid often was fairly general. The point was to assure students that sources of assistance were available and that family income should not be a barrier to postsecondary education. (A related service objective was to make sure that students and their parents had an accurate sense of the costs of attending college; often they believed it was more expensive than it is.) This type of information was commonly conveyed during one-on-one meetings between students and staff or in workshops. When students reached their junior or senior year of high school, they might be invited to informational workshops held at their schools, with parents sometimes invited as well if sessions were held in the evening. Project staff would then make a point of following up with seniors to be sure that they filled out the necessary forms properly and on time, offering individual assistance on an as-needed or as-requested basis.

Some projects also assist students in looking for scholarships—need- or merit-based funds from private and nonfederal public sources. At the sites we visited, students commonly used computers to perform scholarship searches.

Project survey results suggest that project staff consider financial aid services particularly important. An open-ended question in the survey gave project directors an opportunity to list up to five program activities that they thought contributed most to achieving their performance objectives. Over 260 directors listed a total of 1,268 activities or services. Financial aid services were mentioned by more respondents (39 percent) than any other service.⁶ The importance placed on financial aid services probably stems from an understanding that, for many Talent Search participants, especially those from low-income families, financial assistance to help pay for educational expenses will be critical if students are to achieve the program's ultimate goal—enrollment in a postsecondary education program.

FEE WAIVERS

One tangible service provided by many Talent Search projects is to arrange for waivers for college entrance examination fees and college application fees. The registration fees for the ACT and the SAT are currently \$24 and \$25, respectively, and college application fees may range up to \$50 or higher, so waivers can provide meaningful savings to some economically disadvantaged Talent Search participants.

⁶Campus visits were a close second, mentioned by 38 percent of responding directors. Other results of note: tutoring was cited by 19 percent, assistance with postsecondary applications by 18 percent, career counseling services by 17 percent, academic advising by 13 percent, and college orientation activities by 12 percent.

Roughly 80 percent of projects obtained SAT or ACT registration fee waivers for at least one participant; a similar percent obtained college application fee waivers (table 6.5). On average, projects obtained SAT or ACT registration fee waivers for about 61 participants and college application fee waivers for about 71 participants. The numbers are equivalent to about 33 and 39 percent, respectively, of the average number of high school seniors served by Talent Search projects. The differences in the number of waivers secured by type of host institution reflect differences in project size. For example, projects hosted by community organizations served an average of 1,124 participants, whereas projects hosted by 2-year colleges served an average of 728 participants.

Many projects provide fee waivers for some of their participants.

Table 6.5—Provision of fee waivers

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percent of projects providing waivers for					
SAT or ACT registration fees	82%	84%	87%	74%	87%
College application fees	78	81	75	73	83
Average number of participants provided with waivers for:					
ACT or SAT registration fees	61	63	56	43	90
College application fees	71	73	50	50	115
Total number of participants provided with waivers for:					
ACT or SAT registration fees	15,476	5,234	1,744	3,727	4,771
College application fees	16,884	5,884	1,422	4,023	5,555

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Talent Search projects that responded to our project survey provided ACT or SAT fee waivers to 15,476 participants and college application fee waivers to 16,884 participants. Assuming that item and survey nonrespondents were as likely as respondents to provide waivers and that they provided the same average number of waivers, then the estimated total number of participants nationwide who received SAT or ACT registration fee waivers would be 22,169, and the estimated total number of participants nationwide who received college application fee waivers would be 25,822.

SUMMER SERVICES

Talent Search services are not limited to the school year. Well over half (61 percent) of all Talent Search projects offered at least some of their participants a summer component (table 6.6). The percent was similar across projects operated by different types of host institutions. Overall, the group targeted most often for summer

Most projects offer some services during the summer.

services was middle school students: 89 percent of projects with a summer program served middle school students, 69 percent served high school students, and 35 percent served graduating seniors, presumably to help them make the transition to college. A closer look reveals that 28 percent of projects served all three groups, 31 percent served just middle and high school students, and 27 percent served only middle school students.

Table 6.6—Provision of summer services

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percent of projects with a summer component	61%	65%	59%	54%	68%
Percentage of summer components serving:					
Middle school students	89	85	96	93	85
High school students	69	68	70	71	68
Graduating seniors	35	30	22	38	48
Percent of summer components serving:					
Middle school students only	27	27	30	25	30
High school students only	6	10	4	2	5
Graduating seniors only	1	0	0	2	0
Middle school and high school students	31	32	43	36	18
Middle school and graduating seniors	2	3	0	2	3
High school and graduating seniors	5	3	0	4	10
All three groups	28	23	22	30	35

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

The case study projects gave some indication of how summer components may be structured. Project H, for example, ran an enrichment program for middle school students. It operated half a day, five days a week, for three weeks on the host college campus. Participants took a variety of classes ranging from nutrition to computers. Project O offered three short residential programs: one to help eighth graders make the transition to high school, one to help rising high school seniors with the college application process, and one to assist high school graduates with the transition to college. Officials at these projects saw the summer as an opportunity to provide more intensive services than during the school year, and the experiences were well received by the students who participated in them.

SERVICES FOR NONSTUDENTS AND NONPARTICIPANTS

In this section, we shift our focus from services for participants as a whole to services for certain groups—in particular, people who are not typical participants: dropouts and out-of-school adults, parents, nonofficial participants. We present data on the types and extent of services offered to these groups and describe some of the major issues involved in serving them.⁷

SERVICES FOR DROPOUTS AND ADULTS NOT ENROLLED IN A POSTSECONDARY PROGRAM

Thus far, we have focused on services for middle school and high school students, but a small percent of Talent Search participants are not enrolled in school. About 5 percent of participants served in 1998–99 were secondary school dropouts, postsecondary “stopouts,” or people who had received a high school diploma or GED but had never enrolled in a postsecondary program.

Relatively little national information is available on services to nonstudent participants. APR data presented in appendix C show that adults were less likely than enrolled students to have participated in test-taking and study-skills development services, tutoring, cultural activities, and mentoring but more likely to have received academic advising/course-selection services and referrals. APR data also showed that, for the four academic support services, Talent Search projects offered far fewer sessions for adults than for either middle or high school students for the simple reason that students so greatly outnumbered adults.

In the years since the EOC program was established, Talent Search projects have generally decreased their emphasis on serving dropouts. Indeed, project survey data in table 6.2 show that 22 percent of directors reported that they placed a high priority on working with dropouts or returning students, whereas 38 percent reported that they placed a low priority on working with dropouts. (In contrast, 65 percent of directors reported that their high school component was a high priority while 8 percent reported that their high school component was a low priority.) Furthermore, although about half (52 percent) of all projects indicated that there was a high likelihood that they would place greater emphasis on serving dropouts if they had more resources, they rated several other groups and services as higher priorities. (For example, 80 percent of projects reported a high likelihood of increasing their emphasis on the high school component.)

Most projects place relatively little emphasis on serving dropouts.

⁷Appendix C presents survey data on special services for persons with disabilities.

Our case studies reinforced the impression that services for dropouts and adults were generally a limited, marginal aspect of overall program operations. At one project we visited, the usual approach was to refer dropouts to vocational or alternative schools or other programs that could help them prepare for the GED examination. According to another project director, dropouts typically receive at most five hours of service in a program year.⁸

Staff considered dropouts somewhat difficult to serve.

The minimal emphasis that case study projects placed on working with dropouts was a result of both practical and philosophical considerations. From a practical point of view, staff saw project resources as insufficient to be effective in working with large numbers of dropouts. Several staff commented that dropouts are a difficult-to-serve group. They are out in the community, not conveniently accessible at target schools, and likely to need academic remediation—a type of assistance many projects cannot afford to provide. Working with dropouts, one project director explained, requires a different orientation and level of effort than serving enrolled students. To serve dropouts properly, she said, would probably require one staff member to be devoted solely to reaching out and to serving the dropout population. Philosophically, many project staff were much more interested in preventing students from dropping out than in working with dropouts.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Some Talent Search projects seek to serve not only school-aged participants but also their parents. Activities that involve parents in their children's educations and provide them with information on the college admission process, according to project staff, are useful ways to increase the chances that students will ultimately achieve their educational goals. In this section, we address the level and type of parental involvement in Talent Search projects as well as some of the issues related to serving parents.

⁸When asked about working with dropouts, staff in a few projects mentioned their connections to alternative high schools. At one project, for example, staff described visiting two such schools on an as-needed basis to work individually with interested students. But youth attending alternative high schools are not dropouts; they are enrolled in a secondary education program and working toward a high school credential, although some may be former dropouts who returned to school for that purpose.

The project survey found that 80 percent of projects offered some type of family activity; APR data from 1998–99 showed that 84 percent of projects offered such services.⁹ Nationally, one common type of service provided to parents is information on financial aid and assistance with financial aid forms. In the project survey, 87 percent of projects reported that they offer workshops for parents on financial aid, and 84 percent indicated they provide individual financial aid counseling to parents.¹⁰

Many projects offered at least some services for parents.

The case studies further illuminate the various ways that parents are involved in Talent Search. Common activities targeted specifically to parents, or jointly to parents and their children, included information and orientation meetings or open houses at both the start of the school year and the start of certain other program components, such as summer sessions; workshops on financial aid and college admissions; and year-end award ceremonies. Parents were also commonly invited to participate in regular Talent Search activities, such as serving as chaperones during college visits and community service activities.

Staff at the case study projects also noted that they tried to keep parents abreast of their children’s project activities and passed along useful information—ranging from college preparation steps to parenting tips—via newsletters, other mailings, and, in rare cases, home visits. (In addition, several parents we interviewed for the case studies said that they felt free to call project staff with questions or concerns at any time.) Table 6.7 presents project survey data on projects’ communications with parents. Telephone calls were the most common method, used by 95 percent of all projects. Home visits were the least common, used by less than one-third of all projects. There was some variation between projects operated by different types of host institutions. For example, projects hosted by community organizations were less likely than other projects to use newsletters to communicate with parents. Over three-fourths of the projects used at least three of the methods listed. In addition, 34 percent of the projects indicated that they also communicated with parents by some other means, most commonly in meetings at target schools or project offices or during activities.

⁹This is defined in the APR instructions as “events, workshops, meetings, and counseling designed to provide families with information on postsecondary educational opportunities and financial aid available and to involve them in the educational decisions of their children.”

¹⁰One reason why these percent are higher than the percent of projects that reported providing family services (80 percent) could be that the term “family services” was undefined in our survey, whereas the APR explicitly mentions providing families with financial aid information in its definition of family service. In addition, the items about family services and particular financial aid services appeared in different questions in different parts of the questionnaire.

Table 6.7—Ways in which Talent Search projects communicated with participants' parents: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percent of projects using various means of communication:					
Telephone calls	95%	93%	95%	96%	95%
Personal letters	93	94	100	91	90
Newsletters	80	88	82	79	67
Home visits	31	28	44	30	33
Percent of projects using					
All four of the above	25	24	38	23	21
Three of the above	52	57	44	54	45
Two of the above	20	14	18	19	33
One of the above	3	4	0	4	2

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Opportunities for parent involvement were relatively limited.

However, it is important to look beyond the percent of projects that offer certain services and to consider the extent of project offerings and the level of involvement among the target groups. APR data indicate that projects provided an average of 94 family activity sessions in 1998–99. By way of context, the number of family activity sessions was far below the average number of academic advisement and tutoring sessions (673 and 547, respectively) but greater than the number of cultural activity sessions (59). In addition, the number of opportunities for a given parent to be involved would have been lower than the total number of sessions offered, because not all events would have been open to all parents; some would have been designed for parents at individual target schools or for parents of students in particular age groups.

The 1998–99 APR data also show that a relatively small proportion of participants was involved in family services: overall, the average was 30 percent, including 27 percent of high school participants and 36 percent of middle school participants. For comparison, consider that 65 percent of participants were involved in academic advising/course-selection services and that 77 percent received counseling. Our project survey found that during 1998–99, projects served at least one parent or guardian of, on average, 25 percent of their student participants.

The relatively small number of parents involved in Talent Search projects reflects two closely related factors. First, Talent Search projects place less emphasis on parent services than on direct services to students (table 6.2). According to the project survey, 14 percent of projects reported that working with parents was a high priority while 41 percent reported that working with parents was a low priority.

Second, project staff seem to find parental involvement a particularly challenging service area. Among directors who took the opportunity to list up to three aspects of their projects that they considered “particularly problematic,” 19 percent mentioned parental involvement; it was the second most frequently cited problem. Some case study project staff admitted that their efforts to increase parental involvement in their programs had not been particularly successful. Our impression was that, in most cases, limited parental involvement did not result from lack of trying. Rather, projects’ efforts simply had not succeeded as planned. At one project, for example, a staff member recalled that when a financial aid workshop was offered in the evening at one target school, no parents came. At another project, a staff member had tried hosting parent “coffee” in the evening but soon canceled them because of low attendance. Thus, the difficulty of involving parents can lead to a reduced emphasis on parental participation.

*Staff saw serving parents
as a serious challenge.*

Project staff cited several reasons for lower-than-desired levels of parental involvement, although the most common reason was lack of time. Parents were reportedly too busy working or fulfilling other family responsibilities to attend program-sponsored activities. According to two middle school teachers, hard-working but low-income parents were often so focused on present necessities, such as earning enough money to provide their families with food, shelter, and clothing, that they did not always focus closely on their children’s educational futures. Other factors that reportedly affected projects’ ability to generate parental involvement included transportation difficulties, particularly in projects serving large, rural areas; cultural backgrounds that did not fully embrace the pursuit of higher education; limited English proficiency; parental avoidance of situations in which parents might be embarrassed about their own lack of education; and children from “dysfunctional families” who did not reside with their parents.

Staff in several of the projects we visited for the case studies wanted to do a better job working with parents and were interested in learning about effective approaches. They thought that parental involvement was important because, as one staff member put it, the more people students have in their lives pushing them toward college, the better. As for strategies to increase parental involvement, one staff member was considering the possibility of offering incentives to students—such as coupons or certificates that could be used toward the purchase of school supplies, candy, or other items—for bringing their parents to certain events. At another project, a staff member had found that telephoning parents to invite them to activities seemed to prompt a higher response rate. As in the case of other activities, though, efforts devoted to attracting parents require resources. One project director reported that she was interested in creating a parent advisory group but figured that staff and financial resources were insufficient to support such an initiative. The project survey revealed that 68 percent of projects indicated a high likelihood that efforts focused on serving parents would receive increased emphasis if projects had more resources (table 6.2).

SERVING NONPARTICIPANTS

Projects sometimes served people not enrolled in the program.

Throughout this chapter, we have discussed services provided to official program participants—students (and dropouts or other adults) who had completed an application and would be served at least twice during the year. However, our case studies revealed some instances in which Talent Search projects provided services on a regular (or irregular) basis to students who were not counted as official program participants. We are not referring to initial, introductory sessions used to recruit new participants but rather to recurring services. Our case studies revealed various rationales for, and examples of, services provided to nonparticipants.

A fundamental reason why projects served unofficial participants was that the number of students in need of services exceeded the number of students the projects were supposed to serve. One project we visited, for example, served a large rural area wherein students reportedly had access to virtually no other precollege programs or services besides Talent Search. Many of the target schools were small and had limited resources; guidance counselors were either nonexistent or, by their own admission, too busy to provide students with much in-depth advice on preparing for college. Project staff tried to help by sometimes delivering informational workshops to literally all the students in certain grade levels, especially high school juniors and seniors, for whom career and college information was most salient. However, the project reserved the large share of its services, including individualized assistance and college visitation trips, for official program participants.

Staff at other projects explained that the occasional provision of services to unofficial participants was an important strategy for maintaining positive relations with target school officials. Providing a limited amount of service to unofficial participants—whether in a group, such as a whole classroom or a grade-level assembly, or individually on a drop-in basis—was a useful way to achieve and sustain good access to official program participants.¹¹

Regardless of the rationale, however, project personnel felt that they could provide some degree of services to unofficial participants without diluting the services designed for official participants and at no additional cost. If they planned a workshop for 30 official participants, they reasoned, what could be the harm in expanding the group to include some unofficial participants as well?

¹¹Such reciprocal arrangements were fairly common among the projects we visited and appeared to be a basic contextual feature of Talent Search program operations. Two of our case study projects, for example, routinely shared a substantial amount of computer software with their target schools; in turn, school officials were willing to host the program and generously provided Talent Search staff with office and classroom space, use of office machines and supplies, and access to student files.

COMMON SERVICE THEMES AND ISSUES

Although the next section of this chapter emphasizes diversity and variability of services between and within Talent Search projects, some insights that emerged from our case studies seem broadly applicable to most sites or to the program as a whole. This section therefore describes a few such issues and practices, particularly those relating to overall program intensity, projects' responses to limits on service capacity, the emphasis on serving high school students, and serving students through a pull-out approach.

SERVICE INTENSITY AND EXTENT OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Talent Search is generally a nonintensive program, as reflected in two major features that were evident in the case study projects. The first feature is the limited number and types of services offered to any particular participant or participant group. In view of the average funding level per participant, projects are able to provide most participants with what might be termed a "light touch" rather than with a heavy dose of precollege services. In some projects we visited, for example, staff scheduled activities with most students once a month or less often. With the exception of field trips, such as college visits, the activities that most students participated in seldom lasted longer than one hour.

Even if staff visited target schools frequently, they did not necessarily make frequent contact with all participants. Table 6.8 illustrates the point with data on services provided by a Talent Search advisor from one of the case study projects. Although the advisor visited his three target schools once a week, he saw a majority of participants five times or less during the first seven months of the 1998–99 school year. Variation in the number of contacts was a function of both the number of times the staff member tried to reach the students (which in turn was a function of the staff member's sense of student needs and interests) and the students' responsiveness and initiative.

Talent Search typically is not an intensive program.

Table 6.8—Frequency of contact during 1998–99 (as of April 9, 1999), for three target high schools in one project

Number of times students were seen	By high school			All high schools combined (180 students)
	School A (63 students)	School B (42 students)	School C (75 students)	
Zero	11%	24%	9%	13%
1–5	56	48	60	56
6–10	17	21	15	17
11–15	14	2	5	8
16–20	2	5	8	5
21 or more	0	0	3	1

SOURCE: Project staff.

The second program feature that reflects Talent Search's characterization as nonintensive is the limited time and commitment required of participants. While projects encouraged multiyear participation, most of the case study projects did not require students to make a multiyear commitment; furthermore, in some cases, students might not have participated in a project until their senior year of high school. In addition, across all the projects we visited, participation in many services was optional. Students were free to decide for themselves whether to attend a given workshop, sign up for a particular campus visit, participate in a project-sponsored cultural activity, and so on. A staff member at one project estimated that he saw perhaps 40 percent of the participants at his assigned schools on a regular basis. At another project, the attendance level at workshops in the year before our visit reportedly averaged 60 percent.

Some projects might have strongly encouraged certain students to participate in certain services—for example, students struggling in school might be urged to take advantage of project-sponsored tutoring services—but they did not require such participation and imposed no consequences if students did not avail themselves of the services. Rather, the underlying philosophy and message was that students could involve themselves in as many or few precollege services as they wanted. Staff in various projects commonly offered comments such as “You can't force them to come to program activities.” Unless they violated certain project rules (e.g., unacceptable behavior or, in some projects, grades below a minimum GPA standard) or said explicitly that they did not want to be involved in the project any longer, even students with a minimal record of participation would typically be retained on the project roll from year to year in case they ever decided to increase their involvement.

National information also supports the depiction of Talent Search as a low-intensity experience for most participants. The project survey results show that, on average, 38 percent of middle school students and 48 percent of high school students spent less than 10 hours in program activities over the course of the 1998–99 program year (table 6.9). On average, fewer than one in five middle school participants and fewer than one in seven high school participants received more than 40 hours of service. Dropouts and out-of-school adults usually accumulated fewer contact hours than their in-school counterparts.

*Relatively few students
receive more than 40
hours of service in a year.*

Table 6.9—Hours spent in Talent Search services/activities: 1998–99

Average percentage of participants receiving:	Middle school participants	High school participants	Participants not in school
One hour or less	7%	8%	15%
Two to four hours	13	16	35
Five to nine hours	18	24	25
10 to 19 hours	24	24	12
20 to 39 hours	19	16	5
40 hours or more	19	13	8

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Despite the preceding depiction of Talent Search as generally nonintensive, it is worth noting that several case study projects did sponsor at least one more-intensive activity for some participants. For example, one project held a series of week-long “technology camps” during the summer; a second project offered a three-week summer enrichment program for middle school students; and a third project operated an intensive college preparation component during the school year for high school students, in which participants took structured academic classes after school.

LIMITED CAPACITY

Resource constraints (for example, funds or even the number of seats in a passenger van) often prevented case study projects from providing various services to as many students as desired. When capacity was limited, projects usually handled participation on a first-come, first-served basis. In this way, Talent Search projects catered to the most interested and motivated participants. Sometimes eligibility to participate in limited-capacity events and activities was based on student performance in school or other factors. At one project, for example, high school students interested in a multiday trip to visit colleges in a distant state had to (1) earn at least a 3.2 GPA in the fall semester and (2) submit short written reports describing (a) their main career interest, colleges that would help them prepare for that career, and high school courses that would help them prepare for the specified colleges and (b) how they planned to pay for college. The 50 students who did the best job on the reports and met the GPA requirement were invited on the trip.

In some cases, projects cannot meet the demand for services.

The project survey collected information on the ability of Talent Search projects to provide services to all who requested them. Most of the projects that offered a given service were able to serve all the participants who requested the service (table 6.10). For example, 88 percent of the projects that offered counseling were able to provide it to all who requested it. In some cases, however, it was a slim majority. For example, 49 percent of projects that offered mentoring were unable to provide it to all the participants who requested it, and among projects that offered tutoring, 47 percent were unable to provide it to all who requested it. Some projects that could not meet the demand for various services kept waiting lists for interested

participants, although the exception of ever-popular campus visits—most did not maintain such lists.

Table 6.10—Talent Search projects' ability to provide requested services

	Of the projects that offered service, percent unable to provide it to all who requested it	Of the projects unable to provide it to all who requested it, percent that maintained a waiting list for the service
Academic support services		
Test-taking and study-skills development	14%	41%
Academic advising/course selection	13	38
Tutoring	47	42
Assisted (computer) labs	37	24
Personal and career development services		
College orientation activities	18	37
Visits to college campuses	40	54
Cultural activities	41	44
Referrals	13	20
Counseling	12	33
Family activities	22	20
Mentoring	49	31

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

It appears that the services for which projects had the most difficulty meeting demand are the ones that are most resource-intensive. Mentoring and tutoring, for example, require a low participant-staff ratio and sustained personal attention. Campus visits and, in some cases, cultural activities require transportation, which can be expensive.

GRADE-LEVEL EMPHASIS

Most of the case study projects placed a somewhat greater emphasis on services for high school students than on services for middle school students—or at least the emphasis on the two groups was about equal; certainly no projects did more for middle school students than for high school students. Data from the project survey support the notion that high school students were a major focus of the Talent Search program. First, projects served, on average, more than twice as many high school students as middle school students. Second, when asked about the priority they placed on working with various groups and providing various services, 65 percent of

Most projects focus more on high school students than on middle school students.

projects rated their senior high component as a high priority; no other item rated higher (table 6.2).¹² The project survey did not ask a parallel question about projects' middle school components.

Interestingly, however, for some projects, the group that apparently provided the greatest service challenge was high school freshmen and sophomores. College was not as immediate a concern for them as it was for juniors and seniors, and, staff said, freshmen and sophomores did not necessarily respond as well to the types of services commonly provided to middle school students, such as workshops focused on personal development issues like self-esteem or interpersonal relationships.

SERVICE SETTING AND APPROACH

Except for college campus visits and other field trips, most Talent Search services take place at target middle schools and high schools. Moreover, our case studies led to the firm impression that the pull-out approach to service delivery, in which students are temporarily pulled out of their regular classes to participate in program activities, is predominant in Talent Search. In fact, most of the case study projects provided many of their workshops, counseling and advising sessions, and other activities in the form of pull-out sessions. Depending on the activity and the school's class schedule, students pulled out of class might miss anywhere from less than half a class to an entire class period or more.

But sometimes the pull-out approach was problematic—and by some accounts was becoming increasingly so. It was not uncommon for some students to skip Talent Search workshops or other activities in favor of attending their regular classes. In addition, teachers occasionally refused to allow participants to leave classes for Talent Search activities. Some project staff felt that increasing pressure on schools to ensure that students meet certain academic standards (for example, passing high-stakes tests) has contributed to teachers' and administrators' reluctance to release students for extracurricular activities such as Talent Search and that such pressure would only continue to mount.

The pull-out approach to providing services was sometimes a problem.

What are the alternatives to the pull-out approach? One strategy is to provide services during school hours but at times when students are not committed to specific classes. In some cases, project staff scheduled services during lunch or other free times such as an activity period or study hall. A second alternative is to conduct activities outside regular school hours. One project we visited, for example, made an effort not to schedule college trips on regular school days, instead targeting district work days or vacation days. The projects that offered fairly extensive tutoring services tended to offer their sessions after school. A third alternative to the pull-out approach is to serve students in their regular classrooms. The middle school section

¹²Furthermore, when asked how they would respond to having more resources, 80 percent of projects reported a high likelihood of increasing their emphasis on the senior high school component. Only one item, time for staff to meet individually with participants, rated higher.

of appendix A provides some examples of how projects served students in their classrooms. Project survey data show that many Talent Search projects served at least some students in the classroom; 43 percent of all projects reported that they served entire classrooms once a month or more often. But, if our case studies are any indication, the in-class approach is probably limited to a small number of classrooms in a small number of target schools. It was the exception to the rule, not the main service method for any of the 14 projects we visited.

Rather than altogether abandoning the pull-out approach, some projects tried to minimize its potentially negative impact on students. One project, for example, scheduled workshops at different times during the school day from month to month so that students would not be repeatedly pulled out of the same class. At another project, staff timed their meetings with individual students so that students would not be pulled from their core academic classes. Finally, some staff members spoke of trying to design a cohesive set of activities that teachers would see as educationally credible, thereby increasing the chances that teachers would willingly release program participants from class.

Unfortunately, staff sometimes felt that they had few, if any, sound alternatives to the pull-out approach. Staff commonly saw the hours when classes were being held as the only feasible time to meet with most participants. Meeting only during lunch period clearly limits the time available for Talent Search activities at a given target school on a given day. After-school meetings would be less than ideal for students who hold part-time jobs, participate in sports or other extracurricular activities, or rely on a school bus for transportation (especially in rural areas where the journey home may be long and parents cannot easily pick up their children). Weekends also would be problematic because of students' work or personal commitments and project staff's preference for traditional hours. Furthermore, schools are usually not open on weekends, raising the question of where meetings would take place; in addition, distance and a lack of transportation would keep many students from traveling to the host institution. Serving students in their regular classes clearly avoids putting participants at a disadvantage relative to their classmates in terms of learning course material, but turning over instructional time to an outside group offering precollege services requires a high level of buy-in from school administrators and staff. Faced with these issues, one of the case-study projects had recently dropped a high school (and its two feeder middle schools) from its set of target schools because project staff felt that school staff were overly restricting their access to participants through the pull-out approach.

VARIABILITY OF TALENT SEARCH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

The preceding sections of this chapter presented a fairly broad picture of Talent Search services and activities. The purpose of this section, based on our 14 case studies, is to convey a more detailed sense of how projects serve participants. In particular, we describe the high degree of variability in services not only between projects but also within projects.

SERVICE VARIABILITY BETWEEN PROJECTS

Although many of the case study projects provided a broadly similar set of services relevant to the goals of the program, a close look reveals some substantial differences in the services that individual Talent Search projects provided. There was variability in how services were delivered as well as when, where, to whom, and by whom. In some respects, when the details are considered, service differences are far more apparent than service similarities.

Different Service Plans

One of the characteristics shared by virtually all Talent Search projects is the great diversity of their offerings. The projects we visited typically provided a wide variety of activities. Rather than focusing most of their resources and efforts on just a few types of services, they leaned toward offering a little of everything. But the specific mix of services, not to mention the delivery methods and groups targeted for those services, varied considerably. This variability is exemplified by the service plans of three of the projects we visited, as outlined on the following three pages.

*Projects had diverse
service plans.*

Project O Service Plan

At Project O, staff divided program activities into three major categories.

Workshops lasting 50 minutes are conducted at each target school approximately every two weeks. Students are pulled from their regular classes. All project staff follow a general curriculum through the year, but they may design the materials and offer the workshops in any order they prefer. Staff often use games to convey information in an entertaining and engaging way.

Field trips are (ideally) offered once a semester to participants at each school. Designed to provide both educational and cultural experiences, the trips have included visits to a university-sponsored exhibit on Chicano history and to a natural history museum.

Intensive educational experiences attempt to make long-lasting impressions on students' lives. In almost all cases, students must complete an application to participate; meet certain eligibility criteria, such as a minimum GPA; or both. In some cases, students must contribute money toward the cost of the activity. The yearly schedule includes the following activities:

- *College trips.* Three multiday trips take place each year, one each in spring, summer, and fall. One is to distant, out-of-state colleges; one is to several in-state colleges; and one is to colleges in adjacent states. Cultural and recreational activities are part of each trip.
- *Summer residential programs.* Three such programs are held on the host campus. One is to help eighth-graders make the transition to high school (described in detail in appendix A). The second is a four-day program to help rising seniors with the college application process. Finally, an eight-week academic “bridge” program reserves 10 slots for Talent Search graduates who will be entering college in the fall.
- *Knowledge Bowl.* A quiz-oriented program for middle school students, the Knowledge Bowl is held on a Saturday in the fall.
- *Senior retreat.* This springtime, two-day event, typically held in a hotel, helps seniors prepare for the transition to college. It includes workshops on campus resources, scheduling college courses, budgeting, college safety issues, time management, and multicultural issues on campus.
- *College student shadow day.* High school students can spend a day on the host campus shadowing a college student (often a Talent Search alumnus or alumna).
- *Campus discovery day.* This event at the host campus is designed to give juniors insight into how best to prepare for college. It offers workshops on writing a college essay, on admissions requirements, and on campus life as well as a question-and-answer session with faculty.
- *Recognition and awards ceremony.* Staff, students, and parents recognize the accomplishments of outstanding high school and middle school students; students may also attend a panel discussion by current college students; and parents may attend a workshop on financial aid.

Project P Service Plan

This project's services can be grouped into four categories. One major program component is *contacts at school*. Advisors visit their target schools once a week. While on campus, they typically meet briefly—often for no more than 10 minutes—with individuals or small groups of students whom they pull out of classes. The point of the meetings is mainly to keep in touch; staff ask how the students are doing, talk about their plans, tell them about upcoming events and remind them of impending deadlines, offer encouragement, and help them fill out applications for college admission and financial aid. Advisors do not necessarily try to meet with every participant every week but rather choose students on the basis of their particular needs and interests. For example, when the SAT is approaching, advisors try to meet with students who need to register for the examination or to see how other students are progressing in their preparations. For some middle school students, school contacts may be much more frequent and intensive. In recent years, one advisor has provided in-class services once a week to several classrooms. The sessions feature a wide variety of activities and projects related to college and careers.

A second major program component is *use of computers*. On the days that advisors visit target schools, they typically lead an after-school computer club. Students are instructed and assisted in a variety of computer applications, such as file management, word processing, Internet research (e.g., into careers and colleges), Web page construction, multimedia applications (e.g., photo editing, PowerPoint® presentations, desktop publishing), and e-mail. Participation in the computer clubs is voluntary. (The middle school students served in their regular classrooms may spend some of that time working in the computer lab.) In addition, the project's main office features a computer lab for use by students just about any time.

A third, broad category of services is *special events*. From September 1998 through mid-March 1999, the program sponsored the following special events:

- Five test-taking and study-skills development activities, such as workshops on SAT preparation and how to excel in high school, all for high school students
- Three cultural activities for middle school students, including a football game at the host campus and an architectural tour of the city
- Two community service activities, including cleaning up the shore of a local lake
- Twelve career field trips for middle school students, such as visits to computer companies, the local humane society, and a court, and, for high school students, a general career fair at the host campus
- Thirteen college orientation activities, mainly trips to visit campuses conducted separately for middle and high school students
- One essay writing workshop for high school students

A fourth category of services might be called *miscellaneous*. Included are (1) providing eligible students with fee waivers for SAT or ACT examinations; (2) referring students to other enriching experiences, such as Upward Bound Math Science summer programs; and (3) sponsoring an English-as-a-Second-Language class over six Saturdays.

Project C Service Plan

The core services in Project C take place at target schools during the advisors' twice-weekly visits. First, there are two or three *workshops* per year for students in each grade level. The workshops follow a specific curriculum that features a closer focus on college preparation as students progress through school (see table 6.11). Workshops typically last 45 minutes or less. Second, staff meet with students once a year for *one-on-one discussions* about their educational progress and plans. For both the workshops and individual discussions, students are pulled from their regular classes.

Other major services include *college trips* (all students have a chance to take at least one trip each year); *parent financial aid workshops* in the evening; a *family night activity* such as a visit to a science museum; and occasional social, cultural, or recreational *special events* such as TRIO Day, rock climbing, or a trip to the theater. A final service that Project C provides is *subscriptions to precollege publications*—one on financing higher education for 7th and 8th graders; one on careers for students in grades 9 and 10, and one on searching for a college for high school juniors and seniors.

Table 6.11—Specific topics of Project C's workshop curriculum, by subject area and grade level

Grade	Career development	Personal development	Study skills	College preparation
6	Introduction to Talent Search, career exploration, higher education	Consider how personality affects relationships, career, educational choices		
7	Career inventory or survey to evaluate students' interests as they relate to careers	Take personality inventory to identify preferences, strengths; improve relationships, self-esteem	Evaluate how students spend time, learn about time management	
8	Assess students' knowledge of the working world and its relation to school subjects	Evaluate communication skills in selves and others; learn importance of communication		Discuss reasons for obtaining college degree, how present choices affect college plans, classes needed to prepare for college
9	Explore whether careers of interest will fulfill future wishes	Learn how to organize and use a portfolio	Learn about test-taking skills	
10	Explore connections between interests and careers, including "hot jobs"		Learn about critical thinking	Visit the college and career resource center at students' home schools
11			Information on and test-taking skills for ACT and SAT	Learn about types of colleges, tuition reciprocity, importance of campus visits, college costs and financing options
12	Celebrate seniors' graduation and discuss future plans			Learn about college admissions process, selecting a college, financial aid process, and preparing for personal scholarship search

Planning and Timing of Services

The case studies also revealed that projects varied in how they approached the planning of services and activities. Before the start of each school year, some projects developed detailed service plans for each grade level of each target school. The plans listed specific activities that would take place on specific dates, including workshop topics and the names of colleges to be visited. At the other end of the continuum, some projects did not produce a service schedule in advance of the school year. Instead, staff improvised by reacting to students' interests and developing service ideas and plans over the course of the year. Such an approach did not necessarily mean that services and activities varied dramatically from year to year. Indeed, the basic framework remained largely unchanged as staff were guided by general notions of the types of services that students needed at different grade levels and at different points in the year and, in some cases, by project-specific guidelines or goals for the number of different types of activities that would be provided each year. Finally, some projects used a planning approach that fell somewhere between the two described above. At one project, for example, staff members consulted with appropriate target school officials before the year began to agree on the general number and timing of workshops by grade level as well as on possible topics, with details to be addressed during the year.

Projects used different approaches to planning their services.

Regardless of the planning approach, many projects' service plans had a similar rhythm from year to year. For example, projects commonly started the school year with a parental participation opportunity, such as an "open house" at the target schools, and many ended the year with a recognition or awards ceremony to which parents were often also invited. During the year, the timing of some standard but major services, particularly for high school students, was a function of the deadlines for important events in the college admission process, such as the scheduled dates of college entrance examinations and the deadlines for filing admissions and financial aid applications.

SERVICE VARIABILITY WITHIN PROJECTS

The degree of service variability among projects, highlighted above, was at least matched by the variability of services within projects. That projects would design and provide different types and numbers of services for students in different grade levels is not surprising. After all, when it comes to preparing for college, the needs and interests of 6th and 7th graders differ markedly from those of 11th and 12th graders. In fact, given that service variation by grade level within projects is not particularly noteworthy, we pay little attention to it in this section. However, people unfamiliar with the Talent Search program may be somewhat surprised by the extent to which projects may offer different services even for students in the same grade level but at different schools.

A project may have different approaches to serving students in the same grade but at different schools.

The variability in service offerings for different students within the same project is illustrated by a few examples from sites we visited. First, table 6.12 shows the service plans devised by one staff member for two target schools of roughly similar size. It reveals considerable variability by both grade level and school in the *frequency*

of major services. For example, at school B, the project staff member planned to see sixth graders half as many times as seniors at the same school, but she would see seniors at school B less than half as many times as seniors at school A.

Table 6.12—Number of workshops planned for 1998–99, by grade level, at two target schools in the same Talent Search project

Grade Level	School A	School B
6	3	2
7	3	2
8	6	2
9	6	2
10	6	2
11	6	3
12	9	4

SOURCE: Project staff.

Second, table 6.13 illustrates *subject matter or content* variation. Even within one project, staff members serving different schools may devise different service plans for students at the same grade level. For example, the workshops at high school 1 focused more on personal development (for example, sessions on self-esteem and peer pressure) than did those at high school 2, and the two groups of students visited entirely different sets of universities on their respective college tours.

Table 6.13—Service plans for sophomores at two high schools within the same Talent Search project, but served by different staff members: 1998–99

	High school 1 (Talent Search advisor A)	High school 2 (Talent Search advisor B)
September	Workshop on self-esteem College tour (University R) and visit to art museum	Workshop on the PSAT exam Parent night
October	Parent night Workshop on time management and goal setting	Workshop on using high school to get ready for college College Tour (University V) Parent involvement: scholarship night
November	Workshop on career awareness and major selection College tour (University S) and lecture by a professor Community service project	Workshop on making campus visits College tour (University W) College tour (University X) Community service project
December	Workshop on essay writing	Workshop on choosing a college Parent involvement: college night Community service project
January	Workshop on note taking	Workshop on financial aid College tour (University Y and University Z)
February	Workshop on peer pressure and decision making	Workshop on test taking
March	College tour (University T and University U) Workshop on upcoming community service project Community service project	Workshop on careers
April	Workshop on the SAT exam Cultural trip to nearby town	Workshop on course, major, and career selection
May	Scholarship walk-a-thon End of year review	Scholarship walk-a-thon Workshop on military service End of year review (with parents)

SOURCE: Project staff.

Finally, a few projects used different *service delivery methods* for students in the same grade levels but at different target schools. In one of these projects, a staff member provided in-class services once a week to three sixth-grade classes at one school and to one sixth-grade class at a different school. His colleagues at other middle schools typically met with participants before or after school rather than in their regular classes. Similarly, at another project, the director provided in-class services (for

example, games and personal development exercises) every other week to literally every student in a particular middle school, whereas staff serving other target middle schools met with participants after school once or twice a week (primarily for tutoring).

WHY SUCH VARIABILITY IN STUDENT SERVICES?

The variability in Talent Search services, both between and within projects, reflects several factors. One of the most significant factors was the size of the target area. Projects that served relatively large areas, for example, found it impractical to hold many events in a single, central location, such as the host institution, because of transportation issues. These projects tended to provide the vast majority of their services at target schools. In contrast, projects that served relatively small target areas could, and often did, provide services in a central location. For example, a project serving a cluster of inner-city schools provided a wide variety of services after school every day at its headquarters; another project in a similar setting offered drop-in tutoring every afternoon as well as Saturday morning test-preparation courses at its host institution offices.

A related factor was the number of target schools. Projects with a relatively large number of target schools tended to provide services less often than projects with relatively few target schools. In the case study project with the greatest number of target schools (36), staff seldom visited their assigned schools to meet with students and conduct workshops more than once a month, whereas, at the other end of the continuum, staff in two projects with seven target schools visited each school at least once a week and, in some cases, four days a week.

Target school receptivity also had an important influence on service variability. Project staff reported spending more time at and working more closely with target schools that welcomed and supported the Talent Search program and facilitated student access.

Clearly, some service differences reflected the different needs of various groups or types of participants as determined by project staff and school staff. For example, projects serving isolated rural communities may see a greater need for cultural activities than projects based in large cities, and a project may identify a greater need for tutoring among middle school students than among its high school participants. The service variability highlighted in table 6.12 resulted primarily from the views of chief school officials on the types of workshops needed by students at different grade levels and the number of times that students could and ought to be pulled out of class for such sessions.

Another factor behind service differences was resources. Federal funding levels are an issue underlying intraproject service variability. Average funding levels (about \$300 per participant) can force projects to make trade-offs. For example, if project staff want to implement a highly resource-intensive service in one place or for one participant group, they may have to balance their plans with less resource-intensive

Service variability can be attributed to several factors, including the target area and limited resources.

services provided in other places or for other groups. Federal funding levels, however, are *not* an important issue in service differences between projects. All projects face generally similar constraints in terms of grant dollars per participant. Therefore, grant dollars alone are an unlikely cause of different projects adopting widely different service strategies. Much more important to explaining between-project differences is the availability of additional resources such as cash or in-kind contributions from other sources. In cases where projects provided uncommon services, the ability to underwrite those services was often attributable to extra resources. For example, extensive support from Microsoft® was pivotal to the ability of two case study projects to make heavy use of computers in serving students.

Yet another factor was flexible federal guidelines for program operations. Regulations list various categories of services that projects may provide, but they do not specify any services that projects *must* provide for any particular types of participants, let alone details such as service volume or frequency. Thus, Talent Search by design allows projects great discretion in how, when, where, and how much they serve participants to meet program objectives.

Finally, the initiative, preferences, and creativity of Talent Search project staff should not be overlooked. Inter- and intraproject service variation clearly derived in part from staff members' ideas about how best to conduct program activities and how best to take advantage of the discretion accorded projects by program rules. Some projects, for example, placed a relatively high priority on providing a generally consistent set of services across schools. At a project that had, overall, one of the least variable service plans we saw, the director seemed to think that introducing substantial variations in program offerings, such as a high-intensity versus a low-intensity component, would raise equity concerns among major stakeholders. Other projects, though, were more open to varying the type and amount of services available to different participants. Even in the absence of external circumstances that might force them to alter their service mix, such as unexpected changes in target school policies, some projects experimented with new ways of helping various students prepare for a postsecondary education. The scope and range of such efforts had a direct impact on service variability.

CHAPTER 7

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES, AND DATA

The main focus of this chapter is the ways in which Talent Search may affect program participants. Before describing specific outcomes, however, we consider projects' formal goals and informal expectations concerning the ways that participants are intended to benefit from the program. After presenting both quantitative and qualitative information on participant outcomes, we discuss projects' data-collection and evaluation practices.

Overview and Selected Highlights

- Projects' average goals for two key participant outcomes in 1998-99 were as follows: 88 percent of high school seniors and equivalency students would graduate or receive an equivalency certificate; 75 percent of graduates and equivalency recipients would enroll in a postsecondary program.
- Averaging across projects, 89 percent of seniors and equivalency students graduated or received an equivalency certificate, and 71 percent of graduates and equivalency recipients reportedly enrolled in a postsecondary institution.
- Eighty-seven percent of projects met their goal for secondary school graduation rates, but only 53 percent met their goal for postsecondary admissions.
- Participants and program alumni mentioned numerous, diverse ways in which they felt they had benefited from Talent Search, including: more knowledge and information about postsecondary education, better access to and more choices of colleges, improved academic performance, being better prepared to succeed in college, and increased confidence and motivation. Anecdotal statements such as these, however, do not constitute evidence of program effectiveness.
- More than 95 percent of projects reportedly tracked or monitored data on the key participant outcomes of high school graduation, progression through high school, enrollment in college, and completion of college applications. Substantially lower percentages of projects had tried to measure or were collecting data on other outcomes, such as grades, self-esteem, SAT/ACT scores, or financial aid awareness.
- Most projects rely on internal evaluations. The information most commonly used in project evaluations was school retention or graduation rates and students' written evaluations of services. The information least commonly used was comparisons of participants' and nonparticipants' standardized test scores and course completion rates.
- Case study projects did not appear to place a high degree of emphasis on data collection and analysis, focusing mainly on data needed to complete the APR. Resource limitations (funds, time, expertise) may be one reason why projects did not do more in the way of data collection/analysis and evaluation.

TALENT SEARCH PROJECTS' OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

Talent Search projects' outcome objectives are goals for the way the program strives to affect participants. As discussed in chapter 2, the national TRIO office requires all Talent Search projects to set specific goals for the percentage of applicable participants expected to achieve various outcomes during each program year.¹ Each project's goals are supposed to be challenging, taking into account the types of participants served, the service context, and the project's track record.

Table 7.1 displays the average goals across all Talent Search projects, as reported in 1998–99 annual performance reports (APRs), and conveys some of the variability in projects' goals. For example, while projects, on average, expected 75 percent of participating seniors to be admitted to a postsecondary institution, about a quarter of all projects set a goal of 65 percent or lower, and another quarter set a goal of 84 percent or higher. Projects clearly expected to achieve the most success with their objectives for secondary school retention and graduation. Their lower goals for secondary and postsecondary re-entry reflect staff views that high school dropouts and adults are more difficult populations to serve. Although not shown here, analysis reveals that projects' goals did not differ substantially or systematically by type of host institution.

Projects had higher goals for students than for dropouts.

¹Outcome objectives differ from process objectives, which address steps that projects take in operating a program and serving participants. Talent Search projects are also required to set goals for two process objectives: the percentage of “college-ready” participants who will receive assistance in applying for postsecondary admission and the percentage of college-ready participants who will receive assistance in applying for financial aid. Providing assistance with applications is clearly a process undertaken by project staff, not an outcome experienced by participants as a result of their involvement in the program.

Table 7.1—Goals set by Talent Search projects for major participant outcomes: 1998–99

Outcome objective	Average goal	25th percentile	75th percentile
Secondary school retention (percentage of secondary school participants who will continue in secondary school)	89%	85%	97%
Secondary school graduation (percentage of high school seniors and GED or alternative education students who will graduate or receive equivalency certificate)	88	83	95
Secondary school re-entry (percentage of secondary school dropouts who will re-enter secondary education program)	64	50	80
Postsecondary admissions (percentage of high school graduates and equivalency recipients who will enroll in postsecondary education program)	75	65	84
Postsecondary re-entry (percentage of postsecondary “stopouts” who will re-enter postsecondary education program)	65	50	80

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–97.

Talent Search projects do not necessarily limit their outcome objectives to the five major ones discussed above. The project survey also asked about objectives for a handful of other outcomes of potential interest. As shown in table 7.2, about four-fifths of all projects (82 percent) had a specific performance objective for the percentage of seniors applying for financial aid, and about the same proportion had an objective for participant grade-level progression.² In contrast, less than one-half of all projects (48 percent) had a goal pertaining to participants’ grades.

²Grade-level progression differs slightly from secondary school retention; the former refers to moving ahead (not repeating a grade), whereas the latter refers to staying in school (regardless of grade level).

Table 7.2—Additional outcome objectives

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percentage of projects with specific performance objectives concerning the following outcomes:					
Percentage of seniors applying for financial aid	82%	86%	79%	78%	84%
Participant grade progression	81	79	87	80	85
Percentage going to college full-time in fall after graduation	58	56	64	48	72
College preparatory course selection (middle school)	51	57	51	45	52
Participant grades	48	51	59	39	50
Projects' average goal for:					
Percentage of seniors applying for financial aid	87	87	90	90	81
Percentage going to college full time in fall after graduation	72	71	73	74	68

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Overall, with a couple of exceptions, there was relatively little variation between projects operated by different types of host institutions. As for the exceptions, projects hosted by 2-year colleges were substantially less likely than those hosted by community organizations to have established a performance goal addressing full-time college enrollment in the fall after graduation, and projects hosted by 2-year colleges were substantially less likely than those hosted by private 4-year colleges to have established a performance goal addressing participants' grades. The reasons for these differences are unclear, but, in the latter case, it may be worth noting that the two groups of projects were, respectively, the least and most likely to provide tutoring services (see chapter 6, table 6.1).

The survey also asked projects to report their goals for the following two outcomes: percentage of seniors applying for financial aid and percentage attending college full time in the fall after high school graduation. For the former outcome, the average goal was 87 percent; for the latter, 72 percent.

We conclude this section by summarizing information from the case studies on desired outcomes. We asked project and target school staff how students who had participated in Talent Search would be expected to differ from similar nonparticipants as a result of their experiences in the program. As might be expected, respondents consistently said that participants ought to demonstrate higher rates of high school graduation and postsecondary enrollment, which are the overarching objectives of Talent Search. Other outcomes mentioned by respondents included better knowledge of careers and their educational requirements; better knowledge of financial aid; improved self-esteem or self-confidence; better sense of

direction in life; and greater comfort on college campuses and more knowledge of assistance available to them there, such as Student Support Services. Some comments reflected projects' particular service emphases. For example, at projects that focused on academic support, interviewees mentioned better secondary school grades and test scores as expected outcomes. As for longer-term outcomes, many respondents felt fairly certain that Talent Search alumni would do better and stay longer in college than similar nonparticipants. But they also felt strongly that Talent Search projects should not be held accountable for such outcomes. As one project director stated, "We just show them to the door" of college. In the opinion of this director and other staff, once participants left Talent Search, many other factors influenced their lives, none of which the program could affect.

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

We turn now to a discussion of how participants may have benefited from Talent Search. First we consider information on participant outcomes from APRs and the project survey.³ Then we summarize anecdotal comments about outcomes from case study interviews.

PROJECT-REPORTED INFORMATION ON OUTCOMES

An aggregate analysis pooling 1998–99 APR data from all Talent Search projects showed that for three of the five major outcome objectives discussed above, the program as a whole appeared to exceed the average goal set by projects (table 7.3). About 97 percent of 6th through 11th graders stayed in school from one academic year to the next, exceeding the average goal of 89 percent for secondary school retention. About 94 percent of participating high school seniors (and GED or alternative education students) graduated from high school or received a certificate of high school equivalency, exceeding the average goal of 88 percent.⁴ And about 72 percent of postsecondary education stopouts had re-entered a postsecondary education program during the program year or reportedly would do so in the following fall. The rate exceeded the average goal of 65 percent for postsecondary re-entry.

However, the program as a whole appeared to fall short of the average goal set by projects in two areas. About 51 percent of high school dropouts re-entered a secondary education program during the program year, short of the average goal of 64 percent. (APR data did not permit calculation of an overall rate, including middle school dropouts.) And about 71 percent of high school (and high school equivalency) graduates had enrolled in a postsecondary education program during the program year or were reportedly planning to do so in the following fall, short of the average goal of 75 percent for postsecondary admissions. (Analysis also revealed

³APR and survey data both represent projects' self-reported outcome data. Neither source has been independently verified. In addition, neither source compares outcomes for participants with those of similar nonparticipants.

⁴The project survey found that the graduation rate for 12th grade participants in 1998–99 was 91 percent overall, with little variability by type of host.

that for the two key outcomes—high school graduation and postsecondary admissions—there was very little variation by type of host institution in either projects’ average goals or their actual outcomes.)

APRs also contain data on two more outcomes, in this case for high school seniors and high school (or equivalency) graduates served, also known as “college-ready” participants. Nationally, 83 percent of these participants applied for postsecondary admission and 82 percent applied for financial aid.⁵

Most projects met their goals for secondary retention and graduation, but not for secondary re-entry.

Rather than pooling data across all projects, an examination of results for individual Talent Search projects provides a more detailed perspective on participant outcomes. Such an analysis reveals that the large share of projects met their goals for secondary retention, secondary graduation, and postsecondary re-entry and that just over half of all projects met their goals for postsecondary admission (table 7.3). However, a majority of projects failed to meet their goals for secondary re-entry, a finding that may provide empirical evidence in support of staff statements about the difficulty of serving dropouts.

Table 7.3—Talent Search projects’ success in meeting goals for major participant outcomes: 1998–99

Outcome objective	Aggregated, national-level data		Disaggregated, project-level data		
	Average goal	Percentage of participants that achieved the outcome	Percentage of projects that met or exceeded their goal	Percentage of projects that missed their goal by five percentage points or less	Percentage of projects that missed their goal by more than five percentage points
Secondary school retention	89%	97%	84%	7%	9%
Secondary school graduation	88	94	87	6	7
Secondary school re-entry	65	51	38	3	59
Postsecondary admission	75	71	53	18	29
Postsecondary re-entry	65	72	81	4	15

SOURCE: Analysis of data from Talent Search Performance Reports, 1998–99.

NOTE: The number of projects in this analysis varied by outcome, ranging from 328 for postsecondary admissions to 113 for postsecondary re-entry. Like other outcomes analyses performed on APR data (U.S. Dept. of Education May 2002), the analyses followed a two-part strategy. First, projects were included only if they reported data on their outcome goal, number of relevant participants, and number of participants achieving the outcome. Second, apparently erroneous data were corrected. Specifically, when the number of participants reported as achieving an outcome exceeded the relevant number of participants reported earlier in the APR, we capped the outcome number as equal to the participant number, resulting in a 100 percent success rate for these cases. Data problems such as these should be eliminated with the new, Internet-based APR form.

⁵These percentages cannot be compared directly with any outcome goals. The related goals set by projects pertain to the percentage of “college-ready” participants who will receive assistance with applications. But goals for providing assistance are process objectives, not outcome objectives. Furthermore, there is a difference between receiving assistance with an application process and actually applying.

Postsecondary Outcomes

The project survey data enabled us to look more closely at projects' expected outcomes for one particular group—participants who had earned either a high school diploma or a GED by spring 1997. These participants are of special interest because they were in a position to fulfill Talent Search's ultimate objective of enrollment in a postsecondary education program. Results show that project staff expected the vast majority (75 percent) of participants to enroll in a 2- or 4-year college by fall 1999 (table 7.4). They reported that relatively few would go on to a vocational or proprietary school. About 2 percent were reportedly planning to enroll in other types of programs or institutions, with the military specified most frequently (52 of 80 respondents who provided a written answer). On average, projects reported that 10 percent of high school graduates and GED recipients would not continue their schooling and that the status of 5 percent of participants was unknown. Finally, participants at projects hosted by private 4-year colleges were reportedly more likely to attend a 4-year college, and participants at projects hosted by 2-year colleges were reportedly more likely to enroll in that type of college.

About three-fourths of high school graduates would reportedly enroll in college the next fall.

Table 7.4—Expected fall 1999 status of participants who had graduated from high school or received a GED by spring 1999

Average percent who would:	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Enroll in a 4-year college	41%	47%	54%	31%	43%
Enroll in a community college	34	25	23	46	33
Enroll in a vocational or proprietary school	7	9	7	5	7
Enroll in a tribal college ^a	1	1	0	1	1
Enroll in some other program or institution	2	2	1	2	2
Not continue their schooling	10	10	8	11	10
Education status unknown	5	6	6	4	4

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

^aThe survey noted that participants who would be entering a tribal college that was also a community college should be listed in the tribal college response category.

APR data provide similar details on the placements of high school graduates and postsecondary re-entry students *who were going on to some type of postsecondary education program*. Overall, about two-fifths were reportedly planning to attend a public 4-year college, and an almost equal proportion was reportedly planning to attend a 2-year institution (table 7.5). Many fewer were headed for a private 4-year college or a trade or vocational school. The pattern for projects hosted by community organizations was nearly identical to that of the overall pattern for all projects. But among projects hosted by postsecondary institutions, there was an increased likelihood that participants would attend an institution of the same type. For example, whereas 11 percent of the students overall were reportedly admitted to a private 4-year college,

Relatively few graduates enroll in private 4-year colleges.

20 percent of students at projects hosted by private 4-year colleges were reportedly admitted to a private 4-year college.

Table 7.5—Types of postsecondary institutions that high school graduates and postsecondary re-entry students planned to attend: 1998–99

Percentage admitted or readmitted to	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Public 4-year institution	41%	48%	44%	31%	41%
Private 4-year institution	11	9	20	8	12
Public or private nonprofit 2-year institution	40	34	28	55	41
Proprietary school or public or private nonprofit vocational/technical institution	6	8	9	6	5

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

Outcomes for Dropouts

The project survey also collected information from directors on outcomes for dropouts. Two potential short-term outcomes for secondary school dropouts are to re-enter a secondary education program (for example, regular or alternative high school) or to prepare for and receive a GED.⁶ The survey found that 63 percent of all Talent Search projects counted at least one participant preparing for the GED in 1998–99 (table 7.6). The number preparing for the GED averaged about 23 participants per project and was equivalent to about 68 percent of the total number of secondary school dropouts served by projects. The number of participants who received a GED averaged about 14 participants per project and was equivalent to about 61 percent of the total number preparing. (This figure can be interpreted only as a rough estimate of the overall GED success rate because some of those who were preparing may not have taken the GED examination during the same program year, and some who took the examination may not have prepared during the same year.) Some of the variation by type of host institution, particularly for the private 4-year category, may be more attributable to the small number of projects in this analysis rather than to real differences.⁷

⁶The desirable long-term outcome, of course, is that they subsequently enroll in a postsecondary education program.

⁷Only 37 private 4-year projects responded to the initial GED question; as a result, the subsequent means and percentages presented in table 7.6 are based on just 13 to 15 cases.

Table 7.6—GED preparation and outcomes: 1998–99

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percentage of projects with participants preparing for a GED	63%	66%	46%	65%	68%
Average number of participants who were preparing	23	25	11	21	25
Number preparing as a percent of number of secondary school dropouts served	68%	72%	68%	64%	67%
Average number that received a GED	14	16	6	11	19
Number of GED recipients as a percent of the number who were preparing	61%	65%	51%	49%	71%

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Exploring Outcome Differences

Using 1999–2000 APR data, we explored what factors might account for differences in some of the outcomes discussed above. Specifically, we used multivariate regression analysis to examine (1) what might account for variation in the key project outcomes of secondary school graduation, postsecondary admissions, and admission to 4-year postsecondary institutions, and (2) why graduates from projects hosted by postsecondary institutions were relatively more likely to enroll at the same type of college that hosted the Talent Search project they participated in. We controlled for factors such as the characteristics of host institutions (type, location), total number of participants served, percentage of new versus continuing participants, number of years in operation, participants' demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity, status on eligibility criteria, grade level), and the percentage of participants receiving each of the ten services. Unfortunately, however, the analyses provided little insight; the models explained only about 20 to 30 percent of the variation in project outcomes. Better data—especially measures of more factors that may influence outcomes, such as staff models and tenure—may be needed to provide more insight. As for differential enrollment rates at various types of colleges, it may simply be that students' familiarity with their host institutions may lead them to seek out similar types of colleges when they finish high school.

SUBJECTIVE INFORMATION ON OUTCOMES

People we interviewed during our site visits—project staff, school staff, students, program alumni, parents—all viewed Talent Search as a positive influence on participants. Current and former participants felt that they were better off than they would have been without the program. The outcomes mentioned by respondents varied considerably within specific projects and even within specific target schools. In other words, particular projects did not emerge as primarily affecting students in

Students and adults uniformly felt that Talent Search had a positive influence.

any particular way. We also did not detect any systematic differences in the opinions expressed by different types of interviewees. Below we summarize numerous statements made by various respondents, thereby illustrating the range of ways in which respondents saw Talent Search affecting participants.

While providing possible insights, anecdotal remarks are not hard proof of program effectiveness.

First, however, a note on respondents' comments. We met only with students who were currently participating in the program and with alumni who had gone on to college—individuals whose opinions on Talent Search are likely to be more favorable than those of students who stopped participating in the program or those of alumni who did not pursue a college education. Furthermore, anecdotes do not constitute rigorous evidence that the Talent Search program has positive effects on participants. Separating outcomes “caused by” Talent Search from those more attributable to other experiences of the same students requires systematic comparisons of outcomes for participants and similar nonparticipants.⁸

Participants reportedly had more knowledge about college.

The list of ways in which Talent Search was said to have helped students was both long and diverse. One commonly mentioned benefit was *more knowledge and information regarding postsecondary education*.

- Participants at one high school felt that Talent Search had helped them answer some of the major questions they had about going to college, such as what GPA is needed, how much college costs, what support services are available, how big colleges are, what classes are required for admission, and, once at college, what type of scholarships and financial aid may be available.
- Another student said that he did not even know that colleges offered tours to interested students. He had always just thought he would apply, be expected to pay tuition up front, and then just show up.
- A liaison to the program at one target high school opined that, compared with nonparticipants, Talent Search participants have the necessary information to make good decisions, such as what classes they need to take.

Some participants and alumni felt that the program had *improved their access to and broadened their choice of colleges*. Beyond just providing students with needed information, Talent Search project staff provided other services to make sure that students got into college—in some cases a college they had assumed was out of reach.

- A high school student described taking a program-sponsored trip while in middle school to visit a particular college and realizing instantly that it was the place for him. A second student said that

⁸Phase II of the National Evaluation of Talent Search will attempt to make such comparisons by using data from a handful of states. For a description of the planned research, see Maxfield et al., 2000.

because of Talent Search he now knew he could go straight to a major university. A third student said that he had decided to go directly to college after high school instead of first joining the Navy.

- An alumna claimed that without Talent Search she would have attended a community college; instead, she enrolled in a 4-year college. Furthermore, she said that if she had initially attended a community college, she doubted that she would have later transferred to a 4-year college. She said that her Talent Search advisor helped her prepare for the possibility of attending a 4-year college by making sure that she took algebra II and the SAT. She also saw the advisor as instrumental in securing a scholarship for her.
- Another alumnus said that in high school he did not think he could go to directly to a 4-year college but that his Talent Search advisor kept encouraging him to set his sights on a 4-year institution. When he reached his senior year in high school, the student still had not taken enough of the appropriate classes to attend a public 4-year college; nonetheless, his advisor said that enrollment in a 4-year institution was still possible. The advisor made some calls and succeeded in convincing a major public university to add the student's name to a special admission list; the student has since graduated from that university.

Yet another outcome mentioned by some participants was *doing things sooner to prepare for college than they would have otherwise*. Officials at one project said that Talent Search helps keep students on track for important steps such as registering for and taking college entrance examinations, applying for college admissions, and completing financial aid applications. At another project, a high school student said that if it were not for Talent Search, he probably would have “let it slide until twelfth grade.” Similarly, a middle school student said that if there were no Talent Search, “I wouldn’t *do* anything. I’d just worry about it until I hit high school.” And at a third project, all of the alumni we interviewed concluded that the assistance that enabled them to complete their college applications and financial aid forms early was one of the best aspects of Talent Search.

Participants reportedly prepared earlier for college.

Several interviewees described how Talent Search led to *expanded horizons*. In other words, participants had developed broader perspectives and saw more opportunities for themselves. As described above, some participants saw Talent Search as expanding their horizons with regard to college. Students who at first suspected that a college education was beyond their reach came to see it as within their grasp; students who initially thought they could attend only a certain type or level of college came to see attendance at a higher-level, more expensive, or more prestigious institution as a realistic option. We also heard several comments about broader perspectives on careers.

- A project staff member who worked with middle school students saw the project’s career focus as raising participants’ career goals. At the beginning of the school year, when asked about what careers they

wanted to pursue, some students would name occupations such as hair stylist or mechanic. Toward the end of the year, though, those students were aiming higher for more advanced careers.

- Two teachers whose classrooms were served by that staff member independently said that Talent Search taught their students a lot more about careers and college than they themselves could have and that the project helped students make an important connection between jobs and education much earlier than they otherwise would; it gave them a reason for the things they did in school.
- At another project, a high school official felt that, compared with nonparticipants, Talent Search participants tended to grow more in their career interests. The parent of a participant in that project described how the career-interest tests taken by her daughter had opened her daughter's eyes and helped lead her to an intended college major and career field. Furthermore, her son, a Talent Search alumnus, originally had professed aspirations of following his father by working in a mechanic-related job in the mining industry, but the program helped him discover an aptitude for mathematics and computers.

*Some people said
Talent Search
improved academic
performance.*

One outcome mentioned at a few projects, especially those we selected for their emphasis on academic assistance, was *improved academic performance* as reflected in higher grades or test scores. At projects that featured substantial tutoring components, many interviewees were quick to cite tutoring success stories.

- *Grades.* At one project, an alumnus said that when he started in Talent Search, he was earning a D in algebra and felt unable to do any better on his own; with tutoring, however, he raised his grade to a high B. Tutors for the project told of a student who had improved his GPA from 0.8 to 3.0 over a two-year period and of a second student who had failed algebra twice but passed it after tutoring. At another project, students mentioned improving their grades in language arts as a result of the story writing they completed in Talent Search.
- *Grade-level promotion and graduation.* At one target high school, a student speaking on behalf of himself and some other juniors said that, without Talent Search tutoring, "Some of us would still be in tenth grade." Another student said that some juniors would have dropped out. Similarly, the director of another project pointed to students' grade-to-grade promotion rates and high school completion rates as major indicators of the program's success.
- *College entrance examinations.* A high school guidance counselor at one project said that students who spent a decent amount of time in Talent Search preparing for the ACT examination often raised their composite scores on a retake by at least two points and occasionally

by much more.⁹ In addition, a counselor from a high school at another project that served all the juniors and seniors said that SAT scores had increased in the project school compared with nontarget schools in the same district.

- *Other tests.* Staff at one project cited pre- to post-test improvements on teacher-prepared examinations as well as improvements on the standardized achievement test used by the school district. Staff from another project said that the program was motivating students to work harder and helping more of them pass the state's high school exit examination.
- *Study habits and test-taking skills.* At one target high school, a student said that her tutor helped her to feel prepared, calm, and in control when taking mathematics tests. He also showed her different ways of approaching mathematics problems; those methods surprised her own teacher when she used them on a test. A guidance counselor from one of the same project's target high schools mentioned that students learned how to study in groups. Students from another project mentioned that they improved their study skills such that they were less likely to forget what they had learned in school. Staff from a third project described their participants as growing more confident about taking the ACT and SAT.

Several comments focused on how Talent Search participants were *better prepared to succeed in college* than were their peers. To a certain extent, interviewees saw this outcome as the cumulative effect of the various services provided by Talent Search, but sometimes they cited specific activities or experiences, especially those that made students more comfortable in a college environment and more familiar with support services.

- At one host college, officials viewed Talent Search alumni who enrolled there as demonstrating both a stronger determination to pursue college and a better understanding of the commitment needed to succeed in college than did similar students who had not been project participants. At another college, an administrator reported that when Talent Search alumni enrolled in that institution, they performed better than other students because of the academic support they had received, the general exposure to college they gained through field trips, and their ability to deal with the new freedoms offered by the college environment.
- An alumnus from one project explained that Talent Search not only opened the door to college but also introduced him to a network of support services to help him succeed. Specifically, his Talent Search

⁹The maximum composite score on the ACT is 36.

advisor in high school told him about some important resources at the university he was going to attend, such as tutoring assistance from a program similar to Student Support Services.

- An alumnus from a different project said a “bridge” program that she participated in during the summer after high school graduation helped with networking and gave her a connection to some of the “higher-ups” on campus. Another alumnus of the same project said that the connections he made through Talent Search and the bridge program helped him secure a work-study job at the host college when he enrolled there. He also credited Talent Search for helping him feel comfortable in speaking to professors during their office hours, which he thought had helped him do better in classes.

Talent Search reportedly affected participants in various intangible ways.

In addition to the above outcomes, people mentioned several other perceived benefits of participating in Talent Search. Some of these additional outcomes were tangible. For example, a high school counselor pointed to the amount of scholarship money received by participants. Students at one project spoke of improving their attendance at school so that they would be eligible to have the Talent Search program pay part of the cost of a school-sponsored trip to Disney World. Participants in some projects reported benefiting from referrals to summer programs, such as an Upward Bound Math/Science program. Two students at one target high school felt that they had benefited from assistance in securing a summer job.

Other outcomes were more intangible, such as changed attitudes.

- Students at one project, for example, described *learning to control their temper* and walk away from certain situations in response to what they had learned about conflict resolution. A participant at another project said, “I have more patience.”
- Sometimes staff described students as *developing a “sense of direction”* or a clearer plan for their lives. A student speaking for several others said that they now believed that they had a goal for the future. Although we stressed earlier that most students already had a desire to attend college when they joined Talent Search, a few high school students and alumni said the program had changed their aspirations. Before joining Talent Search, they said, they mostly wanted to “get out of school and just live life”; eventually, they developed a desire for a college education.
- Another perceived intangible benefit was *increased confidence*. At one project, a high school student said that the program made him feel better about himself and the future, that he became more confident. Elsewhere, a student described how her participation in Talent Search had increased her self-confidence to the point where she was able to compete in speech and debate tournaments. Similarly, at

another project, a student said, “I was shy and now I am more outspoken.”

- Interviewees at a couple of projects described participants as becoming *more organized* and better at time management. Participants also cited *improved communication and teamwork* skills. An alumna said that the program taught her how to *set goals and achieve them*.
- A middle school counselor said that the program *builds self-esteem* and makes students feel special. Coincidentally, a middle school student from a different project said, “I learned how to respect myself.”
- Talent Search also reportedly helped *motivate students to work harder*, according to staff from one project we visited. Elsewhere, an alumnus said that Talent Search helped build his motivation to work harder in school, helped him learn to enjoy school, and kept him focused on “doing good things” and staying away from bad influences. A current participant in that project said that he had been earning As and Bs but was not necessarily trying to do his best. With Talent Search, he made homework completion a high priority.

Did other groups besides participants experience positive outcomes? Despite little or no talk of “spillover” effects, in which benefits extend directly or indirectly to nonparticipants in target schools or the wider community, we heard the occasional comment about how Talent Search had benefited parents of participants. At one project, a noncollege-educated parent said that through her children’s involvement in Talent Search she herself had “learned lots about college.” A school liaison to a second Talent Search project said that she sometimes sees participants’ parents become interested in pursuing postsecondary schooling. At a third project, a parent said that the program “empowered” her and helped her become more involved in her children’s education; it gave her more confidence to talk to her children’s teachers.

Many of the positive outcomes described above are closely interrelated. Some of them may be seen as intermediate outcomes that lead to other, subsequent outcomes. For example, attitudinal changes, such as greater self-confidence, may lead to behavioral changes, such as better academic performance; better academic performance, in turn, may lead to greater postsecondary options; and so on. But some relationships between outcomes may be more complex. In the view of one target school guidance counselor, for instance, academic success is the best way to build self-esteem and the confidence that leads to more success. A longitudinal study would be necessary to explore such issues.

PROJECT DATA, RECORD KEEPING, AND EVALUATION

The ability of Talent Search projects to demonstrate empirically how they help program participants depends on the participant information they collect and maintain. Systematically collecting and analyzing process and outcome information

is also critical to individual projects' evaluations. Both the project survey and the case studies shed light on projects' practices in collecting, maintaining, and evaluating process and outcome information.

Projects collected differing types and amounts of data on participants.

Two questions in the survey directly addressed projects' data-collection efforts.¹⁰ One asked about the types of items that projects had attempted to measure. The outcome that the largest share (85 percent) of projects tried to measure was completion of college financial aid forms, followed closely by completion of college applications, which 82 percent of projects had attempted to measure (table 7.7).¹¹ Of the eight items we asked about, a majority of projects had not measured three of the items—participant self-esteem, completion of GED preparation courses, and number of college preparation courses taken. There was little variation between projects operated by different types of host institutions. Overall, almost one-third (30 percent) of projects had tried measuring seven or eight of the items, but about 23 percent had tried measuring three or fewer; the mean number that projects had tried to measure was 5.1.

¹⁰A major purpose of these questions, and one discussed below on record-keeping, was to help assess the feasibility of using project data in an impact analysis during Phase II of the National Evaluation of Talent Search. The implementation study did not set out to describe projects' data-collection efforts. For an earlier detailed look at seven projects' data-collection efforts, see Decision Information Resources, 1994.

¹¹Given that all Talent Search projects are required to report in their APRs the number of participants who applied for financial aid and the number who applied for postsecondary admission, it is unclear why the results were so far below 100 percent. In a related survey item, 96 percent of respondents reported monitoring or tracking college application completion (table 7.8).

Table 7.7—Participant information that Talent Search projects have attempted to measure

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percentage of projects that have attempted to measure:					
College financial aid form completion	85%	85%	84%	84%	87%
College application completion	82	82	78	80	87
College aspirations	70	73	70	67	68
SAT/ACT test taking	68	67	64	67	73
Financial aid awareness	62	60	62	64	63
Participant self-esteem	49	48	54	50	45
GED course preparation completion	44	42	46	43	47
Number of college preparatory courses taken	43	48	35	41	47
Percentage of projects that have attempted to measure:					
All eight of the above	12	10	14	12	13
Seven of the above	18	22	14	18	15
Six of the above	22	20	25	22	22
Five of the above	14	17	14	12	10
Four of the above	12	8	14	10	22
Three of the above	8	10	3	8	8
Two or fewer of the above	15	14	17	17	10

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

A second survey question asked about the types of participant information that projects tracked or monitored and whether projects tracked or monitored the information for some or all participants. All but one of the eight items—hours of participation in the program—referred to participant outcomes. All respondents reported that they tracked or monitored high school graduation, and over 95 percent tracked or monitored progress through high school, college enrollment, and completion of college applications (table 7.8). Only one item was tracked by a majority of projects, but not typically for all participants: participants' course selection. College graduation was the only outcome that a majority of projects did not track or monitor at all. Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of all projects tracked or monitored seven or all eight types of information, with the mean number of items at 6.7.

Table 7.8—Information that Talent Search projects tracked or monitored on program participants

	Yes, for all participants	Yes, for some participants	Not for any participants
Percentage of projects that tracked or monitored:			
High school graduation	94%	6%	0%
Year-to-year progression through high school	91	8	2
Enrollment in college	83	14	3
Completion of college applications	74	22	4
Contact hours or participation in program	70	13	17
Grades	65	26	10
Course selection of participants	35	42	23
Graduation from college	15	26	59
Percentage of projects that tracked or monitored:			
All eight of the above		26	
Seven of the above		37	
Six of the above		24	
Five of the above		9	
Four or fewer of the above		3	

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

For many kinds of data, paper records are more common than computer-based records.

A third survey question asked not just about the types of participant data that projects collected, but also about how they maintained it—on paper, in a computer database, or both. Virtually all projects (97 to 99 percent) maintained records on active participants' demographic characteristics and the services they received—information that is critical for completing the APR; the vast majority maintained both paper and computerized records (table 7.9). In contrast, less than two-thirds of projects maintained participants' scores on college entrance examinations (ACT or SAT) or other standardized tests, and a majority of those that did maintain such records kept only hard-copy records. Projects often maintained records both on paper and in a computerized format, but there were a few items (including transcripts and career survey results) that were much more likely to be maintained on paper only. Very small percentages of projects reported maintaining the various types of information we asked about in a computer database only.

Table 7.9—How Talent Search projects maintained data on active participants

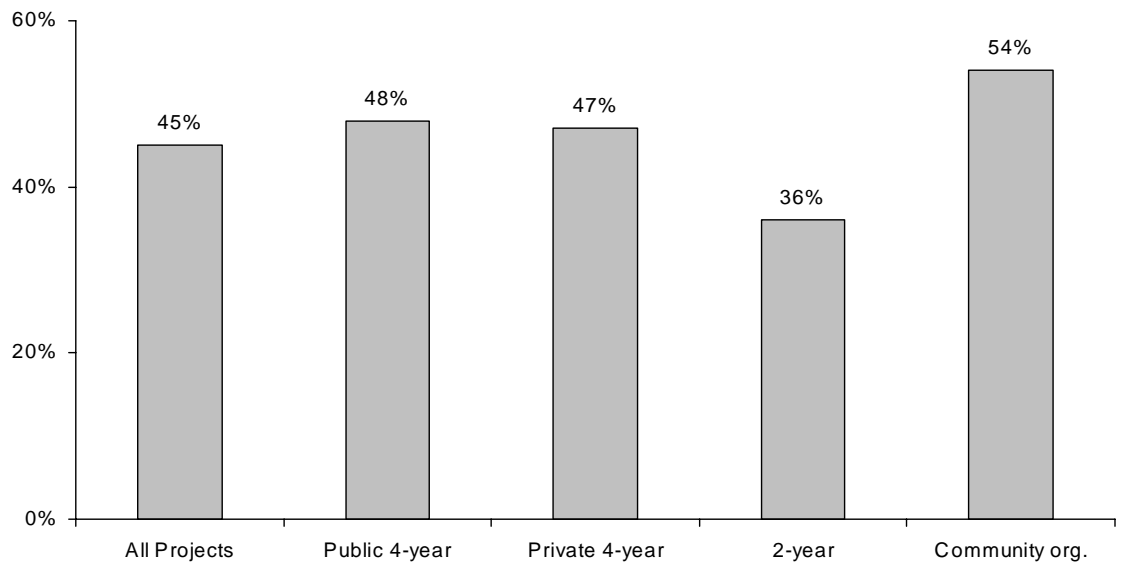
	Maintained on paper only	Maintained in a computer database only	Maintained both on paper and in a computer database	Not maintained in either form
Records of services received	26%	2%	70%	1%
Individual participant contact sheets	30	2	67	2
Demographic information	10	1	86	3
Project's assessment records	46	2	38	14
High school or postsecondary transcripts	64	1	20	15
College or postsecondary school enrollment	29	5	50	16
Career-survey results	56	2	20	21
Recommendations or commendations	63	1	12	24
Follow-up data on former participants	29	3	41	27
Financial aid applications	42	3	27	28
College or postsecondary school applications	42	4	23	31
ACT scores	37	3	25	35
SAT scores	36	3	21	40
Other standardized test scores	39	3	17	40
Diagnostic test data	27	1	8	64
Attitude scale profiles	21	1	5	73

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

A task closely related to data collection and record keeping is project evaluation, and it is a task that all projects must undertake in one way or another. Evaluation plans are one of the dimensions on which Talent Search grant applications are scored. Information on participant outcomes is obviously central to evaluating project effectiveness, but information on project processes is also needed so that staff can consider whether and where they may need to make improvements. Three project survey questions addressed evaluation practices.

Most evaluations of Talent Search projects are internal evaluations. At the time of the project survey, fewer than half (45 percent) of all Talent Search projects had undergone an external evaluation (figure 7.1). Projects hosted by community organizations were somewhat more likely than those hosted by postsecondary institutions to have undergone an external evaluation. A previous review of 31 recent Talent Search grant applications found that some external evaluations were to be conducted by advisory committees composed of community members and that sometimes professionals from other Talent Search projects participated (Silva and Kim 1999).

Figure 7.1—Percentage of Talent Search projects that have had an external evaluation conducted



SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

Most projects conduct both year-end and ongoing internal evaluations.

Overall, more than 90 percent of Talent Search projects reported that their evaluations involved an ongoing assessment of program operation and success—a type of assessment that is sometimes called a formative evaluation (table 7.10). Grant applications commonly described plans calling for primary staff to meet on a regular basis during the year to assess a project’s progress. Case studies confirmed that project staff did in fact meet regularly to address a wide range of operational issues, from recruitment and target school relations to positive and negative aspects of particular activities. In addition, over 60 percent of all projects reported that their evaluations involved a comprehensive year-end study, sometimes called a summative evaluation. Such a study provided an opportunity to make final determinations about project success in meeting process and outcome objectives.¹² There was almost no variation in choice of evaluation by type of host institution. Response patterns revealed that about 60 percent of projects undertook both formative and summative evaluations and that about 30 percent relied on only an ongoing (formative) assessment.

¹²In addition, about 15 percent of projects indicated that some other type of evaluation was performed for their programs, but the responses did not provide any clear insight into the nature of the evaluations. Finally, about 3 percent of projects reported no evaluations undertaken for their programs.

Table 7.10—Types of evaluations performed for Talent Search projects

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percentage of projects using:					
Ongoing assessment of program operation and success	92%	89%	94%	90%	97%
Comprehensive year-end study	63	63	58	65	63
Percentage of projects using:					
Ongoing assessment only	30	27	38	28	35
Year-end study only	2	1	0	3	2
Both of the above	61	61	56	61	62
Neither of the above	7	10	6	7	2

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

What types of information were used to evaluate projects' success in meeting their goals and objectives? Of the 11 types of information that our project survey asked about, the most common response was an analysis of participants' school retention or graduation rates (table 7.11). This result is not surprising in that these rates pertain to major outcome objectives. The second- and third-most common categories of information were written evaluations prepared by, respectively, students and staff. One case study project, for example, distributed feedback forms with open-ended questions after some events (such as workshops, college visits, and other field trips) and used year-end evaluation forms that asked students to rate the program on various dimensions. The least commonly used type of information was a comparison of standardized test scores for participants and nonparticipants (18 percent). Overall, about 15 percent of Talent Search projects used eight or more types of information, but about 26 percent used three or fewer, with the mean at 5.

There were a few cases of notable (but nonsystematic) variation by type of host institution. For example, projects hosted by community-based organizations were much more likely than other projects to (1) follow-up on participants who left the program but remained in school and (2) compare the retention rates of participants with those of nonparticipants. However, we have no insights to explain the differences in the information collected.

Table 7.11—Information used to evaluate Talent Search projects' success in meeting their goals and objectives

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percentage of projects using:					
Analysis of school retention or graduation rates for those served	94%	96%	86%	95%	92%
Written student evaluations of services	82	84	83	85	76
Written staff evaluations of project procedures	65	70	73	56	65
Analysis of course completion rates for those served	48	56	46	44	45
Analysis of retention rates for those served compared to nonparticipants	40	38	30	38	52
Analysis of standardized test scores for those served	38	40	41	32	43
Follow-up of those who left the program and the school	28	28	22	25	38
External evaluations ^a	32	30	35	32	35
Follow-up of those who left the program but remained in school	31	30	24	27	43
Analysis of course completion rates for those served compared to nonparticipants	22	18	19	22	28
Analysis of standardized test scores for those served compared to nonparticipants	18	18	19	17	20
Percentage of projects using:					
10 to 11 of the above	6	6	6	5	7
Eight to nine of the above	9	9	3	8	14
Six to seven of the above	20	16	25	19	26
Four to five of the above	39	47	42	35	33
Two to three of the above	23	21	22	30	14
None or one of the above	3	1	3	3	7

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

^aRespondents who said “yes” to this item were asked to specify the type of external evaluation. Respondents most often mentioned feedback and assessment from target school staff, followed by feedback and assessment from the host institution.

The preceding tables and narrative may give the impression that many Talent Search projects maintain a great deal of data on program participants and use it extensively to assess program effectiveness. But the situation is not that clear. For example, projects that reported that they had attempted to measure various outcomes may not have succeeded in measuring the outcomes, or may have stopped due to associated costs or difficulties. In addition, the project survey did not collect information on how projects selected nonparticipants for comparison with participants.

The case studies provided a different perspective on data collection, record keeping, and program evaluation. The overall impression that emerged was that these projects did not place much emphasis on data collection and analysis. Although most case study project staff had fairly firm beliefs about the ways in which their participants benefited from Talent Search, they did not have objective data that would support those beliefs. The projects focused their record keeping and data analysis on the elements required for the APR, such as high school graduation and other major outcome objectives. By and large, projects did not collect data on the other outcomes they claimed their participants were achieving. A project with a major emphasis on tutoring, for example, collected no objective information, such as course grades, on students' academic performance. Similarly, a project with a substantial test preparation component for high school students did not collect data on students' SAT or ACT scores.

Projects also did not use a rigorous approach to evaluation. None of the 14 case study sites systematically compared outcomes for program participants with a matched group of nonparticipants. Only one of 31 previously reviewed Talent Search grant applications mentioned a plan to conduct such an evaluation (Silva and Kim 1999).

What might account for projects' practices regarding data collection and evaluation? First, projects indicated they did not have sufficient resources—such as time, funds, or expertise—to mount a serious data-collection and analysis effort. As it was, staff in some projects already spent one day each week engaged in paperwork, such as recording which students had received which services that week. More time on administrative tasks would have meant less time in the field working with participants. Second, staff apparently operated under the assumption that participants would stop using project services if such services did not meet their needs. In other words, why track students' grades to measure the effectiveness of a tutoring component when voluntary participation rates in tutoring suggest that the service must be producing the desired outcome? Third, project staff seemed to feel that they were close enough to their participants and key target-school staff to obtain a well-informed view of how students were benefiting from the program. Fourth, in some cases, projects might not have had easy access to needed data sources such as student transcripts.

Overall, evidence suggests that data collection and record-keeping appeared to be among the greatest challenges faced by some Talent Search projects. When the survey asked directors to list problematic aspects of their projects, *collecting and maintaining student records* and *student tracking and follow-up* were among the more frequently cited problems.

Projects' data collection and evaluation efforts were limited in part by resources.

Data collection was a challenge for some projects.

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APPENDIX A

A FOCUSED LOOK AT THREE TYPES OF SERVICES: PROVIDING ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE, USING TECHNOLOGY, AND SERVING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

As mentioned in chapter 1, a major objective of the case studies was to gather detailed information on a few topics of widespread interest to the Talent Search community. The topics selected for their likely interest were the provision of academic assistance, the use of technology in serving students, and serving middle school students. We settled on these topics—and identified appropriate candidate sites—after considering several sources of information: interviews conducted with Talent Search staff during the first round of site visits; informal interviews with Talent Search staff serving as officers of the regional organizations for TRIO staff;¹ responses to a 1998 survey of Talent Search programs about services to middle school students as conducted by the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE); responses to a fax sent by COE to virtually all Talent Search projects asking about topics of interest; and telephone calls to several individuals knowledgeable about the Talent Search community.

Site selection was based solely on our initial understanding of the degree to which projects emphasized one or more of the three service areas; we did not consider type of host institution or location. However, given that such factors may be of interest, some basic characteristics of the six grantees selected for this part of our study follow:

¹There are 10 such organizations: Association for Equality and Excellence in Education (AEEE); Association of Special Programs in Region Eight (ASPIRE); Caribbean Association of TRIO Programs (CATP); Mid-America Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (MAEOPP); Mideastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (MEAEOPP); Northwest Association of Special Programs (NASP); New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA); Southern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (SAEOPP); Southwest Association of Student Assistance Programs (SWASAP); and Western Association of Educational Opportunity Personnel (WESTOP).

- Two public 4-year colleges in small cities
- Two public 4-year colleges in large cities
- One private 4-year college in a large city
- One nonprofit community organization in a large city

Coincidentally, some of the eight randomly selected projects were also strong in one or more of the three service areas of interest; therefore, this appendix also draws on relevant examples from those projects.

Before turning to the three special topics, we describe the objectives and limits of our qualitative research. To begin, the practices discussed here are meant to be illustrative of how projects could, if they so desired, provide certain services. By focusing only on selected topics, we do not mean to imply that Talent Search personnel should be paying particular attention to these matters relative to other issues or concerns. We recognize that opinions differ on how best to use program resources and that projects operate under widely different circumstances. Furthermore, we cannot present the activities described below as exemplary or promising practices. We are not in a position to judge the effectiveness of the approaches we have chosen to highlight. Undoubtedly, we could have identified and studied many other Talent Search projects that use different but equally interesting service approaches in the three topic areas. In summary, we make no judgments as to whether other Talent Search projects would benefit from adopting similar service approaches. Rather, we simply believe that the information will be of interest to a substantial portion of Talent Search personnel around the country.

PROVIDING ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

In considering academic assistance as a topic to focus on in this report, we discerned among Talent Search staff two markedly different viewpoints about providing academic assistance through Talent Search. Many people we spoke with felt that academic assistance was an important service that Talent Search projects could provide, perhaps even *should* provide, and were interested in learning about how projects around the country provide such support. Some project directors, however, felt that their limited resources made it imprudent to implement an academic assistance component. One director said, for example, that with local middle schools spending \$4,700 per student per year and “failing miserably,” his Talent Search project could not expect to have any impact on academic outcomes with funding of \$190 per participant per year. While we do not know the extent to which these two opposing viewpoints prevail, the contrast was nonetheless striking. By focusing on academic assistance in this chapter, we are not taking sides in the debate but instead are simply providing information that will be of interest to many Talent Search personnel around the country.

Although a wide variety of services could be considered as falling under the rubric of academic assistance, we focused particularly on services designed to help students to perform better in their regular school work and on school examinations. In practice, academic assistance as defined here can take the form of tutoring or other types of subject-specific instruction whether provided by a person or through self-paced computer programs. It excludes teaching or reinforcing general study skills as well as preparing students for college entrance examinations such as the SAT and ACT.

Below we focus on academic support services at four of the projects we visited.

AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: PROJECT H

Project H is based at a 4-year college in a large city. It serves nine target schools, some in the inner city and some in surrounding urban communities. Academic assistance is provided primarily to participants in the four target high schools; services to middle school students focus mainly on personal development and career exploration, not on improving academic performance.

The project's academic support services take two forms, tutoring and classroom instruction, with tutoring the predominant mode of assistance. Tutoring services vary somewhat from school to school, but the basic plan calls for offering one or two hours of tutoring after school four days a week throughout the school year. At a couple of target schools, tutoring is also available for up to an hour before school. The before-school option was often helpful to students who participated in sports or other after-school activities. Project data for 1998–99 indicate that tutoring was available an average of 128 days out of a 174-day school year in each of the four target high schools.

Tutoring sessions function like voluntary study-hall periods—students can either work independently or seek help from the tutors as needed. Students typically ask for help with particular homework assignments, although they sometimes seek more general assistance with academic subjects. In most cases, tutors work with students on a one-on-one basis, but sometimes two or more students who need similar assistance work together with one tutor. The tutors take an active role in determining whether and in what ways students need assistance. Tutors provided a wide range of assistance in the sessions we observed, from talking with one student about a book she was reading for a social studies class to helping a small group of students understand and solve trigonometry problems.

At one of Project H's target high schools, the Talent Search program provides academic assistance through traditional classroom instruction. In one high school we visited, for example, the Talent Search project sponsored a basic mathematics class designed primarily for seniors at risk of not graduating due to their poor performance in their regular mathematics classes. The class was held after school four times a week for one hour during the fall semester. Led by one teacher, it had an enrollment of about 20 students. During the session we observed, the instructor

was teaching about relationships between overlapping sets and subsets, including the use of Venn diagrams.

Project H recruits regular classroom teachers to provide tutoring or instruction or both on a part-time basis. They receive \$10.30 per hour and typically work eight hours per week for Talent Search. (Project H's 1998–99 budget included \$25,600 for tutors' and instructors' wages.) Tutors and instructors who work with Project H appeared not to be motivated by the money. In fact, we learned that many of them could easily work after school as private tutors for \$25.00 per hour. The project director has been successful in recruiting school staff with a special interest in helping disadvantaged students.

Although this project's academic support services were optional, students struggling in one or more classes are encouraged to attend the Talent Search tutoring sessions. Several of the students who attended tutoring sessions on a regular basis told us that they used the assistance to keep their grades high enough to maintain their eligibility for participation in school athletics. A minority of official program participants in the target high schools took advantage of tutoring sessions during 1998–99, according to project records, but they are the students whom program staff know best and are considered the project's core participants.

Why and how did Project H come to place a major emphasis on academic support, and what led to the service structure described above? Fundamentally, the focus on academic assistance reflects the vision of the original director and chief officials at the host institution. That vision has been central to the project since its inception. The officials saw a need for precollege services for students “in the middle” in their high schools—those students who were not already performing at a high academic level. They felt, for example, that the local Upward Bound projects, one of which reportedly requires its participants to maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average, were serving only the best and brightest of the city's low-income and minority students, those who were “pretty much assured of succeeding” even without special assistance. The people behind Project H said that they wanted to reach down below the top 10 percent of students and that they knew that such students would need help with academics. Other tutoring options are available in some target high schools but typically are not available as often or as reliably as is Talent Search. “If you want to improve your grades and get college advice,” said one high school student, “this is the program to join.”

The focus on high school as opposed to middle school students reflects a belief that the former understand the importance of academic success and thus can be motivated to improve their school performance. In contrast, key project and target school staff believe that middle school students generally are not developmentally ready to focus seriously on academics. As a counselor from one target middle school explained, right after puberty middle school students are thinking much more about relationships than life after high school, which seems a long way off. In addition, middle school students often operate with the belief that if they fail a class, they “can always go to summer school” to make it up, whereas high school students

understand that failing a class may prevent them from graduating or participating in interscholastic sports.

The reliance on target school staff as Talent Search staff reflects a belief that teacher involvement is critical to the success of any school-based program. Project H's former director said that during her 22 years as a teacher in local schools, she had seen many programs fall short of their potential because of a lack of buy-in by school staff and students and limited relations between program staff and students. She felt strongly that visits to a school once or twice a week by outsiders would not lead to long-term impacts. The school and its students need to have a sense of ownership. "Kids are territorial about their schools," she said. "They don't necessarily accept people popping into and out of that territory. You have to be *of* the school, not just in it."

Using full-time target school staff as Talent Search tutors and instructors, the current director elaborated, means that adults affiliated with the program see the students "all the time," not just an hour or so each week, as is common in other Talent Search projects. The Talent Search tutors talk to program participants in the hallways between class periods and so on—not just when they are "on the clock" during their official tutoring hours—demonstrating to students that they care and building closer relationships. Finally, Talent Search staff who are drawn from within a target school may be especially effective at communicating with other school staff about individual student needs, curriculum, and other matters.

One challenge we heard about at Project H concerned the ability of some tutors to assist students in subjects outside their area of expertise. In response, the project tried to schedule teachers with different backgrounds—such as an English teacher and a mathematics teacher—to be on duty at the same time. That way, a tutor could, if needed, refer a student to her colleague for more-specialized assistance. Another strategy we observed at one target school was to use primarily special education teachers as tutors. These teachers told us that they were trained to diagnose students' learning issues and adapt their instructional approach accordingly. In addition, the special education teachers were experienced in juggling many students and subjects at one time, were generally familiar with all the key curricula in the school, and were adept in helping students individually.

AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS: PROJECT M

Project M is based at a 4-year college in a large city, although most of its nine target high schools and five target middle schools are located in surrounding suburban school districts. Project M's academic support services are similar in many respects to those of Project H. For example, services consist mainly of after-school tutoring, and the tutors are teachers from the target schools. An important difference, however, is that academic assistance in Project M is provided to middle school students, not to high school students, for whom services focus on college information and assistance with college and financial aid applications. Four of the five target middle schools offer tutoring services.

Since its inception, Project M, which first received funding around the time that the Talent Search program increased its emphasis on serving middle school students, has focused on academic support for middle school students. Project staff polled school principals and found substantial interest in supplemental services that would help raise middle school students' standardized test scores and improve their academic performance in general. The perceived need for higher testing and academic performance meshed with the perspective and philosophy of the Talent Search staff. Project staff believe that early academic intervention is an important way to get students on the right track, reducing the likelihood that they will drop out in later years. They also feel that the target schools are not able to give students all the academic help they need. The host institution's TRIO director, who also oversees an Upward Bound project, looked to that program as a model for designing a new Talent Search project. She recognized from the outset that, given its funding level, Talent Search could not offer academic support services for all participants or with the same intensity as Upward Bound, but she chose to emphasize academics to the extent possible among middle school students.

Academic assistance is typically available two to three hours a day four days a week through most of the school year. One of the target middle schools offered tutoring services on three weekday afternoons and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Students can receive help with homework in any subject, but the program emphasizes English, mathematics, and science. Academic support is provided through two components—tutoring sessions and computer labs. Group counseling sessions—on topics such as conflict resolution and careers—sometimes make up a third component in a typical day's Talent Search programming.

Project M relies on 12 part-time tutors, all of them regular teachers in the target middle schools. One advantage of using the target schools' regular classroom teachers as tutors for the Talent Search program, staff explained, was that the teachers were familiar with the types of homework and assignments the students were working on. Tutors work six to eight hours per week and are paid \$12.50 per hour. As was the case with Project H, teachers in Project M's target schools could earn substantially more for private tutoring—reportedly over \$30 per hour. The teachers undergo training in tutoring skills and counseling techniques as well as in the instructional software that students use in the computer labs. The project director oversees the tutors' work by reviewing the forms on which they keep track of students' needs and the services provided and by occasionally visiting the schools and observing tutoring sessions.

Students who are struggling academically are scheduled and expected to participate in tutoring; students who are doing sufficiently well in school are excused from tutoring but are generally expected to participate in the other program activities—computer labs and counseling. In reality, however, there are no mandatory participation requirements for struggling students. Those who participate infrequently are not automatically dropped from the program rolls. For example, students who participate in other extracurricular activities, such as cheerleading or sports, are

routinely allowed to skip Talent Search. Of the 75 program participants at one middle school we visited, 25 regularly attended tutoring sessions.

To determine the academic areas in which students most need help, the project relies not only on student self-reports and teacher or counselor assessments but also on frequent diagnostic testing, including teacher-made tests; standardized tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills®, which is used in all the target schools; and other assessments such as the Coopersmith Inventory and the Mooney Problem Checklist. Tutors are expected to consult with students' regular teachers to discuss deficiencies and areas of need and to review students' grades. To track student progress, tutors keep weekly records indicating how many hours students spent in tutoring, in what areas they needed assistance, and how those needs were addressed.

Students cited the opportunity for tutoring as a major reason for joining the Talent Search program. Even students who were performing well in school said that they wanted to bring their grades up higher. Middle school participants offered lots of positive comments about their Talent Search tutors.

At one middle school we visited, all 30 students in attendance at the tutoring session started out in one classroom where they did their homework. The three tutors in the classroom helped students as needed, but some students who had the same assignments worked alone or in pairs or small groups without asking for assistance. After tutors verified that students had completed their homework and checked it for errors,² the students were released to work in the computer lab, taking advantage of educational software. The opportunity to use the computers was clearly a major motivation for students to complete their homework. In the school's computer lab, which featured 34 desktop computers, sixth graders worked on a lesson about onomatopoeia, seventh graders on a variety of spelling, vocabulary, and reading comprehension exercises, and eighth graders on a lesson about prefixes and suffixes.

At a second middle school we visited, students were divided into three groups—one in tutoring, one using computers, and one in group counseling—and rotated between these activities at set intervals. During the computer session, students worked in pairs on a program that focused on mathematics topics such as fractions, decimals, percentages, and ratios.

One challenge Project M has faced with its after-school tutoring component is transportation. Some students cannot participate to the extent they desire because reliable transportation home is not available when the program ends each day. In at least one of the target schools, however, project staff arrived at a creative solution by teaming up with another after-school program that does have funds for

²All Talent Search participants in this school carry a daily planner, provided by the program, in which they list their homework assignments and other short-term objectives. Tutors sign the planners when the students have completed their homework during the after-school tutoring session, helping some parents feel more confident that their children are keeping up with their school work.

transportation. The other program's participants are allowed to use the Talent Search project's computer resources and, in exchange, Talent Search participants receive rides home on the other program's bus.

AFTER-SCHOOL TUTORING AND SATURDAY TEST PREPARATION SESSIONS: PROJECT N

Project N is hosted by a 4-year college in a large city. It covers four target middle schools and eight target high schools, all located relatively close by in the inner city. Students in the schools have historically scored much lower than their peers across the state on required standardized tests.³ More generally, students in the target schools are struggling with their regular classes. At one target school, guidance counselors estimated that 80 percent of students receive an F in any given grading period. Performance issues were a key factor behind Project N's decision to make academic assistance a major element of its program offerings. Interestingly, some of the target schools are served by more than one Talent Search project, but Project N was distinguished from the others by its focus on academics.

Project N's academic support services consist primarily of tutoring and test preparation classes provided on weekday afternoons and Saturdays during the school year, although in some years when funds are available, the project offers a two- to three-week summer session focused mainly on academics.

Project N uses college students from the host institution as tutors and test preparation course instructors. They receive about \$7.00 per hour and work from five to 15 hours per week. Several tutors on the roster were themselves former Talent Search participants. Tutors do not specialize in particular subjects but instead try to provide whatever assistance is needed.

Tutoring is provided at the host college campus, in office space devoted to several precollege programs. It is available Monday through Thursday from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to noon. All students, regardless of grade level, can drop in whenever they need individualized help from one of the tutors on duty. On the day we observed the program, two tutors were on duty; on another day, one tutor was on duty. The project has no attendance requirements, but some students we met with told us that their parents made them attend tutoring sessions.

Students can receive specific help with particular homework assignments or more general tutoring on course material. Sometimes they bring in papers or other completed assignments for tutors to review before turning them in at school. At the time of our visit, plans were underway to introduce two forms to guide and monitor

³For example, in 1997–98, 24 percent of 11th graders in the target schools passed a statewide examination in mathematics compared with 86 percent of students in the state; 28 percent passed the examination in reading compared with 84 percent at large; and 34 percent passed the examination in writing compared with 88 percent at large. In addition, of those students who took the SAT that year, the average score in the target high schools was 735 compared with a statewide average of 1,006.

tutoring services: an academic improvement plan would focus on needed areas of improvement and a tutoring report form would record services provided.

The second major academic support service available at Project N is test preparation. Although services are offered to help students prepare for the SAT, we focus on the project's efforts to improve student performance on statewide middle school and high school proficiency tests. These are high-stakes examinations. For example, if eighth graders fail an examination, they must take remedial classes in mathematics or English during ninth grade, which can prevent them from taking the other courses they need to be ready for college. High school seniors must pass the examination as a condition of graduation.

Test preparation classes are held on Saturday mornings from 9:00 to noon at the host college campus. Classes last for 10 weeks. Separate sections are held for middle school and high school students. The classes, offered twice a year, typically operate at capacity, with 20 to 30 students. Instructors administer a pre-test at the beginning of the class and a post-test at the end to gauge student improvement. Results are sent home by mail to each student's parents. Each class has a lead instructor for English and mathematics and two teaching assistants. Instruction focuses primarily on subject matter content and secondarily on test-taking skills and strategies.

In addition to tutoring and test preparation, one senior staff member leads an algebra enrichment pilot program. She works with a small group of ninth graders who are earning a C or lower in their regular algebra class. Students go to the host campus twice a week for after-school sessions aimed at improving their understanding of key concepts and enhancing their ability to solve algebra problems.

Project N's summer program reportedly resembles its Saturday test preparation sessions. Four days a week the participants spend 90 minutes each on mathematics and language arts, followed by group counseling and skills development sessions. (Fridays are devoted to cultural and fun-filled field trips.) When held, the summer program has been able to accommodate virtually all interested students, an average of about 60.

As with Projects H and M, a relatively small number of participants in Project N take advantage of tutoring and other academic support services. For those students interested in Project N's various types of academic support, one potential barrier is transportation; students must find their own way to and from the host campus. Another issue is some students' reluctance to travel out of their own neighborhoods, which one person described as "balkanized." Project staff would like to have funding to provide transportation or subsidize bus fares.

AFTER-SCHOOL CLASSES AND TUTORING: PROJECT S

Project S is operated by a community-based organization in the heart of a large city. The organization, which has a long history in the city, operates several other programs in addition to Talent Search, including Early Head Start, an after-school

program, and a child care program; Talent Search is the organization's only precollege program. The project covers five target high schools⁴ and five target middle schools, all located in the inner city.

This project's focus on academics has mainly been a response to a perception that the city schools provide a generally weak education and that students therefore need supplemental support if they are to be well prepared for college. But the academic focus took on additional importance in recent years when the state implemented a policy requiring all students to pass examinations in English and mathematics as condition of receiving a high school diploma. In fact, the large majority of Talent Search participants at Project S receive little in the way of academic support services; their exposure to the program comes mainly in the form of one-on-one college advisory sessions and career and financial aid workshops delivered at target high schools and program headquarters. A small number of highly motivated students, however, participate in an academically intensive program track that we call "Aim High."

Aim High involves an extensive schedule of academic services Monday through Thursday.⁵ From 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., students can attend an independent study hall session. Alternatively, they may participate in a wide range of recreational or cultural enrichment activities, some of which, such as poetry and computers, could help them with their regular school work. From 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., the project offers structured academic courses designed to help students pass the state's standardized examinations in particular subjects. During the 1999-2000 school year, course offerings were as follows: Monday, U.S. history and English; Tuesday, global studies; Wednesday, math I, II, and III; Thursday, biology, chemistry, and physics. Simultaneously, for students not taking a class, one-on-one tutoring is available. Tutoring sessions allow participants to receive individualized help with their school work. Project staff design a schedule for each participant based on the student's needs and interests (and, of course, in consideration of experience in the program and activity enrollment limits). All Aim High participants must take at least one of the structured classes. To help gauge Aim High participants' academic needs, project staff send a form to all the participants' regular school teachers twice a year, asking them to list all the major assignments that will be due during the semester and to describe the specific skills or concepts the student will need to improve on in order to excel in the course.

Project S draws on a large pool of volunteers to serve as tutors for Aim High; about 80 volunteers were on the project rolls when we visited. Some tutors are working professionals or other adults, but the vast majority are students at a nearby

⁴The project also serves students from a number of other high schools, but provides only provides services at the five designated target schools.

⁵Aim High also operates from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Fridays, but the only academic-oriented activity is a structured class to prepare students for the verbal portion of the SAT; a class focused on the mathematics portion is held on Tuesday nights.

university. The students were part of a large community service effort promoted by the university's president. Project S's host organization was one of eight community-based organizations where volunteers could work. No matter how many hours per week they volunteered, tutors at Project S were expected to commit to a fixed schedule, which enabled the full-time staff to try to match tutors to particular students based on subject interest and expertise, gender, and race or ethnicity.

Aim High is designed primarily for high school students. It serves 100 to 120 students and usually has a waiting list of about 25 students. Participants in Aim High must sign a "contract" that acknowledges their commitment to remain in the program and to abide by certain behavioral rules while in the program, such as acting respectfully and not "hanging out" in program offices. Aim High activities are held at the host institution's headquarters and at a nearby public housing community center. Students must get to and from the program on their own; virtually all of them walk, ride bicycles, or use public transportation, and some travel 30 minutes or longer from school to Project S headquarters.

Project S would not be able to offer the Aim High program without outside funding from charitable foundations. One use of outside funds is to provide monthly stipends of \$50, \$100, or \$150 to Aim High participants—a rare practice in Talent Search. The stipend amounts are linked to the number of academic classes the students are taking, their performance and behavior in the program, and the length of time they have participated in the program. A program brochure describes the stipends as both an incentive to inspire participation and learning and a reward for demonstrating commitment. The stipends, together with the instructional focus, make the Aim High component of Project S look more like an Upward Bound program than most Talent Search programs.

One challenge that Project S faces in providing academic assistance services relates to its reliance on a volunteer tutoring corps, particularly students from a fairly prestigious university. As volunteers, some tutors feel less committed to the program than would paid staff. During their college examination periods or between-term breaks, for example, some tutors may not show up. And tutors from more economically advantaged families than the Talent Search participants occasionally have difficulty in both understanding the context of students' lives and relating to the daily challenges students face in and out of school. Project S staff said, however, that most student-tutor matches succeed—some develop close relationships, in fact—and that there is little they can do about tutors sometimes needing to skip tutoring sessions, except to encourage them to be responsible and give as much notice as possible.

USING TECHNOLOGY IN SERVING STUDENTS

As technological advances lead to the introduction of new and more powerful devices at an almost dizzying rate and more and more educational software enters the market, some observers have argued that technology—in particular, computers and the Internet—have the power to revolutionize education. Whether such a

revolution will ever truly occur is impossible to say, but it is clear that computers and related technology are already enabling Talent Search staff to change the way they provide services to program participants. As more and more students gain access to computers in their homes and schools, it may seem odd to them that an education-related program such as Talent Search would *not* be using computers to the full extent possible.

This section focuses on using technology to serve Talent Search students—in particular, communicating with students and giving them information and experiences intended to help them complete high school and pursue a postsecondary education. This focus excludes purely administrative uses of technology, such as computerized databases that support program operations.

We did not identify any Talent Search projects where computer use was as important or extensive as academic assistance was at the four projects described in the preceding section. But we did, however, study a few projects that made substantially greater use of computers than did the “typical” project—projects in which technology figured prominently in program objectives and activities. Even in projects that made relatively little use of computers in serving students, we occasionally learned of one or two interesting practices involving technology. Below we highlight a variety of ways in which the Talent Search projects we studied were using technology in serving program participants.⁶

AFTER-SCHOOL COMPUTER CLUB: PROJECT P

Project P is hosted by a 4-year college in a large city. It covers 15 target schools, 10 within the city limits and five in a suburban community located 20 miles away. All the target schools have operated computer labs for several years; in fact, the long-time existence of the labs was one of the key factors that enabled Project P to make computer use a notable program feature. Talent Search participants’ exposure to computers varied by target school, grade level, degree of interest, and other factors, but opportunities existed for a wide range of activities, from file management to word processing, from Internet research to Web page construction, and from desktop publishing to e-mail.

The primary opportunity for students to use computers under the auspices of Project P is through an after-school computer club that meets once a week at most of the target schools, particularly the high schools. All official program participants are invited to attend, but participation in the computer club is voluntary, and a relatively small group of students typically shows up—for example, eight to 12 students out of about 75 students on the program rolls at one target high school we visited. The full-time project staff member assigned to work with the target school directs the computer club activities. Most of the time, staff members give basic guidance to the

⁶Appendix C presents survey data on the extent to which projects used computers in serving and communicating with participants.

group as a whole and then assist students as needed on an individual basis. Occasionally, staff use group instruction, such as when teaching students how to design a Web page.

On the day we observed an after-school computer club in progress, students were accessing their personal accounts on a Website that provides information about postsecondary education (*guidance.collegeedge.com*, which subsequently changed to *ecos.embarck.com*). Project P had purchased 700 accounts—enough to cover all program participants—at a cost of \$1.75 each, plus a \$1,500 flat license fee. Students entered a user-ID and password to gain access to their accounts. They filled out on-line profiles about themselves, entering information about their backgrounds, subjects they might like to study in college, regions of the country where they might like to attend college, and so on. The site then provided lists of colleges that might meet a student's interests—say, public universities in the Midwest that offer degrees in veterinary science—and links to all kinds of additional, related information.

One group of Project P middle school students we met with had used computers at their school during the school day for a special project on careers. They researched information about careers that interested them and then developed PowerPoint® slide shows, with integrated text and graphics, for presentation to a meeting of their peers. Afterward, project staff posted all the slide shows on the project Website, along with pictures of the students who created them, so that students, parents, and others could view the presentations any time. Project P's Website also contains a wide range of information that is useful to program participants. In addition to listing scheduled activities, such as workshops and field trips, the Website provides links to target school home pages, to other programs that students might want to participate in during the summer, and to resources that can help students in school and as they look ahead to college.

All Project P participants were also permitted to use a small computer lab, shared with Upward Bound, at Project P's main office. Finally, the project had purchased a scanner and a digital camera to enable students and staff to incorporate photographs and other graphic material into various applications.

Given that computer use was such a significant aspect of Project P's Talent Search program offerings, the director formally established program outcome objectives concerning participants' experiences with computer-related skills. For example, by the time they graduated from eighth grade, 75 percent of middle school students were supposed to have completed the following in the area of multimedia: (1) prepare a PowerPoint® presentation, (2) transfer data or graphics from the Internet to PowerPoint®, (3) use photograph editing software, (4) use a multimedia encyclopedia for research, and (5) use desktop publishing software. Similarly, by the time they finished tenth grade, 75 percent of high school students were supposed to have completed the following in the area of Internet research: (1) go to any specified URL (Web page), (2) use a search engine to find a Website, (3) use Boolean terminology to search for Websites, (4) save a Web document, (5) copy Internet text into a word processing document, (6) cite a Web source using style guides of the

Modern Language Association or the American Psychological Association, and (7) use HTML editor to construct a Web page containing graphics, background, text, tables, and links. Other skills pertained to operating system and file management, word processing, and e-mail.

What accounted for Project P's emphasis on technology? In part, it was the project's recognition that computers and the Internet are excellent resources for learning about college and career opportunities. It was also partly a response to a perception that students need to develop good computer skills. Project staff, however, tried not to overstate the importance of computers in serving Talent Search students. The director said that computers are, to a certain degree, "bells and whistles," a program feature that can attract and excite students, but not a feature as important as meeting more fundamental precollege needs. And students seemed to get this message. Some told us that gaining Internet research skills was valuable and that computer experience would "help a lot" with future schooling and jobs "because technology is the future," but they recognized that the ability to design a Web page, for example, was not critical for gaining admission to college.

Another major factor behind Project P's focus on computers and related technology was that the project had a substantial source of support in addition to its federal Talent Search grant. Project P's host institution was one of several dozen TRIO grantees in a partnership with Microsoft® Corporation. During the 1998–99 school year alone, Project P received from Microsoft® in-kind donations valued at \$97,000—specifically, software and site licenses to install and operate the software. Project P staff installed the software, such as Microsoft Office, not only on the computers in its own offices but also on computers in all of its target schools. School officials were, of course, delighted to receive the free software, which could be used by all students, not just Talent Search participants. In turn, schools readily agreed to grant the Talent Search program exclusive access to their computer labs for an hour or so each week. The project's software donation also helped make schools more receptive to its service needs, such as the ability to pull students from classes for short meetings.

DISTANCE TUTORING AND SUMMER TECHNOLOGY CAMPS: PROJECT R

Project R, based at a 4-year college in a small city, covers 27 target schools, most located in smaller surrounding towns and rural communities. In recent years, the project has initiated efforts to integrate technology into as many facets of its operations as possible, including its own record-keeping functions, communication with participants, and various services and activities. The project director believes that participants must become technology-literate in order to succeed in college. In addition, she saw expanding the use of technology as a way to engage students and to challenge and energize the staff. Here we focus primarily on two of Project R's major technology initiatives: distance tutoring and summer technology camps.

Project R provides most of its tutoring in face-to-face settings, such as at target schools; however, given that the target area is fairly large (it includes three counties)

and that some tutors (who are college students) do not have cars, it is not always easy for tutors to connect with students in need of academic assistance. In response, the project adopted an innovative approach: distance tutoring through Microsoft's® NetMeeting® software. The system uses personal computers outfitted with Internet connections and cameras while participants wear microphone and headphone sets so that people in two different locations can see and hear one another in real time. Project R also incorporated electronic writing pads or "white boards" that function like a shared, virtual chalkboard. The pads allows each person to see what the other is writing, such as mathematical equations. The information written on the pads can be saved or printed for future reference.

At the time of our visit, distance tutoring was fairly new and in use to only a limited extent. The tutors used the technology at the project's office on the host institution campus. Interested students, who typically could participate in a distance tutoring session once a week, could go to one of four remote facilities established to accommodate distance tutoring: two at community colleges, one at a target high school, and the fourth at a community center. The computer lab at the one high school outfitted with distance tutoring technology closed at 4:00 p.m. each day, which provided a fairly limited time frame for distance tutoring—but even the limited time was an improvement over arranging for tutors and students to meet in person. Overall, project staff were enthusiastic about the potential of distance tutoring. It not only saved the costs associated with transportation, but the greater convenience made it easier to recruit tutors.

We observed a distance tutoring session for a student needing help with chemistry homework. The tutor had a copy of the textbook used in the student's class, which helped provide a common frame of reference. The student asked the tutor questions about information in the text and about specific homework problems. They discussed the issues and used the white board to work through solutions, and so on. Initially, they set up the screen so that they saw one another and the white board, but after a while they minimized the picture screen and concentrated on the white board. Overall, the session seemed to be particularly productive.

A second important way in which Project R uses technology in serving Talent Search students is through summer technology camps. Each summer, the project offers several one-week technology camps at the host institution and a nearby high school. The camps can accommodate up to 200 students per week. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Students may enroll in more than one camp per summer, but staff members ensure that all interested students get to participate in at least one session before registering them for a second or third camp. Each day's activities last run 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Bus service is available to students from some areas. Courses are designed for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Topics and applications include how a computer works, how to use the Internet, Web page creation, programming in C and C++, programming in Java, using Unix, using Microsoft® Office, and creating multimedia presentations. Talent Search project staff and computer science students from the host institution are the primary staff for the camps. Several students we interviewed especially enjoyed the technology

campus, and some described that experience as the most interesting part of the program.

Project R also featured a number of other interesting technology-related activities:

- It supports a Website with features similar to those of Project P's, plus it has program applications, tutoring request forms, and college visit forms that students and parents can print or download.
- A computer lab in the project office on the host institution campus provides Internet access for college searches or other uses, tutorial software in various academic subjects, ACT and SAT preparation software, and even videos on self-esteem and other subjects.
- Parents also enjoy access to the lab, particularly e-mail accounts if they are interested. The project has offered some technology workshops for parents, focusing on topics such as using the Internet, multimedia tools, and Microsoft® Office software. Access to the lab is most beneficial to parents living relatively close to the host college, and a computer workshop that attracted about 20 parents proved a success.
- Some students participate in a nationwide competition called ThinkQuest, in which small groups create informative Websites. Winners receive college scholarships.
- Graduating seniors are encouraged to compile an "electronic portfolio" on a CD to showcase their achievements and leadership abilities. Students create a personal transcript outlining the types of courses they have taken, the extracurricular activities they have participated in, their college entrance examination scores, awards they have received, and so on. Using digital cameras and scanners, students also can save copies of important documents, such as award certificates and letters of recommendation. The electronic portfolios are intended for potential use in students' college entrance endeavors.
- The project asks all participants to complete a technology assessment form that addresses issues such as whether they are interested in attending a summer technology camp; the extent to which they use computers at school and at home; the ways in which they use computers; the type of processor they have in their home computer; the extent to which they and their parents use e-mail; their interest in receiving e-mail messages about Talent Search activities and other useful information; their self-assessment of their computer skills; their familiarity with various operating systems; their interest in participating in ThinkQuest; and any requests or suggestions about technology-related services.

It should be noted that Project R has been able to implement these service approaches *without* the assistance of major outside sources of financial or in-kind support. The introduction and integration of technology at Project R was

accomplished through a pooling of resources between Talent Search and Upward Bound and with resources from the host college. (At this institution, the Talent Search project director also oversees the Upward Bound program.) The computer lab in the main office, for example, was developed with funds from both programs and is used by participants and staff from both programs. In addition, some of the technology is not as expensive as some readers might assume. For distance tutoring, for example, information collected by Project R indicated that digitized writing pads and video cameras can each be obtained for about \$100 or less and microphone and headphone sets for under \$20 while the Microsoft® NetMeeting® software comes free with Internet Explorer.

One important step in developing and implementing technology-intensive services was the recruitment of a qualified staff. It can be somewhat of a challenge, the director explained, to find and retain staff who are both familiar with computers and related technology and able to work well with program participants. In addition, the project took the pivotal step of hiring a full-time staff member to fill the position of technology coordinator. The coordinator is responsible for fostering technology integration. Another factor in Project R's favor was the prevalence of computers in target schools. Virtually all participating schools have taken advantage of generous corporate and foundation support to provide in-school computers. Thus, the program is operating in an environment that supports and is conducive to the use of technology in education.

DIVERSE USES OF COMPUTERS AND TECHNOLOGY: THREE OTHER PROJECTS

Project C is based at a 2-year college in the suburbs of a large city. It serves four high schools and three middle schools, all in the city. The project has found several ways of using computers and related technology to serve program participants, aided in part by support from the Microsoft®-TRIO partnership program.

- Project C, like Project P, has received a substantial amount of free software from Microsoft®—valued at about \$50,000 in 1998–99—which it has loaded onto several computers at each target school. The software—including Word, Excel, PowerPoint®, Access, Virtual Globe, Bookshelf®, Encarta®, and FrontPage—is available for all students and staff at the target schools. To help ensure that the software would be used effectively, the project sponsored in-service training for interested target school staff. Project staff reported that school officials were highly appreciative of both the software and the training opportunity.
- The project operates a laptop computer loan program for its participants. Students can check out and take home a laptop computer loaded with software to help them prepare for the ACT.
- High school juniors and seniors have accounts on embark.com (the same Internet-based company mentioned in the description of Project P), which enables them to conduct customized searches for information on colleges and financial aid.

- At one of the target middle schools, Project C and school staff co-sponsor an after-school computer club whose participants meet once a week to pursue a variety of computer-based projects.
- Each of the project's three full-time advisors has a laptop computer that they take with them whenever they visit target schools. Loaded on the computer is an Access database with extensive information on program applicants and participants, including students' grades, the program activities students have participated in, and students' "Education Career Plans." This information, which is updated weekly, enables staff to see how students are progressing toward their goals and can serve as a basis for discussions about what additional services students should receive.
- Finally, Project C uses an automated telephone messaging system to remind students and their parents of upcoming program activities. The system automatically dials participants' home telephone numbers and plays a message recorded by project staff. The project director described the system as a cost-effective way to communicate with program participants.

In recent years, Project H has also been increasing its use of computers to serve Talent Search participants. Some examples of its activities follow:

- Students in at least two target high schools can use computer-based individual tutorial software to prepare for the ACT.
- We observed a Talent Search staff member at one target high school helping participants use a new computer lab to access personal accounts at ecos.embark.com.
- In fall 1999, the project offered an Internet research course that met on a few successive Saturdays in a computer lab at the host institution campus. About 100 high school seniors took the class and—an interesting feature—earned one college credit from the host institution. Project officials intended to repeat the course in subsequent years, offering it to younger students as well.
- Middle school students who attended a summer enrichment program were exposed to computers in a variety of ways. During summer 1998, for example, students learned to navigate the Internet for research, used Microsoft® Word to prepare a scientific manual, made labels for science fair displays, created a Web page about mathematics, and prepared a PowerPoint® presentation, complete with sound and animation, on African-Americans who had made major contributions to society. All students used computers during at least one of 10 structured activity periods each week, and those who were involved in a "computer science track" used computers during at least half of the activity periods. A high school freshman who had participated in the summer session said that

after learning about the Internet through Talent Search, he was able to help his parents when they eventually connected with a home computer.

Project I is operated by a community organization and serves 36 target schools spread over an expansive, mainly rural area. This project, like Project C described above, obtained laptop computers for all of its full-time field staff, plus portable printers. Loaded onto the computers was a database, provided by the state government, that contained extensive, detailed information on postsecondary institutions and careers. We observed the staff's use of this equipment in two different ways with high school students. In one case, students filled out a short questionnaire that asked about college interests, such as field of study and region, size, and type of institution (public or private 2- or 4-year institution). The staff member quickly entered this information in her computer and was able immediately to generate and print out a list of colleges that met the student's criteria. In another case, students were asked to name an occupation that interested them. The staff member was then able to print out two types of information about that occupation: (1) a general profile that included information on required aptitudes; typical working conditions; minimal educational entry requirements; training and education; advancement; employment hints; and national and in-state data on average earnings, employment outlook and current employment; and (2) a "career pathway" report, including descriptions of the number and type of courses that students should take in high school and college to prepare for a particular occupation.

SERVING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

When Talent Search was created in 1965, it focused on high school juniors and seniors, but subsequent legislation in 1989 directed projects to place an increased emphasis on middle school students.⁷ In our discussions with Talent Search personnel around the country, however, we perceived varying levels of interest in, and emphasis on, serving middle school students. Some project directors described different orientations toward middle school services as a function of project longevity. Projects that were in existence for many years before the middle school initiative, they said, have tended to maintain their longstanding focus on serving high school students, whereas projects established more recently adopted a sharper focus on middle school students from the outset.

Regardless of project age, Talent Search staff still have questions about how best to serve middle school students.⁸ Several services that have long been considered central to Talent Search's mission, such as sharing information about financial aid and helping students complete college admission and financial aid applications, are

⁷Through its GEAR-UP program, the federal government has more recently shown a continuing interest in early intervention. The program is designed to follow students from the seventh grade through to college entry.

⁸General interest in this area led COE to conduct a survey of Talent Search projects' practices in 1998, although the results were not published.

most relevant and salient to students nearing the end of high school. At the same time, though, deciding what types of precollege services are most appropriate and interesting for students as young as 12 or 13 years old and then implementing those services has evidently posed a challenge for some Talent Search projects.

Our goal in studying middle school services was not to prescribe how Talent Search projects should serve students in sixth through eighth grade but simply to describe a range of interesting examples of the approaches taken by a handful of projects. The descriptions include projects offering frequent and diverse services throughout the school year as well as projects offering intensive services provided over a short period, including summer programs. We also highlight some projects that serve middle school students in their regular classrooms.

BIWEEKLY WORKSHOPS AND SUMMER PROGRAM ON TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL: PROJECT O

Project O is hosted by a 4-year college in a small city. Its 11 target middle schools and 13 target high schools are spread over a mainly rural area twice the size of Connecticut. Since the program was first funded about 11 years ago, it has been premised on the philosophy that to make a difference in students' lives, "you have to start young." The project not only provides early intervention services beginning in the sixth grade but also pays special attention to transition points, including the transition from middle school to high school.

The core services provided to virtually all middle school students are workshops and field trips. These same services comprise the basic program offerings for high school students, although the focus differs for the two groups. For example, workshops offered to sixth-graders deal with basic issues, such as What is college? As the students get older, the focus shifts toward life skills and decision-making. By the eighth grade, the workshops and activities focus more on course selection as the students start to plan for the transition to high school. Although project staff ("counselors") do address issues such as financial aid with middle school students, they simply try to make the students aware of financial matters so that they will start thinking about such issues.

Project O offers workshops at each target middle school approximately every two weeks. The sessions run for one class period (typically 50 minutes), with students pulled from their regular classes. Workshops are usually conducted on a grade-level basis; therefore, a Talent Search counselor delivers the same workshop three times in a row when she visits a middle school. The counselors follow a general curriculum—that is, a standard set of topics to be covered during the year—but enjoy considerable flexibility as to both the order of topics and how materials and activities are designed and presented. In working with middle school students, especially, counselors strive to be creative and to keep students interested, entertained, and engaged. One commonly used technique is a game format. For an example of a game for middle school students, see the accompanying box.

Using a Game to Teach Middle School Students about College

Project O's four counselors jointly developed a "board game" to focus middle school students' attention on several issues central to the Talent Search program. We observed the workshop at two middle schools.

The game consisted of 24 posterboard "tiles" arranged into a square with six tiles per side and placed on the floor of a large open area. Each side of the oversized game board dealt with a different theme such as financial aid, course selection, life skills and decision-making, and college dilemmas. A question or short vignette written on each tile related to the theme on that side. Students were divided into teams, each assigned to a different side of the board. They spent five to 10 minutes on a side before rotating to the next side. Each team had a "die"—a large, cubed-shaped cardboard box with one, two, or three large dots per side—that they rolled to determine their movement along the tiles on their side of the board. When they landed on a tile, they had to answer the question or address the situation described. For each correct answer, the team received a colored "key" (cut out of cardboard) with different point values, depending on the difficulty of the question and the quality of their answer—green keys were worth one point, silver keys two points, and gold keys three points. The team with the most points at the end of the game would win.

Following are examples of the challenges presented on each side of the board:

- *Financial aid.* The tiles on the financial aid side of the board included true-and-false, multiple-choice, and short-answer questions. In most cases, the students could pick the difficulty level of the question (one, two, or three points) they wanted to answer. One of the true-false questions asked, "True or false: In college, you have to maintain a 2.0 grade point average (a 'C' average) or higher to maintain your financial aid." One of the multiple-choice questions asked, "Which degree program does financial aid not cover—a) associate's degree, b) certificate program, or c) bachelor's degree?" One of the short-answer questions asked, "Name up to three types of financial aid." Answers included grants, scholarships, loans, and work study.
- *Course selection.* One of the tiles related to course selection said, "Name colleges in this state that are considered 'selective.'" For each correct answer, the students selected one of several high school history courses listed on the posterboard. After the team members had selected their courses, the counselor explained how many points each course was worth and why. For example, U.S. history was worth one point (a green key) because it is a required class while world history was worth two points because it is an elective that goes beyond U.S. history. Another tile said, "Name types of college

(continued on next page)

Using a Game to Teach Middle School Students about College *(continued)*

degrees and define them.” Students had to identify degrees by their abbreviations (e.g., A.A., B.A., M.S., Ph.D., M.D.), explain what the abbreviation stood for, and say how many years it takes to earn each degree. For each degree they correctly identified, students selected one of several high school mathematics classes listed on the tile. In this case, higher-level mathematics classes (e.g., calculus, trigonometry) were awarded more points than basic mathematics classes (e.g., algebra).

- *Life skills and decision-making.* Tiles on this side of the board presented a series of scenarios involving some type of barrier or obstacle that could prevent a student from attending or succeeding in college. Teams were told to discuss the issue as a group and come up with three possible solutions. One point was awarded for each acceptable answer. One scenario was as follows: “You are in HS 110 (Modern History of South America) and you were given an assignment to work in a group of five to research, write, and present a paper on the cultural customs of the Yanomamo Indians. Two weeks before the project is due, one of the group members stops showing up for the meetings. If the project falls apart, you all get a bad grade. What should you do?” Other scenarios dealt with family problems, problems with roommates using other roommates’ possessions, and mixed signals from parents about attending college versus finding a paying job.
- *College dilemmas.* This category presented students with a series of scenarios that could occur in college. Each posterboard showed a picture of a young adult and included a vignette about a problem facing the student. The players were told to work as a group to come up with three possible actions or solutions to the problem. One scenario was as follows: “Tameka struggled in high school to get good grades. She went to college and worked hard, but her grades started slipping around mid-terms. She feels like a failure...she knew she wasn’t going to make it in college. What should she do?” Other scenarios dealt with struggling to pay for college, partying too much, and responding to racial jokes.

At the end of the game, after the points were tallied, members of the winning team each received a token prize—a fancy-looking ballpoint pen. Then the counselor recapped the key message from each of the game themes. “The classes you take in high school are very important. Colleges don’t only look at your grades, they want to see that you took challenging classes as well.” “Effective decision-making is really important—you need to start thinking about how everything you do from now on affects you.” “Start thinking about financial aid—the earlier the better. Use your Talent Search counselor as a resource.” He said he would be there to guide and help the students all the way through high school and that they would have plenty of time to learn more about the issues they covered in the game. Finally, he said that when students got to college they would find several resources available, such as the financial aid office.

Ideally, participants at each of Project O's target middle school should have the chance to go on one field trip per semester, although that was not always the case. The trips, designed to provide both educational and cultural experiences, are typically open to all Talent Search participants and filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Participation is often limited to 14 or 28 students because the program uses 15-passenger vans for transportation. Examples of some recent field trips for middle school students include a basketball game at the host college, an interactive exhibit on oceanography at a different college, a weather research center at a third nearby college, a national sports training facility, a museum of natural history, and a geological research site.

One of the signature pieces of Project O's middle school component is the High School Transition (HST) program, which is designed to help eighth-graders make the transition to high school. Project staff describe HST as an "intensive education experience" designed to make a lasting impression on students' lives. The week-long program takes place in the summer on the campus of the host institution, with students spending some nights in the dormitories. Approximately 35 to 40 students participate, overseen by all four of the project's full-time counselors. Students are asked to contribute about \$30 to help defray the cost of a major outdoor activity (with scholarships available to those who need them), but otherwise the program is free.

When the HST program was created, a contribution from a local bank funded the program. When the bank decided not to fund the effort any longer, the project's host institution stepped in to cover program costs. For the summer of 2000, however, the host institution dropped the program because of general budget cutbacks. As a result, Project O staff were forced to shorten the program from eight to five days, with only three nights in the dormitories instead of seven.

Highlights of the 1999 HST program included the following:

- *Opening night family dinner.* The evening included a review of the previous year's program and a question-and-answer session about the HST program and Talent Search in general. Parents received advice on how to help their children succeed in high school and how to plan for the college application process.
- *Community service.* A major goal of the HST program is to help participants develop a sense of leadership by giving back to the community and to the program. Students performed community service at a local elementary school and a nearby senior center.
- *Team-building activities.* Students learned about taking positive risks and working as a group through rafting and by completing a ropes course.
- *Career day.* In an activity focused on higher education, participants were engaged in an interactive scavenger hunt on careers. Students conducted research and site visits related to a number of different occupations and

interviewed local professionals ranging from lawyers to computer programmers.

- *Ethics discussions.* Students were presented with scenarios such as skipping class, preparing for a test, confronting a racist or sexist teacher, partying, and facing academic and family problems. Afterwards, they discussed their reactions to the hypothetical situations to help them prepare for real-life experiences.
- *Career workshop.* Using the Internet, students participated in a workshop on careers and career searches and used information to prepare projects on careers of interest to them.
- *Study session, journals, and seminars.* As part of a nightly study session, students wrote in their journals, which staff later reviewed. In addition, college and community professionals conducted seminars on topics such as goal setting, learning styles, and preparing for higher education through course selection.
- *Activities with current high school students.* Current high school students talked with program participants about matters such as what to expect, what to do, what to avoid, course selection, grades, policies, and studying.
- *Exposition and awards dinner.* The program ended with a celebration of students' accomplishments, with parents, other family members, and guests invited to attend. Students exhibited their projects on the career they researched. Participants and guests enjoyed a buffet dinner and a slide show of pictures from the program. All students received a certificate for their participation in the program, and five students received special recognition for their outstanding exhibits.

Another major event sponsored for middle school students is the Knowledge Bowl, featuring a combination of academic challenges and fun-filled activities and contests. All 11 target middle schools participate in this once-a-year event, which is held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on a Saturday in the gym of one of the participating middle schools. The team quiz competition is a major activity. Students try to answer questions on a wide range of topics, from subjects they covered in Talent Search, such as college admissions and financial aid, to subjects they may have covered in school, such as science and astronomy (e.g., listing the order of the planets in the solar system). Students also participate in timed debates on topics such as dress codes, gang membership, and economic issues, with project staff judging the presentations and awarding points. Recreational and fun-filled activities might include, for example, an obstacle course relay and a game in which teams try to put as much "trash" (newspaper) as possible in other teams' designated areas while keeping their own areas as trash-free as possible. At the end of the day, prizes are awarded to the teams based on their cumulative point totals.

Project O staff offered several thoughts on what it takes to ensure the success of a middle school Talent Search component in Talent Search. First, they concluded that

it is important to recruit staff who can relate to children 12 to 15 years old. Second, they said that services must be age-appropriate. A lecture on course selection, for example, is not likely to hold the attention of middle school students. Activities need to incorporate an element of fun and be structured for a high level of interaction (e.g., games) while delivering information at the appropriate level of detail. Third, relationships are extremely important. At the middle school level, it is more important to focus on the process of establishing bonds than on outcomes. A long-term relationship built on a solid foundation of trust and support will pay off in the long run.

SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM: PROJECT H

Project H offers a modest amount of tutoring for students at some of its target middle schools (for example, one or two hours a week) but focuses primarily on providing other types of services during the school year, such as personal development and career exploration. Like Project O, Project H has developed a summer program as one of its major offerings for middle school students. In particular, for the past few years, the project has offered middle school students the chance to attend a summer enrichment program. Participation in the summer session is based on a first-apply, first-served policy, but so far the project has been able to accommodate all applicants. In 1999, 65 students participated. Students can participate up to three times—in the summers following sixth, seventh, and eighth grade.

Summer session participants sign up for one of five subject area tracks. In 1998, for example, the tracks were social studies, biology, mathematics, computer science, and school organization. Each track has a special theme or focus. In 1998, the mathematics group focused on the stock market, the computer science group learned how to develop PowerPoint® presentations, the biology group focused on nutrition, the social studies group studied the Harlem Renaissance, and the school organization group read *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul* and focused on developing a “personal framework.” If the same general track is offered in consecutive years, the focus will change so that returning students will have new experiences. Groups sometimes take educational field trips, such as to the zoo or local businesses.

The program meets Monday through Friday for three weeks. From 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., students take the main class for their chosen track; from 10:45 a.m. to noon, they attend a different class each day. For example, students in the social studies track would all attend the biology class on Monday, the mathematics class on Tuesday, the computer science class on Wednesday, the school organization class on Thursday, and the biology class again on Friday. The program concludes each day with lunch, which is provided free to all participants. At the end of the three-week session, students make presentations about the projects they worked on, such as computerized slide shows or science experiments, which are judged by college faculty. The session also includes a Quiz Bowl and an awards ceremony luncheon, which parents are invited to attend. Finally, the program takes the students on a full-

day trip by bus to a major city several hours away. The students visit museums, shop, and participate in other recreational activities.

The summer program engages one teacher per subject, or track, hired from a target middle school or high school. The instructors receive \$750 per week. Some of the summer program instructors are drawn from the pool of part-time tutors who work with Talent Search during the school year.

Classes meet in regular college classrooms on the host institution campus. Use of the college facilities makes college seem more real to the middle school students, the director said, not distant or unknown. Students also learn a bit about college from guest speakers such as the vice president for enrollment management and the director of admissions. These officials talk to the students about college admissions on a general basis—not about the details of GPA requirements, test scores, and so on but rather about what the students can start doing now to be prepared to apply to college when the time comes, such as getting involved in extracurricular activities that will look good on their applications.

Students receive a temporary college ID card and a Talent Search T-shirt, both of which must be worn at all times during the summer session. A set of rules governs student behavior both in and out of class. The rules and other issues are discussed in an orientation session for students and parents before the session begins. To get to and from the program, students take public transportation (with program-provided bus tickets), are transported by their parents, or ride on a college-provided bus that makes a couple of stops near target middle schools.

While Project H officials hope that the summer enrichment program will help students perform well in school, they agree that the program is aimed at making learning enjoyable and interesting, giving students some early exposure to college, and providing them with a positive summer experience that is academically, socially, and culturally enriching. The summer session serves as a “carrot” of sorts for middle school students to motivate them during the school year. Given that students who earn less than a C average in school must attend summer school, only the better-performing students are able to participate in the Talent Search summer session. Summer session participants reportedly see their involvement as prestigious; according to the director, the students love to be able to tell their friends they were in a summer program at a college.⁹

⁹The project director felt that a summer program like this would probably not succeed with high school students. Many high school students work or must attend summer school; for those with free time, there are no incentives that the program can offer to participate, such as school credit or the stipend that Upward Bound students often receive in the summer. Middle school students, the director said, are more open to this type of experience.

MONTHLY WORKSHOPS AND SATURDAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAM: PROJECT X

Project X is operated by a community-based organization located in a large city. Its three target middle schools and two target high schools, however, are located in outlying suburbs and rural areas 15 to 20 miles from the grantee's office. Project X project offers a wide range of services for middle school students, including a short enrichment program.

The main service for middle school students is a series of monthly “precollege workshops” provided during the school day at the target schools. The workshops are usually organized and delivered by grade level, with students pulled out of their regular classes. Table A.1 provides a sample workshop schedule for one of Project X's target middle schools. In terms of frequency and format, the workshops for middle school students are similar to those for high school students.¹⁰

	Sixth Grade	Seventh Grade	Eighth Grade
September		Personal Development— Goal Setting	College Awareness— Types of College Majors
October	Personal Development— Self-Esteem	Personal Development— Time Management	College Awareness— Introduction to Admissions and Aid
November	Personal Development— Self-Esteem	College Awareness— Types of Colleges	Career Awareness— Interest Inventory
December	Academic Advising— Study Skills	Academic Advisement— Study Skills	Academic Advising— Study Skills
January	Academic Advising— Study Skills	Academic Advisement— Testing Skills	Personal Development— Leadership Skills
February	Personal Development— Peer Pressure	Personal Development— Conflict Resolution	Career Awareness— Values Inventory
March	Personal Development— Peer Pressure	Personal Development— Problem Solving	Personal Development— High School Transition
April	Personal Development— Communication Skills	Personal Development— Communication Skills	Personal Development— Communication Skills

SOURCE: Project staff.

Other fixtures of the service schedule for middle school participants include two parent nights in the fall; two cultural awareness activities and college tours, one of each in the fall and early spring; a scholarship fundraiser and a community service project in late spring; and a session to review the year and a final ceremony in late

¹⁰The content of workshops for high school students, as might be expected, focuses less on personal development and more on the details of selecting a college and applying for admission and financial aid.

spring. These activities, too, are generally similar to those provided for high school students.

Like Project H, however, Project X has also developed a special enrichment program for interested middle school students—a service with no parallel for high school students. The enrichment program is offered once in the fall for students from the two smallest target middle schools and once in the spring for students from the largest target middle school. It meets on five consecutive Saturdays at a community college in the large city where the grantee is based. Project X provides students with free bus service between their schools and the college. All middle school participants can apply for the program—with admission on a first-apply, first-served basis—but some preference is given to serving eighth-graders over seventh- or sixth-graders. During the 1998–99 school year, 51 students participated in the Saturday enrichment program, over one-third of the middle school students served by Project X. Students are expected to attend every session and abide by the rules spelled out in the application form that they and their parents must sign.

The chief focus of the program, which operates from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., is academics. In the morning, after a 15-minute donut and juice session, all students take a one-hour course in reading and writing and a one-hour course in mathematics. Teachers hired from local schools teach the courses. The course objectives are to build students' skills in an interesting, fun-filled way. In a recent year, the reading and writing class produced a short collection of student literary works to publish in a "magazine." The mathematics class covered topics such as factor trees, graphs dealing with integers, solving equations, and multiplication short-cuts. After a half-hour lunch break, students spend an hour in various recreational or personal development activities led by regular Talent Search staff.

IN-CLASS SERVICES: THREE PROJECTS

As should be clear from the preceding descriptions, most services for middle school students are provided outside of students' regular classes—for example, during pull-out sessions or, in some cases, after school, on weekends, or during the summer. Three projects we visited, however, had each implemented a different approach—serving students in their regular school classrooms, with Talent Search staff essentially taking over for the regular teacher for one class period every week or two. Because of the similarities between the projects' efforts, we discuss them together in this section.

Project P. During the 1998–99 school year, Project P began serving middle school students in their regular classrooms at two of its eight target middle schools. Project P targeted these two schools for in-class services because a high percentage of students enrolled in the schools came from low-income families and were potential first-generation college students; thus, the program could officially enroll all students in the selected classrooms in the Talent Search program and not worry about taking on too many participants who did not meet the program's eligibility criteria. At one middle school, the project served one sixth grade class; at the other school, it served three of five sixth grade classes. At the latter school, all five of the sixth grade

teachers were interested in involving Talent Search in their classrooms, but the project could not afford to serve all the classes. Therefore, the Talent Search staff chose three classes more or less randomly. As a consolation, the program permitted each of the other two teachers to select for participation in the Talent Search services a few students whom they thought would especially benefit from the program. The project stipulated, however, that these students had to meet both the low-income and first-generation eligibility criteria. The students left their regular classes to join the Talent Search classes when activities took place.

One project staff member was responsible for both schools, visiting each classroom once a week throughout the school year; he did not work with any other target schools. In each classroom, the Talent Search “advisor” typically took over for the regular teacher for two consecutive subject or activity periods, for a total of one hour and 40 minutes. Sixth-graders in the classes received many more contact hours of service than their peers in Project P’s other target middle schools. The regular classroom teachers could use the time allocated to Talent Search however they liked. For example, they followed along with the Talent Search session, graded tests, planned lessons, and so on. They could even leave the room because the Talent Search advisor was a certified teacher; district policy required a certified teacher to be with students at all times.

Talent Search class sessions were devoted to a variety of activities but placed a good deal of emphasis on career exploration. The Talent Search advisor often led the students through multipart projects that took several weeks to complete. For example, each student researched a country that he or she would like to visit, explored transportation options, estimated vacation costs, and then arrayed all the information on poster boards and delivered an oral presentation in front of the class. The advisor graded these and other Talent Search assignments and the regular classroom teachers factored the grades into the students’ overall grades in related subjects, such as social studies. During some sessions, the students visited the school’s computer lab, which was reserved for their use during Talent Search sessions. In keeping with the objectives of Project P’s in-class services for middle school students, the advisor said that after their first year in Talent Search, participating students should have a sense of who they are, where they want to go in life, and how to get there. They should also demonstrate better knowledge of careers and businesses.

Project P has continued to serve middle school students in their regular classrooms during subsequent school years, although some changes were necessary to enable the same students to participate. Whereas sixth-graders remained with one teacher the whole school day, seventh-graders rotated among different classes by subject, making it difficult for the adviser to arrange class time with the former sixth-graders. The Talent Search advisor worked with school officials to arrange the schedules of interested students so that most of them would be together in two particular seventh grade classes (e.g., U.S. history during fourth period), permitting Talent Search to meet its service objective. The project also adopted two new sixth grade classrooms. During the 2000–01 school year, a new principal and an increased emphasis on

statewide learning standards forced Project P to give up in-class services in this middle school; instead, it began offering services before and after school. However, the project was able to implement in-class services at a couple of its other target middle schools.

Project H. Like Project P, Project H provided in-class services for the first time in the 1998–99 school year. Applying this approach in one of its five target middle schools (an inner-city school), the goal was to have a schoolwide impact. Through an ambitious schedule, the project director herself, who was working on a teaching degree, provided Talent Search services to virtually every student in the school (excluding only those in special education) for one 45-minute class period once every two weeks. She served four classrooms of sixth-graders, four classrooms of seventh-graders, and four classrooms of eighth-graders by using the following two-week rotation:

Week 1

Monday—two classrooms

Thursday—three classrooms

Friday—two classrooms

Week 2

Monday—one classroom

Thursday—two classrooms

Friday—two classrooms

A good deal of the services provided to this middle school revolved around personal or social development activities—partly in response to what the school’s guidance counselor said the students needed. For sixth-graders, services focused on activities such as self-assessments of students’ strengths and weaknesses. For seventh-graders, the program placed a stronger emphasis on study skills, goal setting, and self-sufficiency. For eighth-graders, the focus turned toward their futures in high school and college. We interviewed a group of seventh-graders who described what they had learned in Talent Search mainly in terms of self-awareness, personal choices, and interpersonal relations:

- “We learn how to be respectful, how to hang out with the right kind of friends, and that we should try to bring our grades up.”
- “We talk about having courage, and self-esteem, and how to control our actions.”
- “Don’t be depressed, and you should be careful not to hurt other people’s feelings, and to watch how you behave.”
- “Treat people as you want to be treated.”
- “Two wrongs don’t make a right.”
- “Effort is what counts, not winning or losing.”

- “How to work together as a team, not just as individuals, and how to be a leader, not a follower.”

Across all grade levels, services frequently required students to work together in small groups and to talk to one another and the director. The focus on these types of interactions was partly a response to the district’s assistant superintendent’s observation that students needed to improve their communication skills. We witnessed the communication strategies in practice in two classroom sessions. During the first 15 minutes, in what the director called an “icebreaker,” the director called on students individually to name an event in the 20th century that had a lasting impact on society, explain the event’s significance, and then cite a personal goal for the 21st century. (Students frequently cited goals for graduating from high school and going on to college.) During the remaining 30 minutes, students chose to work in small groups on one of two activities. One task was to solve logic and mathematics-related puzzles; the other was to come up with a response to a hypothetical situation, such as overhearing a fellow student talking about suicide or having a friend announce his intention to cheat on a test. At the end of the class, the groups shared their solutions and ideas with the other students.

Project B. Project B is hosted by a 4-year college in a medium-sized city. Its five target middle schools, however, are located in small towns in the surrounding countryside. Project B has been using an in-class approach to serving middle school students for about three or four years. At the time of our visit in spring 1999, one project staff member was providing in-class services at two of the target middle schools. At one small school, he provided services once a week in separate classes for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders, essentially serving all students in the school. At another school, he taught in each of the sixth grade classrooms once a week. During the previous fall semester, he had also worked with students in each of the seventh and eighth grade classes at this school but he had discontinued that practice because (1) the number of classes made the work too time-consuming and (2) some teachers were not sufficiently supporting his efforts—for example, not collecting the homework he had assigned. However, he still taught in seventh and eighth grade classrooms “now and then.”

Project B’s Talent Search class sessions may touch on a variety of subjects over the year, such as careers, colleges, goal setting, and so on, with the central message that college is the key to achieving one’s material goals. The project staff member sometimes brings in guest speakers to inspire students to achieve. Project B places considerable emphasis on communication skills. At one of the target middle schools we observed two class sessions—one with sixth-graders and one with seventh-graders, both focused on public speaking. All the students had been asked to prepare five-minute presentations on any subject of interest to them. One by one, the project staff member asked the students to step up to the front of the classroom and present their oral reports. He encouraged them to follow recognized tips for successful public speaking such as speaking audibly and making eye contact with the audience. All the students in the “audience” were asked to fill out a short evaluation form on each speaker. Although these in-class services were available to many

students who were not official Talent Search participants, all additional program services, such as tutoring and advising, were restricted to official participants.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This chapter presented several detailed descriptions of how selected Talent Search projects were operating in three areas of particular interest: providing academic assistance, using technology to serve students, and serving middle school students. Our goal was for these descriptions to provide staff in Talent Search projects throughout the country with examples that might stimulate thinking about new and different ways of serving participants, possibly leading to program improvements. We conclude this chapter with some summary thoughts about the highlighted service approaches, along with a discussion of potential challenges and issues associated with each of the three topics.

ISSUES IN PROVIDING ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE

Four of the selected Talent Search projects had made academic assistance a priority so that students could improve their performance in regular school classes and on important school examinations. All four projects provided tutoring services, but the projects' tutoring efforts differed on several dimensions, including the target audience (middle school students or high school students), the location of services (target schools or the host institution), and who provided the services (target school teachers or college students). Three projects provided classroom-style academic instruction.

The decision to provide tutoring and other types of supplemental academic support reflected a certain vision of the types of students Talent Search should serve (the selected projects did not have minimum GPA requirements, for example) and a belief that Talent Search could address academic needs effectively, even with constrained resources. The manner in which projects provided tutoring sessions reflected both ideal notions of what would work best and the realities of local circumstances, such as student transportation, school officials' preferences, and, of course, the project budget. For example, the availability of a large pool of nearby college students willing to provide tutoring for free as a form of community service was fortuitous for Project S.

The different approaches to providing academic support undoubtedly have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, target school teachers must be paid more than college students to work as tutors, but they are able to maintain frequent contact with students and have better knowledge of school curricula. On the other hand, college students can provide students with role models close to their own age and serve as a useful source of current information on the college experience.

A general issue that surfaced concerning Talent Search projects that emphasize academic support was the potential trade-offs necessitated by limited funding. As noted earlier, some Talent Search personnel believe that current funding levels

essentially prohibit projects from providing academic support; tutoring and instruction, they said, are relatively costly services. Indeed, at some of the selected projects, key staff acknowledged that their academic assistance components prevented them from providing other services as often as they might have liked. For example, we noted in particular that a couple of the projects infrequently sponsored visits to college campuses—a service that students at these and other projects often mentioned as useful and highly interesting. One project director said that his project was not able to offer as large a cultural enrichment component as he would have preferred.

Nonetheless, key staff at these projects were convinced of the relative value of academic support services and were committed to continue offering such assistance. Even if most of those entitled to the tutoring services did not avail themselves of the services on a regular basis, project officials would rather have the services available than not offer them at all.¹¹ Projects interested in implementing a resource-intensive service component, such as academic assistance, should be conscious of the trade-offs they may face. They may need to find additional sources of support for other program activities. In Project M, for example, students participate in fundraising activities to help support certain trips and other program activities. In addition, the project applies for grants from corporations, foundations, and government agencies to support new program initiatives and negotiates with target schools and colleges to ensure that Talent Search students can participate in those groups' college visitation trips.

ISSUES IN USING TECHNOLOGY TO SERVE STUDENTS

Computers can make a vast amount of information—about colleges, financial aid, careers, and so on—instantly available. Rather than request a college brochure and wait for it to arrive in the mail, for example, today students can log on to a college's Web site and get all the information they want, and sometimes even take a “virtual campus tour” literally at the click of a button. But the mere availability of computer-based information does not ensure that students will know how to access it, how to evaluate it, or how to act on it. That is one service that Talent Search staff can offer.

Our exploration of Talent Search projects' use of technology in serving students revealed several important points. First, many students are interested in computers, and the chance to use them in fun-filled and productive ways can be an attractive feature of a program's offerings. One case-study project reported, for example, that daily attendance at its after-school session dropped noticeably during a period in which computers were unavailable. We heard of several Talent Search projects around the country that sometimes help students complete and submit financial aid and college admission applications electronically, but some of the projects we focused on above have gone substantially beyond that, giving program participants

¹¹Ironically, substantially higher student participation rates in tutoring sessions might have forced projects to hire more tutors, thus driving up costs and potentially necessitating more trade-offs.

appealing opportunities to explore the Internet and to learn how to use various software packages, for example.

Second, adequate resources—financial and otherwise—are obviously essential to implementing a substantial computer component in Talent Search program offerings. Project R’s experience, however, shows that Talent Search projects may not necessarily need a large infusion of outside funding or in-kind donations, such as the Microsoft®-TRIO partnership. Projects relying primarily on their federal grant funds, or perhaps pooling resources from another TRIO program such as Upward Bound, may have to “start small” and build in new technology elements slowly over time. Because Talent Search projects often serve a large number of participants spread over a large area, they might find it most logistically sensible to provide some technology-related services at students’ target schools. Projects whose target schools are well equipped in terms of computers and related technology may be at an advantage.¹²

Third, it will probably be important to engage staff who not only can relate well to typical Talent Search participants but who also bring with them the technical skills and experience to deal with a wide range of hardware and software issues. Finding and retaining such staff may be a challenge for projects. Using college students on a part-time or volunteer basis may be a promising strategy.

Fourth, computers and other technology hold out the promise of greater efficiency in project operations, as illustrated by the examples of Project R’s distance tutoring and Project C’s voice messaging system. Cost savings may be of particular interest in a program such as Talent Search, which is commonly described as having a relatively low level of funding per participant.

ISSUES IN SERVING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Several of the selected Talent Search projects had developed interesting services for middle school students. Some projects had what they described as a full middle school curriculum—a systematic structured series of workshops and other activities that reportedly corresponded to middle school students’ developmental needs. Indeed, the sample workshop schedule for different grade levels shown in Table A.1 reflects a planned progression from knowledge about self to knowledge about college.

We also highlighted some projects that had developed multiday programs on weekends or during the summer, available to middle school students who were interested and able to participate. The programs were designed to serve both general needs, such as academic enrichment, and more specific needs, such as preparation for high school. It is possible, moreover, that these services may generally hold more

¹² It should be noted that after we did our case studies, the TRIO office provided all Talent Search projects with \$10,000 in supplemental funds for computer technology.

appeal for middle school than for high school students, particularly if scheduled during the summer when many high school students prefer to work. We saw that these programs represent one way for projects to provide Talent Search participants with early exposure to a college campus; even the project hosted by a community organization (Project X) found a way to hold its enrichment program on a college campus.

Finally, we described how three projects were serving middle school students in their regular classrooms, taking over for regular teachers every week or two. Projects providing in-class services saw the in-class approach as an ideal way to work with students and would have liked to use that approach more extensively. The in-class approach, though, appears to carry with it some significant challenges. To implement classroom-based services obviously requires a high degree of cooperation from target schools. With high-stakes testing becoming ever more prevalent, it may also become harder for Talent Search projects to initiate and maintain in-class service delivery. For school staff to agree to cede control of their classrooms on a regular basis, they must essentially buy into the proposition that the affected students will benefit more from Talent Search than from regular instruction. Talent Search personnel might be better able to make a case for in-class services if they could demonstrate convincingly the benefits of program participation. Solid data on outcomes for participants and similar nonparticipants could be useful in that regard, but, as we noted in chapter 9, relatively few projects possess such information.

APPENDIX B

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TALENT SEARCH PROJECTS SHUT DOWN?

As part of a modification to our original contract, the U.S. Department of Education's Planning and Evaluation Service asked us to explore what happened at sites that lost their funding to operate a Talent Search project in 1998. Key issues concerned whether grantees either established new programs or expanded other programs to continue serving Talent Search participants, and the extent to which former participants may have been able to find similar services from other providers. With regard to other providers, two distinct situations seemed theoretically possible. The existence or closure of a Talent Search project in an area might have encouraged the development of other precollege programs, because the Talent Search program was seen as valuable and worth emulating. Alternatively, the existence of a Talent Search project might have deterred the development of similar programs, because it was seen as sufficiently meeting target students' needs. It was also possible, of course, that Talent Search had neither of these effects.

The scope of our exploratory work on this task was limited. During the first few months of 2000 we attempted to reach key officials—the former program director or a representative of the former host institution—for brief telephone interviews. We made contact with officials from all but two of the projects that lost funding in 1998. Our findings, which are based on officials' perceptions of how students and services changed in the aftermath of losing federal Talent Search funding, are summarized below. We did not follow up with students to determine their receipt of services to replace Talent Search.

TALENT SEARCH PROJECTS RARELY LOSE FUNDING

Talent Search grantees rarely lose their federal funding. Since existing projects can receive up to 15 extra points on their applications ratings for prior experience, they have an advantage over new applicants. Of all the grantees that were operating a Talent Search program during the last grant cycle (1994–98) and applied for continued funding, only 14 were turned down. Basic information on these former grantees is provided in table B.1.

Table B.1: Talent Search grantees that did not receive funding for the current grant period.

Grantee	Location	Type of Host Institution	Approved number of participants in 1996–97
California State University, Fullerton	Fullerton, CA	Public 4-year college	800
Community and Economic Development Association, Inc.	Maywood, IL	Community organization	600
Davenport College of Business	Grand Rapids, MI	Private 4-year college	975
Emporia State University	Emporia, KS	Public 4-year college	1,100
Hopkinsville Community College	Hopkinsville, KY	Public 2-year college	600
Joliet Junior College	Joliet, IL	Public 2-year college	700
Lumbee Regional Development Association	Pembroke, NC	Community organization	850
Michigan State University	East Lansing, MI	Public 4-year college	800
Northwest-Shoals Community College	Muscle Shoals, AL	Public 2-year college	800
Northwestern Michigan College	Traverse City, MI	Public 2-year college	600
Provisional Educational Services, Inc.	San Bernardino, CA	Community organization	1,000
Southeast Missouri State University	Cape Girardeau, MO	Public 4-year college	1,100
University of South Carolina, Spartanburg	Spartanburg, SC	Public 4-year college	1,000
Wayne County Regional Education Service Agency	Wayne, MI	Community organization	700

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs.

Actually, one of the 14 institutions, Northwest-Shoals Community College, continued operating a Talent Search project; in fact, two projects. It had two grants during the 1994–98 grant period. For the 1998–2002 period the college applied for continued funding for both projects and also submitted an application for a new Talent Search project. One of the two previously funded projects' applications was turned down, but the application for the new project was accepted. The new project, however, was approved to serve 200 fewer participants than the one that was forced to shut down, and it serves different target schools.

HOST INSTITUTION RESPONSES

Grantees that wished for at least some of their former Talent Search participants to continue receiving some kind of precollege services could have pursued several different strategies. They could have started new programs, expanded other existing programs, or referred them to programs or services available from other institutions. Each of these approaches was tried to varying extents by some of the former Talent Search grantees. But apparently none of them proved to be very feasible or successful—at least not if success is judged by the percentage of former Talent Search participants able to get similar, alternative services.

Several of the projects tried to start other federally-funded precollege programs. At least three of the former Talent Search grantees applied for a new Upward Bound grant in the competition that closed in October 1998 (for the grant cycle that began in fall of 1999). Two of them won. One of these winning institutions sent letters to about 100 former Talent Search participants, inviting them to apply for the new Upward Bound project. Our contact estimated, however, that less than 10 of them eventually joined Upward Bound. In addition, at least five of the former grantees had applied or were planning to apply for a GEAR UP grant, although none had been successful at the time of our interviews; two of the five were planning to apply for the second time.

Only one former project director mentioned applying for other sources of program funding, besides Upward Bound and GEAR UP, that could potentially serve some students who had been in Talent Search. But two of the three grants she had in mind were for family literacy programs, not very similar to what Talent Search had offered.

It is important to note, however, that many of these actions were not motivated solely or even primarily by the loss of the Talent Search grant. Some of the organizations were following a longstanding practice of continually seeking out new funding opportunities that would benefit their target constituencies. For example, one former project director whose organization applied for an Upward Bound grant said they had planned to do that anyway, although losing the Talent Search grant certainly “sealed the decision.” And another official said that when it comes to providing services, “I’m always looking for more money.” Thus, some efforts described above were not seen at the time as ways to replace lost Talent Search funds.

Six of the former grantees apparently did not try to initiate any new programs to replace Talent Search. Three of these host institutions, according to our contacts, also had no other precollege programs to accommodate former Talent Search participants, although the former director at one of these places said she does what she can occasionally to provide minimal services to the former target population. For example, she had recently made a presentation on financial aid at one of the former target high schools and she always provides one-on-one assistance to people who call or stop by the office with education-related questions. The remaining three projects had one or more other precollege programs, but reportedly did not expand them to serve former Talent Search participants.

An important reason why these organizations did not initiate efforts to compensate for the loss of Talent Search, even though former program staff had been interested in doing so, was insufficient funds. They did not have the money, our sources told us, to create new programs and pay the staff who would be needed to operate them. A few staff also questioned their organizations’ commitments to the Talent Search program. Finally, a representative of one of the community organizations explained that even if his institution possessed or had been able to obtain funds to support a program smaller than Talent Search had been, it would have been somewhat

politically difficult to sponsor services that would benefit just some of the districts or schools in its target area; they felt pressured to serve all or none.

Competing for a new Talent Search grant in the future is also an option that some former grantees may pursue. In seven of the twelve cases we studied, officials thought their former host institutions would apply again for a Talent Search grant at the next opportunity; some said they definitely would. In the few cases where officials we interviewed could not make an educated guess as to what their former host institutions would do, they consistently favored the idea of submitting a new application and hoped that would happen. An official at one former grantee noted, however, that if they won a GEAR UP grant, there might be less interest in competing for Talent Search again, since the two programs have overlapping purposes and target groups.

THE POST-TALENT SEARCH SERVICE ENVIRONMENT

If former grantees did not come up with new ways to serve former Talent Search participants, where could these students, dropouts, and other adults turn, if interested, for similar precollege services? To what extent could former Talent Search staff help them find alternative programs? Our exploratory research indicated that there were few good options; service opportunities were often rather limited and in any case the alternatives were not very comparable to Talent Search.

One of the more prevalent alternative service options might have been Upward Bound. As we stated in the preceding section, two former grantees started operating an Upward Bound program one year after their Talent Search projects shut down. Also, several of the other host institutions were operating an Upward Bound project when they lost their Talent Search funding. During the 1998–99 program year, according to the TRIO directory, seven of the 14 former Talent Search grantees were operating a “regular” Upward Bound project,¹ including one institution (Northwest-Shoals Community College) that had two Upward Bound grants. In addition, the target areas served by some of the former Talent Search projects were also served by Upward Bound projects hosted by other nearby institutions.

In cases where the former Talent Search target high schools were also served by an Upward Bound project, or where students from a former Talent Search target middle school were transferring to an Upward Bound target high school, some former Talent Search participants might have been able to join Upward Bound and thereby continue receiving precollege services. But officials consistently pointed out that this would only have happened to a very limited extent. Because Upward Bound projects are so much smaller than Talent Search, the number of Upward Bound openings in any given year would be tiny relative to the number of former Talent Search participants. Moreover, the two programs are of a different nature. Students who had participated in Talent Search might not be able to make the greater time

¹That is, not a Veterans Upward Bound project, which would not be an alternative service option for the typical Talent Search participant.

commitment typically required in Upward Bound, might not be interested or in need of its intensive academic services, and might not meet the eligibility criteria.²

- One former Talent Search grantee that already had an Upward Bound project referred some participants to it, but the prospects for their getting in were not good, because it had a waiting list.
- One of the former grantees that won funding for a new Upward Bound project, sent letters to about 100 former Talent Search participants, inviting them to apply for the new Upward Bound program. Our contact estimated, however, that less than 10 of them eventually joined Upward Bound.

Other than Upward Bound, several officials said, there were few alternative precollege programs even roughly comparable to Talent Search in the areas they served. Some said there were virtually none. One of the community colleges that lost its Talent Search grant had a year-round, precollege math and science program, but it only served only 50-75 students. A former director from a community organization said that colleges in the local area may have had a few “little programs,” but these lacked the capacity to absorb many former Talent Search participants. A former target district for a different project had recently received a GEAR UP grant. In one target city there was a Boys and Girls Club. And elsewhere a former target middle schools reportedly had been awarded a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, but according to the former Talent Search project director it was not as comprehensive as Talent Search had been, and lacked a precollege orientation.

One former project director said that in his city there were a few “enrichment programs” run by community organizations, but that these programs were much smaller than Talent Search; were not constantly recruiting and did not operate on school campuses, so students might not know about them and might find it more difficult to participate in them, relative to Talent Search; and, in some cases, were aimed specifically at just one racial/ethnic group, such as blacks or Hispanics, and therefore were not likely to help students with other backgrounds. Another former director said that other programs did not offer as extensive a range of services as Talent Search did, and may not be free.

A few officials commented that opportunities varied considerably by location, including community size and urbanization. For example, one person described how

²Three kinds of eligibility criteria apply here. First, in Upward Bound, two-thirds of all participants must be from low-income families and be potential first-generation college students, and the remaining one-third must be either low-income or first-generation. In Talent Search, two-thirds of participants must be both low-income and first-generation, but the remaining one-third do not have to meet either of these criteria. Thus, any Talent Search participants in this last category would be prohibited from joining Upward Bound. Second, Upward Bound is only for high school students; it does not serve students below 9th grade, nor out of school adults. Third, individual Upward Bound projects might have their own additional eligibility standards, such as a minimum GPA requirement, that some former Talent Search participants would be unable to meet.

in a small community students had very few alternative programs, but in a mid-sized city formerly served by the same Talent Search project, they had a greater chance of finding some other program to join.

We usually asked specifically whether former target schools had stepped up to fill the gap left by the closure of these Talent Search projects. Perhaps having seen what the Talent Search program did for their students, schools would initiate or increase efforts to provide similar services. Most officials, however, said there was no response by former target schools. Some schools may have been interested in providing students with supplemental services similar to those Talent Search had provided, said a former project director, but they would very quickly have run up against funding limits. A couple of former grantee officials said that schools did not have the resources, neither the money nor the staff, to carry on the type of services Talent Search had provided. In the middle- and low-income areas that Talent Search targeted, one of them explained, schools were strapped for cash and typically had just two guidance counselors trying to serve 500 to 1,000 students.

Neither the existence nor the demise of Talent Search had spawned many alternative precollege programs in the target areas, according to our contacts. As with the former grantees themselves, other potential service providers were hampered by a lack of funds. One official assessed the situation this way: Without government “leading the charge” and providing the funds, then nothing will ever happen and service needs will go unmet. In addition, another former director worried that alternative programs starting up after Talent Search ended might find some students and parents skeptical about joining, based on a concern that these new programs too might go out of business.

Furthermore, our sources felt that their Talent Search projects, when they were operating, had not deterred the development of alternative precollege programs. The general lack of similar services was attributed first and foremost to a lack of funds; it was not because potential program operators and funders felt that Talent Search was doing all that needed to be done for the target population. As one former project director put it, if anyone had looked closely, they would have clearly seen that Talent Search was not coming anywhere near meeting the level of need in the community; they would have seen there was plenty of room for similar programs.

A final interesting finding from our interviews was that when a Talent Search project shuts down, other programs may also see decreased participation. We heard this from representatives of two of the 12 projects we studied. Both cases involved programs that could help students pay for college.

- One former host institution, a two-year college, has a program that is modeled somewhat after the well known I Have A Dream program. Area schools annually choose 50-60 disadvantaged middle school students for the program. The students attend a short summer program at the college and then receive a guarantee that if they remain drug-free and maintain a 2.0 GPA, the program will cover all

tuition costs at the college above and beyond the value of any Pell grants they receive. An official told us that without Talent Search to provide services to this program's participants in the years between 6th and 12th grade, fewer of them are using these "scholarships."

- At one of the community organizations, a high proportion of Talent Search participants were from one particular racial/ethnic group. There are at least two generous college scholarship programs aimed specifically at this group, but without Talent Search, the former project director said, many students are not hearing about these scholarships at all or not soon enough to benefit.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The general picture that emerged from our limited research on the aftermath of Talent Search project closures is one in which few former program participants can readily obtain similar services from alternative sources. A lack of funds was cited as key to this situation far more than a lack of will. But while the cessation of services was no doubt unfortunate for those affected, concerned readers may be comforted by a few thoughts. First, it is rare for Talent Search grantees to lose funds. Second, former participants at the 14 de-funded projects did at least receive *some* precollege services, some of them for several years, and this may have a positive effect on their lives. It is possible, for example, that students who were approaching the end of high school when the projects ended knew a good deal more about financial aid and getting into college than they would have if they had never joined Talent Search in the first place. Third, at the same time that these 14 projects were shutting down, many new Talent Search projects were starting up in other communities all around the country, serving lots of other students and dropouts who undoubtedly need precollege assistance just as much as those in the areas where the 14 de-funded projects had operated. In fact, ED funded about 40 new Talent Search projects beginning in the 1998–99 program year. Thus, in the big picture, although 14 projects shut down, the nation saw a distinct net increase in the number of people and communities served by Talent Search.

APPENDIX C

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON TALENT SEARCH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

This appendix expands on the information presented in chapter 6. Four topics are addressed: Annual performance report (APR) data on academic support services, APR and project survey data on personal and career development services, the use of computer technology in project services and communications, and services for persons with disabilities.

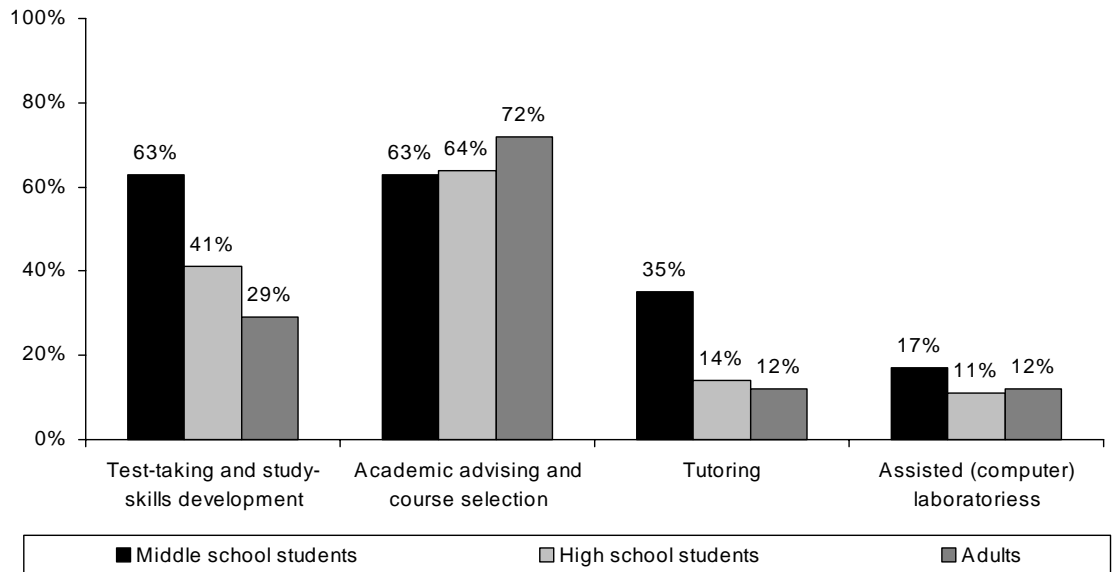
APR DATA ON ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Compared with our survey data, APR data showed roughly similar percentages of projects providing each of the four academic support services, but APR data also provided additional information on the scope of these services. The most frequently provided service was academic advising/course selection; projects provided an average of 673 such sessions (table C.1).¹ Overall, academic advising/course selection was also the service delivered to the largest percent of participants. However, the percent of participants receiving these four services varied by type of participant, as shown in figure C.1. For example, middle school students were substantially more likely than high school students to receive tutoring and test-taking and study-skills development services.

	Percentage of projects providing services	Average number of sessions per project	Percentage of participants receiving services
Test-taking and study-skills development	92%	265	47%
Academic advising/course selection	91	673	65
Tutoring	80	547	21
Assisted (computer) labs	63	149	13

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

¹A “session” may be thought of as any meeting, activity, or event that involves participants. Some sessions may involve a single participant, others may involve many participants.

Figure C.1—Percentages of participants receiving academic support services: 1998-99

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998-99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

APR DATA ON PERSONAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Compared with our project survey data, APR data showed roughly similar percent of projects providing each of the several personal and career development services (with the exception of referral services, discussed below). APR data also provided additional information on the scope of these services. The most frequently provided service was counseling; projects provided an average of 1,286 such sessions (table C.2). Overall, counseling was also the service received by the largest percent of participants. However, the percent of participants receiving personal and career development services varied by participant type, as shown in figure C.2. For example, a substantially higher percent of middle school students than high school students participated in cultural activities while adults were substantially more likely than students at either level to receive referrals.

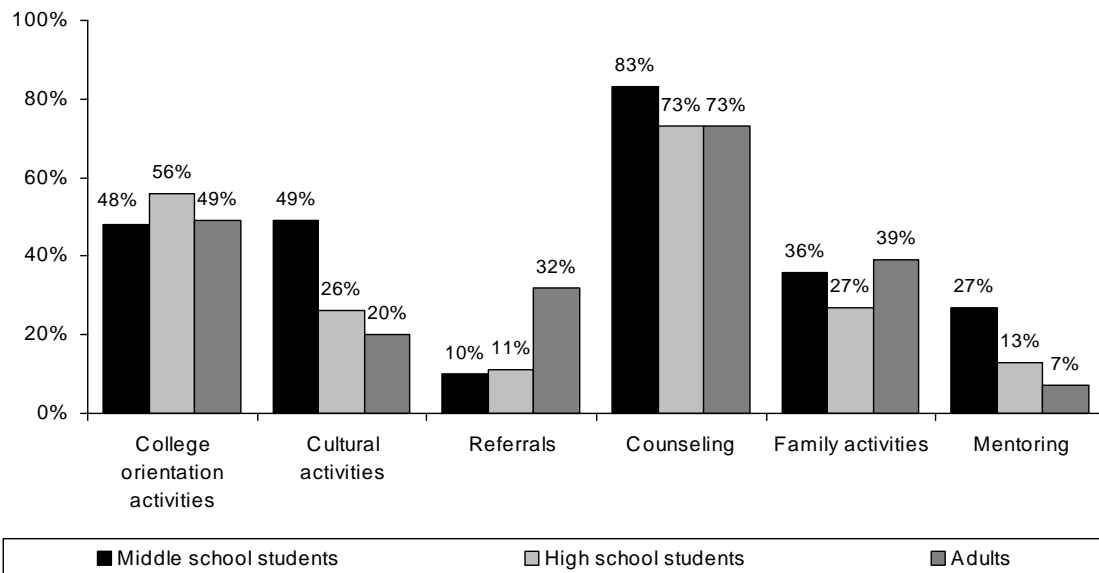
Table C.2—APR data on provision of personal and career development services: 1998–99

	Percent of projects providing service	Average number of sessions per project	Percent of participants receiving service
College orientation activities ^a	95%	217	54%
Cultural activities	90	59	33
Referrals	68	27 ^b	12
Counseling	92	1,286	77
Family activities	84	94	30
Mentoring	58	233	17

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

^aThe APR does not ask separately about campus visits as the national evaluation's project survey did; this activity is included in the definition of college orientation activities.

^bThis is the number of organizations to which participants were referred, not the number of sessions or referrals.

Figure C.2—Percentages of participants receiving academic support services: 1998–99.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Talent Search Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: May 2002.

REFERRALS

We conclude this section with a brief discussion of referrals, a means for Talent Search projects to assist people not by providing direct service but rather by pointing them to services provided by other organizations. The discussion is important for two reasons. First, far more projects in the national evaluation's survey than in the APRs reported that they offered referrals for the same year (92 versus 68 percent,

respectively). Although we cannot explain the discrepancy, one hypothesis holds that survey respondents were thinking about the referrals they give not only to participants but also to nonparticipants. For example, if an individual not enrolled in the program asked a project staff member about a particular service and the individual was not eligible for the program, the project did not provide that service, or the project could not accept any more participants, the staff member would likely refer the person to other service providers. Such referrals, however, would not be recorded in project records. In the APR, in contrast, projects report only services provided to a well-defined set of official program participants, not informal assistance given to nonparticipants. The other services mentioned in both our questionnaire and the APR, such as tutoring and mentoring, are not activities that would be provided informally to nonparticipants.

The second reason for discussing referral services separately from other personal and career development services is that we have additional related information. Specifically, the project survey asked about referrals to other TRIO programs (such as Student Support Services or Upward Bound). Nearly all projects (98 percent) reported that they made such referrals to some degree or another, including 26 percent that reported frequent referrals (see table C.3). Projects with different types of host institutions showed little variation in providing frequent referrals to other TRIO programs.

Table C.3—Referrals to other TRIO programs in the area

Percent of projects that provide referrals	Host institution				
	All projects	Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	Community org.
Frequently	26%	24%	26%	29%	23%
Regularly	45	53	28	46	42
Occasionally	27	22	44	22	30
Never	2	0	3	3	5

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

USE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY IN PROJECT SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Talent Search projects are incorporating computer technology into their service plans to varying extents, as shown in table C.4. Results from the project survey showed that 71 percent of projects used computerized career guidance programs and that an equal percent offered assistance with the online version of FAFSA.² At the low end of the distribution, one-third (33 percent) of projects communicated with

²In addition, 80 percent of projects checked “yes” when asked about “other computer-related activities/services,” but we cannot be certain about the specific services or activities they had in mind and therefore excluded that survey item from this analysis.

participants by e-mail, and about one in 10 projects (11 percent) was engaged in interactive distance-learning activities.³ Projects varied widely in terms of how many technology-related features they had at their disposal or used. About a quarter (24 percent) had or used six or more features, and about the same number of projects (24 percent) used two or fewer features; the mean was 4.1.

	All projects	Host institution			Community org.
		Public 4-year	Private 4-year	2-year	
Percent of projects that had or made use of:					
Computerized career guidance programs	71%	71%	64%	81%	59%
Assistance with Internet-based FAFSA	71	69	54	77	76
College applications online	66	72	54	68	60
Assisted (computer) labs	61	61	68	61	58
E-mail communication with target school	45	50	41	50	33
Project Web page	43	53	38	36	41
E-mail communication with participants	33	40	21	38	24
Interactive distance-learning activities	11	10	10	15	3
Percent of projects that had or made use of:					
Seven or eight of the above	9	14	3	10	2
Six of the above	15	15	12	19	13
Five of the above	22	25	21	19	23
Four of the above	17	12	24	22	14
Three of the above	13	12	15	13	16
Two of the above	14	14	15	10	20
One or none of the above	10	10	12	9	13

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

In some cases, the percent using computer technology differed substantially between projects operated by different types of host institutions. For example, 81 percent of projects hosted by 2-year colleges used computerized career guidance programs compared with 59 percent of projects hosted by community organizations. Projects at public 4-year colleges were about twice as likely as those at private 4-year colleges

³Appendix A includes a description of one project's distance-tutoring service.

to use e-mail to communicate with participants. Overall, however, there was no consistent pattern.

Although 28 percent of projects reported that use of technology was currently a high priority, 78 percent indicated that there was high likelihood that they would increase their emphasis on the use of technology if they had more resources. Whether or not projects secure more resources, it seems safe to assume that the use of computer technology in program services and communications will increase in the future. Our conversations with several project directors around the country led us to believe that the use of technology to serve participants was an issue of widespread interest. Accordingly, we devoted some of our case studies to focusing on this issue. It is one of three topics discussed in greater detail in appendix A.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

About one in four Talent Search projects provided special services to participants with disabilities (table C.5). Although not shown in the table, there was almost no variation between projects operated by different types of host institutions in the provision of special services. The most common service provided by the projects was transportation (47 percent), followed by specialized instruction (46 percent) and assistive devices/educational technology (36 percent). Relatively few projects (19 percent) provided all three of these special services; the mean was 1.3. Our case studies did not explicitly explore services for persons with disabilities.

Table C.5—Services to participants with mental or physical disabilities

Percent of projects providing special services	25%
Of all projects providing special services, percent providing:	
Transportation	47
Specialized instruction	46
Assistive devices/educational technology	36
Of all projects providing special services, percent providing:	
All three of the above	19
Two of the above	17
One of the above	41
None of the above ^a	23

SOURCE: National Survey of Talent Search Projects, 1999–2000.

^aMany of these projects reported providing some other type of special service.

APPENDIX D NATIONAL INFORMATION ON THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTERS PROGRAM

In addition to conducting a national evaluation of the Talent Search program, MPR was also obligated, as part of our contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Planning and Evaluation Service, to conduct a survey of all Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs). This appendix summarizes some background information on the EOC program, describes issues associated with our research, and presents the results from the survey along with some data from annual performance reports (APRs).

BACKGROUND ON THE EOC PROGRAM

The Educational Opportunity Center program was established as the fourth TRIO program in 1972, about six years after the establishment of Talent Search. The goal of the EOC program is to increase the number of adult participants who enroll in postsecondary institutions. EOCs focus on serving people at least 19 years old, typically adults who may not have completed high school, or who have a high school diploma (or equivalency) but who have never enrolled in a postsecondary institution, or who have enrolled at some point but have "stopped out."¹ Two-thirds of the participants in each EOC must be low-income and a potential first-generation college student; the remaining one-third must meet one of these two criteria.

To aid participants, EOCs may provide a wide range of services, including:

- Academic advice
- Personal counseling
- Career workshops

¹If there is no Talent Search project in the area, an EOC may serve people under age 19. Veterans are eligible for the EOC program regardless of age. EOCs may also serve individuals already in college, according to the regulations found in 34 CFR 644.3(a)(3).

- Information on postsecondary education opportunities
- Information on financial aid
- Assistance in completing applications for college admissions, testing, and financial aid
- Media activities designed to involve and acquaint the community with higher education opportunities
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Coordination with nearby postsecondary institutions

From the beginning, the Talent Search and EOC programs have been perceived as closely linked in that they are both low-intensity programs that foster postsecondary entrance and assist participants in securing federal financial aid. Currently, the two programs share the same TRIO grant cycle and the same performance report. The chief difference is that EOCs focus on out of school adults, while Talent Search focuses on students enrolled in grades 6-12.

EOCs may be operated by institutions of higher education; public and private not-for-profit agencies; a combination of institutions, agencies, and organizations; and, in exceptional cases, secondary schools. Many of the tables in this appendix present data by type of host institution, using the following three groups: centers hosted by 4-year colleges or universities;² centers hosted by 2-year colleges; and all other types of host institutions, which we refer to as community organizations.

EOCs served an average of about 1,860 people in 1998-99 (see table D.1). Centers hosted by 4-year colleges were the smallest, serving an average of about 1,470 participants, and those hosted by community organizations were the largest, serving an average of about 3,000 participants. The average EOC grant amount in 2000 was about \$372,000. Although the average EOC serves more participants than any other TRIO program, the funding per participant (under \$200 in 2000) is lower than any other TRIO program (see table 1.1 in the main body of this report).

²There were too few EOCs served by private 4-year higher education institutions to allow us to present data separately on them, as we did with regard to Talent Search projects.

Table D.1—EOC participant levels, by host type: 1998–99

Host institution	Number of centers	Total number of participants served ^a	Average number of participants served
4-year	40	58,931	1,473
2-year	23	36,516	1,588
Community org.	19	56,897	2,995
All centers	82	152,344	1,858

^aNumber actually served, as reported in APRs, rather than number expected/funded to serve.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal TRIO Programs.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA

A survey was distributed to all EOC directors and collected between spring 1999 and spring 2000. The questions in the EOC survey were very similar to those in the Talent Search survey, covering topics such as program and host institution characteristics, staff characteristics and responsibilities, participant characteristics, recruitment, services, outcomes, record keeping, and budget issues. Respondents could complete either the hard copy or an online version. The overall response rate was 91 percent (75 of 82). Table D.2 presents the survey response rates by type of host.

Table D.2—Number of EOCs, distribution of participants, and response rates to national survey and performance reports, by host type

Host institution	Number of centers	Percentage of centers	Percentage of all EOC participants served	Percent of EOCs responding to survey	Percent of EOCs completing 1998–99 performance report
4-year	40	49%	39%	93%	95%
2-year	23	28	24	96	96
Community org.	19	23	37	84	95
All centers	82	100	100	91	95

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: February 2002; National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

For certain topics, including participant outcomes, we also used data from EOCs' annual performance reports for 1998–99. Ninety-five percent of centers submitted an APR (table D.2).

Survey nonresponse, missing APRs, and item nonresponse on either of these sources account for minor fluctuations in the number of EOCs on which our results are based. The relatively small number of EOCs operating to begin with, plus nonresponse, together mean that some results should be interpreted with caution.

For example, with only 15 survey respondents hosted by community organizations, one or two EOCs answering differently could lead to relatively large percentage change in the responses.

Throughout this appendix, percentages that should sum to 100 may not, due to rounding.

FINDINGS

This appendix is intended as a reference document that will (1) provide officials with national data that may not have existed before, (2) serve as a point of comparison for any future research, and (3) allow individual center staff to compare their own structure and operations to those of other centers with similar host institutions and to all centers nationwide. Because our research involved only a survey and some analysis of APR data (not a literature review, case studies, or conversations with EOC directors), we are limited in our ability to draw conclusions from or interpret the significance of our findings. Nonetheless, one overarching observation is that EOCs operated by community-based organizations differ substantially, on certain dimensions, from those operated by postsecondary institutions. EOCs at community organizations are much more likely to be located in a large city; are much less likely to operate other programs for disadvantaged individuals; are much more likely to have an external advisory board; tend to serve a higher proportion of racial/ethnic minorities; have much higher participant-to-staff ratios; are much more likely to use volunteers; and are much more likely to have had an external evaluation conducted. However, when it comes to services, EOCs at community organizations did not differ systematically from other EOCs.

Below we summarize the major findings about EOCs from the national survey and 1998-99 annual performance reports. The narrative focuses on overall results, but most tables present data both for all centers combined and by type of host institution.

HOST INSTITUTIONS, PROJECT OPERATIONS, AND TARGET AREA

Size and host type. EOCs operated by community-based organizations are almost twice as large as those operated by higher education institutions, serving an average of about 3,000 participants; they account for 23 percent of all centers but serve 37 percent of all EOC participants nationwide (table D.2). This appears to be related to program longevity, since grantees tend to grow over time. Ten of 16 centers hosted by community organizations started operating in 1980 or earlier, compared with 4 of 35 EOCs at 4-year colleges and 6 of 21 at 2-year colleges.

Area served. More than four of ten EOCs (42 percent) primarily served a large or very large city (with populations of over 100,000); one-third served small or medium-sized cities (with populations of less than 100,000); and nearly one-fourth (24 percent) served rural or farming communities (see table D.3).

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
A large or very large city (over 100,000 people)	42%	43%	23%	67%
A small or medium-sized city (up to 100,000 people)	33	29	45	27
A rural or farming community	24	29	27	7
A suburb of a medium, large, or very large city	1	0	5	0

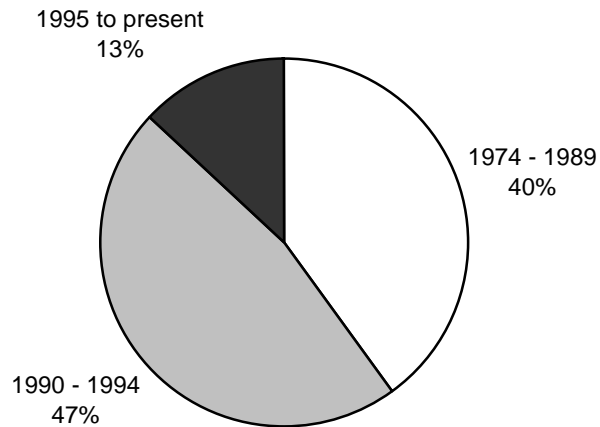
SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Other programs for disadvantaged persons. Nearly all EOC host institutions (92 percent) also administered other programs for disadvantaged persons (see table D.4). The most common were Student Support Services (75 percent), Talent Search (71 percent), and Upward Bound (64 percent).

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Host had other program(s) for disadvantaged persons	92%	97%	100%	67%
Of all EOC programs:				
Student Support Services	75	91	82	9
Talent Search	71	69	68	82
Regular Upward Bound	64	86	59	19
Other college preparation or support programs	40	54	27	18
Upward Bound				
Math/Science	28	46	14	0
Other	22	20	32	9
Veterans Upward Bound	21	31	14	0

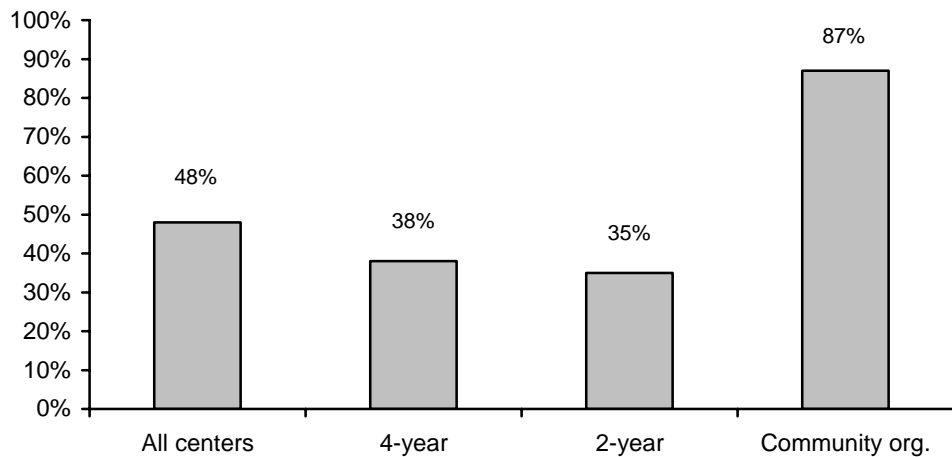
SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

First year of operation. As of 2000, nearly nine of ten EOCs had been operating for more than ten years: 47 percent began operation between 1990 and 1994, and 40 percent began in 1989 or earlier (see figure D.1).

Figure D.1—Year that EOCs operating in 2000 first started operating

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Advisory boards. Forty-eight percent of all EOCs had a board of directors or another external group that provides advice and/or support; they were most common among centers hosted by a community-based organization (see figure D.2).

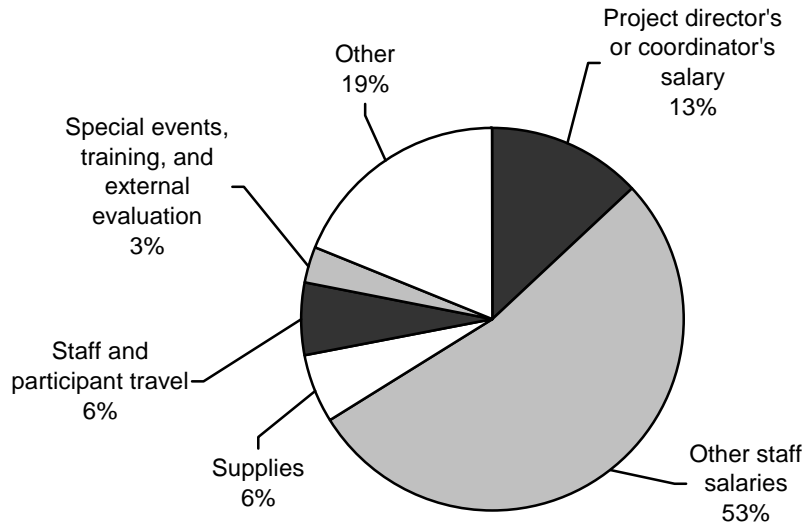
Figure D.2—Percentage of EOCs that had a board of directors or external group providing advice/support

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Allocation of EOC grant money. EOCs spend, on average, about two-thirds of their grant funds on staff salaries—13 percent for the project director/coordinator

and 53 percent for other staff (see figure D.3). In addition, 6 percent goes for staff and participant travel, and another 6 percent goes for supplies.

Figure D.3—Allocation of EOC grant money by budget category: 2000



SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

STAFF

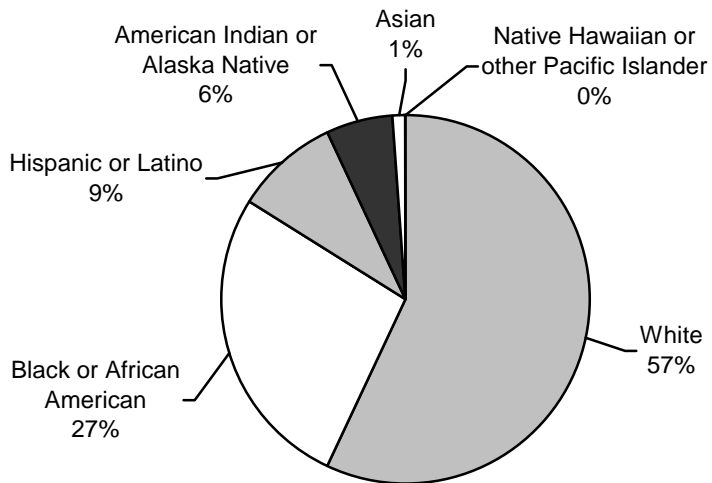
Race/ethnicity. Nearly half (48 percent) of all EOC staff were white, about one-third (34 percent) were black, and 13 percent were Hispanic/Latino (see table D.5). Among directors/coordinators, however, 57 percent were white, 27 percent were black, and 9 percent were Hispanic/Latino (see figure D.4).

Sex. About 70 percent of all EOC staff were female (see table D.5), although 58 percent of directors were female (see figure D.5).

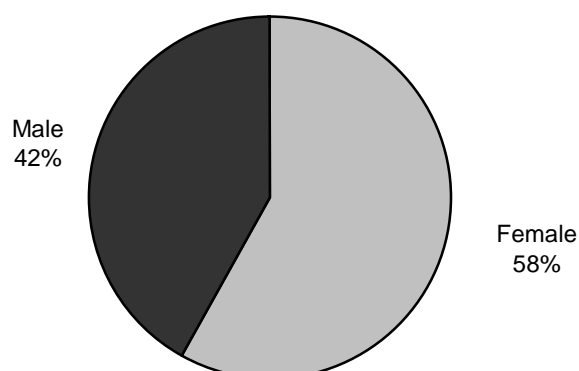
Table D.5—Demographic profile of all EOC staff, 1999-2000

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Race/ethnicity				
White	48%	48%	58%	39%
Black or African American	34	34	27	40
Hispanic or Latino	13	13	10	16
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	4	3	3
Asian	1	1	1	1
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	1	2	2
Sex				
Female	71	69	75	71
Male	29	31	25	29

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: February 2002.

Figure D.4—Race/ethnicity of EOC directors/coordinators

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999-2000.

Figure D.5—Sex of EOC directors/coordinators

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999-2000.

Educational attainment. Overall, 20 percent of EOC staff had less than a bachelor's degree, 36 percent had a bachelor's, and 44 percent had an advanced degree (master's or higher). Advanced degrees were held by 61 percent of directors/coordinators, 47 percent of counselors, and 22 percent of other professionals (see table D.6).

Table D.6—Highest level of education completed by EOC staff, by type of host institution and by position, 1999-2000

	Less than bachelor's degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Ph.D. or other professional degree
Host institution				
All centers	20%	36%	39%	5%
4-year	15	39	40	5
2-year	23	34	39	5
Community org.	24	35	39	3
Position or title				
Directors/coordinators	0	21	61	19
Assistant or associate directors/coordinators	0	11	72	17
Counselors/advisors	6	45	47	1
Other professionals	39	37	22	1
Support staff	13	54	33	0
Tutors	48	24	29	0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998-99*, Washington, DC: February 2002.

Languages used with participants. One or more staff members in 52 percent of all EOCs used a language other than English to communicate with participants (see table D.7). Spanish was the most commonly used language; 41 percent of *all* projects used Spanish to communicate with participants.

Table D.7—Use of languages other than English to communicate with participants

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percent of centers where staff use language(s) other than English	52%	44%	53%	69%
Of all EOCs, percent using:				
Spanish	41	37	43	50
Other	25	7	25	56
Chinese	5	0	0	20
American Indian language	5	6	8	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Staff levels. EOCs employed an estimated 599 staff members nationwide, an average of about seven people (6.3 full-time equivalent staff) per center. Centers had an average of 254 participants per staff member (see table D.8).

Table D.8—EOC staff levels: 1999–2000

Host institution	Estimated total number of staff	Number of staff per center	FTE staff per center	Number of participants per staff
4-year	267	6.7	5.7	221
2-year	165	7.2	6.2	221
Community org.	167	8.8	7.6	342
All centers	599	7.3	6.3	254

*Adjusted upward from the responding EOCs to reflect the total number of centers overall and for each type of host institution.

NOTE: In reporting on staff, centers were instructed not to include undergraduate work-study or other part-time student employees or volunteers. However, the data should include graduate students who might have been employed as tutors or in other roles.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: February 2002; National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Volunteer and undergraduate staff. Relatively few EOCs (12 percent) used volunteers. The average number of volunteers at those centers was about two, and

those volunteers reportedly contributed a total of about 24 hours of labor per week. However, a majority of EOCs (53 percent) employed work study students; those centers used an average of about two work study students and those students contributed a total of almost 28 hours of labor per week. Slightly fewer EOCs used other undergraduate students, but those students worked an average of about 36 total hours per week (see table D.9).

Table D.9—EOCs' use of different types of staff: 1998–99

	Percentage of centers using these staff	Among centers using these staff, average number used per center	Average total hours of labor per week that these staff provide, per center
Volunteers			
4-year	9%	1.3	8.3
2-year	5	1.0	20.0
Community org.	31	3.3	37.5
All centers	12	2.3	24.4
Work study students			
4-year	55	2.7	30.4
2-year	62	2.0	26.5
Community org.	36	2.2	19.2
All centers	53	2.4	27.5
Other undergraduate students			
4-year	45	2.7	32.9
2-year	52	2.6	39.3
Community org.	14	3.0	40.0
All centers	41	2.7	35.9

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Staff levels and experience, by position. The average center had 1.3 director/coordinator, 2.1 counselors, and almost three other professionals. Directors/coordinators accounted for 18 percent of total full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, counselors for 31 percent, and other professionals for 41 percent. Directors/coordinators had an average of 6.6 years of experience at their current centers, counselors averaged 5.6 years of experience, and other professionals had 4.7 years of experience on average (see table D.10).

Table D.10—Average number of EOC staff, number of FTEs, and years of experience, by position: 1999–2000

Position	Average number per center	Average FTEs per center	Average percentage of total FTEs	Average years of experience in current center
Directors/coordinators	1.3	1.1	18%	6.6
Associate or assistant directors/coordinators	0.2	0.2	4	8.2
Counselors	2.1	1.9	31	5.6
Other professionals	2.8	2.5	41	4.7
Support staff	0.3	0.3	4	4.9
Tutors	0.3	0.1	2	2.0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Salaries. The average annual salary for directors/coordinators was about \$41,200, while associate or assistant directors/coordinators had average salaries of about \$44,200, and EOC counselors earned about \$31,400 on average (see table D.11). The explanation for why associates/assistants earned more than directors/coordinators has to do with their respective numbers and different staffing structures. First, there were 98 directors/coordinators in our database, indicating that some centers have co-directors, co-coordinators, or both a director and a coordinator, who have relatively lower salaries because they share some key responsibilities.³ Indeed, at centers with more than one director/coordinator, their average salary was \$32,639. Second, there were only 16 associates/assistants, and the directors/coordinators at these EOCs earned substantially more than their associates/assistants: the average salary of directors at EOCs that also had an assistant/associate director was \$55,667, whereas directors/coordinators at EOCs with no associate/assistant on staff earned an average of \$37,077.

Table D.11—Salaries for full-time EOC staff, by position: 2000*

Position	Mean	Median	75th percentile
Directors/coordinators	\$41,205	\$40,739	\$44,445
Associate or assistant directors/coordinators	44,194	44,445	49,096
Counselors	31,389	29,032	35,143
Other professionals	25,548	25,564	29,768
Support staff	30,286	25,840	31,008

*Full time is defined as working 37 or more hours per week. Salaries were reported for 1999, but adjusted for inflation. Salaries include all sources, not just money paid out of the EOC grant.

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

³Sixty-three directors/coordinators worked full-time and had salary data.

Leadership experience of directors/coordinators. As of 2000, 70 percent of EOC directors/coordinators had served as director of their centers at least two years, including 13 percent who had been in that position for 11 or more years (see table D.12). Thirty-four percent and 27 percent had served as directors of Talent Search and Upward Bound projects, respectively, and 66 percent had previously directed some other program serving disadvantaged persons.

Table D.12—Experience of EOC directors/coordinators running this and other programs

	11 years or more	6–10 years	4–5 years	2–3 years	Fewer than 2 years	Never
This EOC	13%	26%	16%	16%	30%	0%
Another EOC	2	2	0	0	2	95
Talent Search	8	10	2	3	11	66
Upward Bound	5	4	5	2	11	73
Other projects serving disadvantaged persons	23	9	9	13	11	34

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Other experience of directors/coordinators. Before taking on their current leadership roles, 52 percent of all EOC directors/coordinators had served at their current centers in some other capacity, including 10 percent who had done so for at least 11 years (see table D.13). Only 2 percent had previously served as a staff member at another EOC.

Table D.13—Experience of EOC directors/coordinators working in another capacity (other than director) for this and other programs

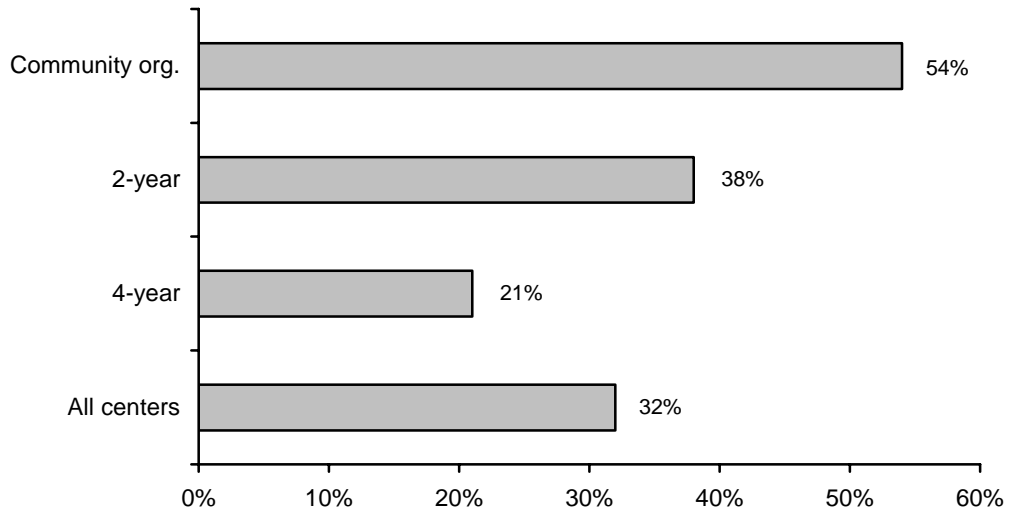
Worked at	11 years or more	6–10 years	4–5 years	2–3 years	Fewer than 2 years	Never
This EOC	10%	10%	7%	16%	10%	48%
Another EOC	0	0	0	0	2	98
Talent Search	2	2	5	4	4	84
Upward Bound	0	4	4	2	5	86
Other projects serving disadvantaged persons	15	12	10	10	10	44

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Director/coordinator responsibility for other programs. About one-third of all EOC directors/coordinators (32 percent) also simultaneously serve as the director or

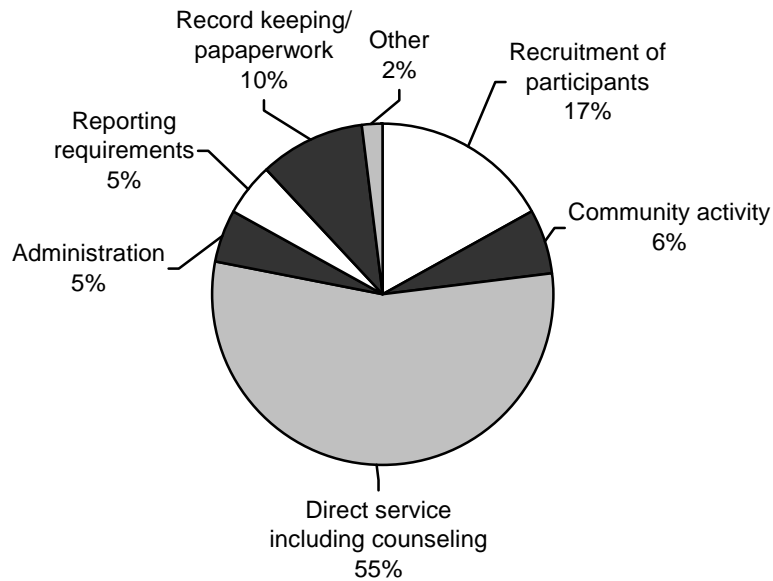
administrator for one or more other programs operated by their host institution (see figure D.6).

Figure D.6—Percentage of EOC directors/coordinators who also direct or administer other programs at the host institution



SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

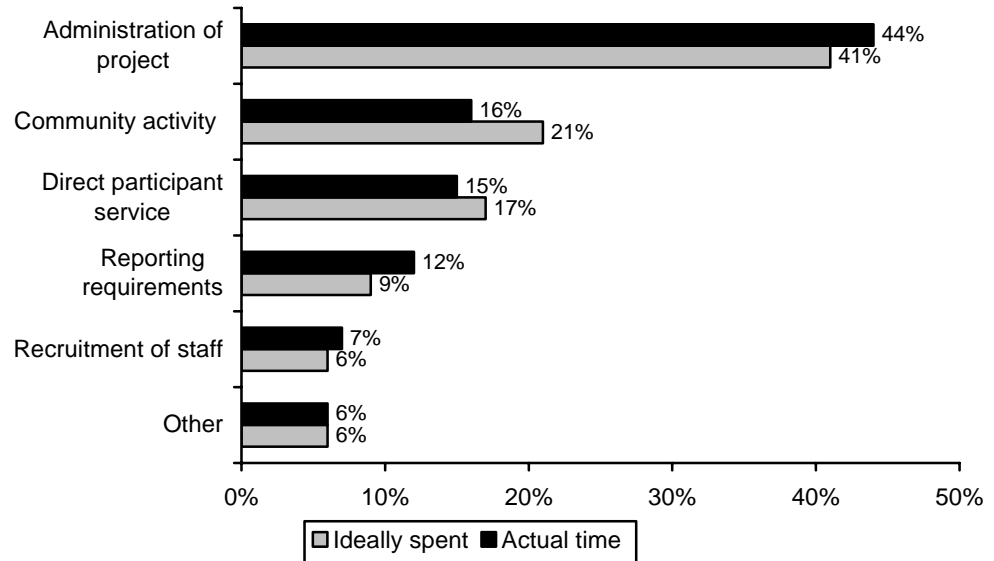
Staff time allocation. EOC staff nationwide spent, on average, 55 percent of their time providing services, including counseling, directly to participants (see figure D.7). Seventeen percent of staff time was used for participant recruitment and 10 percent was spent on record keeping and paperwork.

Figure D.7—Estimated average time allocation of total project staff

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Actual and ideal time allocation of directors/coordinators. Overall, the amount of time that EOC directors/coordinators spend on various tasks is close to the amount they would prefer to spend on those tasks (see figure D.8). Program administration takes up, on average, 44 percent of their time, while only 15 percent of their time is spent on direct services to participants.

Figure D.8—How EOC directors/coordinators spend—and would like to spend—their time



SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Staff hiring/training. Thirty-seven percent of all EOCs reported having a specific performance objective pertaining to hiring and/or training staff (34 percent of centers hosted by 4-year colleges, 33 percent of those hosted by 2-year colleges, and 47 percent of those hosted by community organizations).

PARTICIPANTS

Eligibility. Seventy-one percent of participants were both low-income and potential first-generation college students, 13 percent met only the first-generation criterion, and 11 percent met only the low-income criterion (see table D.14).

Race/ethnicity. Whites constituted a plurality of participants, accounting for 41 percent; blacks were close behind at 36 percent; and Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 14 percent of participants (see table D.14).

Sex. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of participants were female (see table D.14).

Age. Forty-four percent of participants were age 28 or older, 40 percent were 19-27 years old, and the remaining 16 percent were 14-18 years old (see table D.14).

School enrollment and grade level. When they were first served by an EOC, 37 percent of EOC participants were high school graduates or GED recipients who had

never enrolled in a postsecondary education program, 28 percent were either secondary or postsecondary dropouts, 21 percent were postsecondary students, and 13 percent were enrolled in high school (see table D.14).

Veteran status. Four percent of EOC participants were veterans (see table D.14).

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Eligibility				
Low-income and potential first-generation college student	71%	73%	70%	72%
Potential first-generation college student only	13	13	13	12
Low-income only	11	10	12	11
Other	5	4	5	5
Race/ethnicity				
White	41	44	44	36
Black or African American	36	32	29	46
Hispanic or Latino	14	15	16	12
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	6	4	2
Asian	2	1	3	2
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	0	2	0
More than one race/ethnicity reported	2	1	2	3
Sex				
Female	64	64	67	63
Male	36	36	33	37
Age				
28 or older	44	42	43	45
19-27	40	38	45	39
14-18	16	19	12	16
Grade level				
Postsecondary student	21	17	16	28
Postsecondary dropout	14	11	16	15
High school graduate or GED recipient	37	42	45	28
Secondary school dropout	14	15	16	12
12th grade student	11	12	5	13
9th-11th grade student	2	2	2	3
Veteran status	4	5	4	3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998-99*, Washington, DC: February 2002.

Targeting of potential participants. Seventy-seven percent of EOCs place “much” or “very much” emphasis on recruiting current or former welfare recipients, and 66 percent place that degree of emphasis on people who dropped out of school (see table D.15). Another highly emphasized group is low achievers with ability for college. Conversely, relatively few EOCs placed much or very much emphasis on recruiting people with a particular subject area strength/interest (5 percent), or on non-native speakers of English (14 percent).

	None or very little emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Much or very much emphasis	Not applicable
Welfare recipients or former recipients	8%	14%	77%	0%
Those who dropped out of school	10	22	66	1
Low achievers with ability for college	21	27	43	9
All those in specific schools or programs	30	24	39	7
Rural	32	22	38	9
Urban	24	25	36	15
Racial/ethnic minorities	26	36	35	3
At-risk due to fragile family situation	27	34	30	10
Middle achievers	35	26	29	9
Low achievers	43	19	29	9
Veterans	35	37	28	0
Persons in specific service programs such as drug rehabilitation	44	30	24	1
Females	45	28	22	6
Males	47	26	21	6
High achievers or gifted and talented	52	21	20	8
Those with disabilities	37	40	16	7
Non-English speaking or English as a second language	53	27	14	6
Specific subject area interest/strength (e.g., math/science)	68	12	5	15

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Disqualifying factors for participation. Relatively few factors would disqualify people from receiving services from an EOC. Twenty-seven percent of EOCs disqualified individuals from participating in the program if they are enrolled in another precollege program and 26 percent disqualify those who have no specific

interest in college (see table D.16). On the other hand, no responding EOCs disqualify individuals on the basis of their GPA or for past drug/alcohol abuse.

Table D.16—Percent of EOC projects that listed the following as disqualifying factors for potential participants

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Enrollment in other precollege program	27%	32%	14%	33%
No specific interest in college	26	24	38	13
Other	16	14	15	20
Family income too high	13	12	14	13
Not first generation in family to attend college	6	3	5	14
English language proficiency below a specified minimum	4	3	0	13
Low achievement or ability test scores	3	3	0	7
High achievement or ability test scores	1	3	0	0
A history or behavioral or emotional problems	1	0	0	7
Gang activity	1	0	5	0
A history of alcohol or drug abuse	0	0	0	0
Pregnancy or parenthood	0	0	0	0
A record of disciplinary actions	0	0	0	0
Grade point average below a specified minimum	0	0	0	0
Grade point average above a specified maximum	0	0	0	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Recruitment methods/sources. EOCs use a wide variety of methods or sources to find potential participants (see table D.17). Virtually all centers (99 percent) rely on presentations to GED classes, training programs, and community organizations. More than nine of ten projects also rely on word of mouth, for example getting referrals from current participants and social workers or career counselors.

Table D.17—EOCs' recruitment methods or sources

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Presentations to GED classes or training programs	99%	97%	100%	100%
Presentations/programs at community organizations	99	100	100	93
Current participants	96	97	95	93
Social worker or career counselor recommendation	94	94	95	93
Word of mouth, informal network	93	97	86	93
Newspaper stories or advertisements	84	82	76	100
Radio announcements, programs or advertisements	71	76	48	93
Campus visits	67	59	90	50
Teacher recommendation	67	71	67	57
Parent recommendation	62	71	52	57
Other	28	26	19	43
Incentives such as cash, movie tickets, or donated prizes	12	9	14	14

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Overall recruitment strategies. The most common strategy for recruiting participants, employed by half of all EOCs, is to reach as many applicants as possible and then screen for those who meet eligibility requirements (see table D.18). Slightly fewer EOCs, however, use a different approach, focusing their recruitment efforts only on individuals most likely to meet their program eligibility requirements (40 percent).

Table D.18—EOCs' overall recruitment strategies, with regard to eligibility requirements

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Target recruiting efforts at only those participants most likely to meet this project's eligibility requirements	50%	56%	38%	53%
Reach as many participants as possible, then screen for those who meet eligibility requirements	40	41	48	27
Recruit a number of eligible participants up to the number of program openings	6	0	5	20
Other	4	3	10	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Determining who is a participant. In order to count someone as a program participant (e.g., in the annual performance report), a majority of EOCs (56 percent) use a guideline that specifies a minimum number of service contacts (see table D.19). Ten percent of EOCs require attendance at particular events or activities.

Table D.19—EOCs’ guidelines for determining who can be reported as a participant

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Having a specified number of service contacts	56%	49%	70%	53%
Other	17	23	6	25
Attendance at specific events or specific activities	10	17	5	0
Remaining in EOC program for a specific length of time	7	6	5	13

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Needs assessment. Three-fourths (76 percent) of all EOCs reported having a specific performance objective pertaining to conducting needs assessments for participants (80 percent among centers hosted by 4-year colleges, 67 percent among those hosted by 2-year colleges, and 80 percent among those hosted by community organizations).

Retention challenges. Eighty-five percent of EOCs indicated that retaining participants is important to achieving program goals. Roughly one-fourth of these centers reported that it is very difficult to retain participants until they complete the GED and about the same proportion also reported that retaining participants until they enroll in a postsecondary program is very difficult (see table D.20).

Table D.20—How difficult EOCs find it to retain participants until they achieve various outcomes

	Very difficult	Moderately difficult	Not difficult	Not applicable
Retain through to completion of GED	27%	50%	18%	5%
Retain through to enrollment in postsecondary program	25	70	5	0
Retain through to return to high school	18	42	2	38
Retain through to completion of financial aid application	0	40	60	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Academic support services. About 90 percent of EOCs provided academic advising/course selection services, 66 percent provided test-taking and study-skills development, 44 percent provided assisted (computer) labs, and 39 percent provided tutoring; 17 percent provided all four of these academic support services (see table D.21).

Table D.21—EOCs' provision of academic support services

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers providing:				
Academic advising/course selection	91%	85%	95%	100%
Test-taking and study-skills development	66	79	48	60
Assisted (computer) labs	44	38	52	47
Tutoring	39	50	29	27
Percentage of centers providing:				
All four of the above	17	26	5	13
Three of the above	27	24	33	27
Two of the above	37	32	43	40
One of the above	16	12	19	20
None of the above	3	6	0	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Personal and career development services. Virtually all EOCs provided referral services and counseling; college orientation activities and visits to college campuses were sponsored by a large majority of centers; mentoring, cultural activities, and family activities were provided by one-third or less of all EOCs; 19 percent provided six or seven of the seven personal and career development services listed in the survey (see table D.22). About 25 percent of EOCs reported frequently referring individuals to other TRIO programs in the area (see table D.23).

	Host institution			
	All centers	4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers providing:				
Referrals	99%	97%	100%	100%
Counseling	97	97	95	100
College orientation activities	81	74	90	87
Visits to college campuses	70	76	71	53
Mentoring	34	38	38	20
Cultural activities*	27	35	29	7
Family activities**	19	15	19	27
Percentage of centers providing:				
All seven of the above	9	9	10	7
Six of the above	10	15	5	7
Five of the above	19	18	33	0
Four of the above	36	32	29	53
Three of the above	20	18	19	27
Two or fewer of the above	7	9	5	7

*For example, field trips, special lectures, and symposiums

**For example, events, workshops, meetings, and counseling designed to provide families with information on postsecondary educational opportunities or financial aid.

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Percentage of centers that provide referrals	Host institution			
	All centers	4-year	2-year	Community org.
Frequently	24%	26%	29%	13%
Regularly	48	43	57	47
Occasionally	28	31	14	40
Never	0	0	0	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Ability to meet demand for services. Most EOCs do not have trouble meeting the demand for key services. For all four academic support services and all seven personal and career development services, a substantial majority of EOCs that provided a service are able to provide it to all participants who request it. Of the centers that are unable to provide any given service to all who request it, relatively few—typically 10 to 30 percent—maintain waiting lists (see table D.24).

Table D.24—EOCs' ability to provide requested services			
	Of the EOCs that offered service		Of the EOCs unable to provide it to all who requested it, percentage that maintained a waiting list for the service
	Percentage able to provide it to all who requested it	Percentage unable to provide it to all who requested it	
Academic support services			
Academic advising/course selection	89%	11%	20%
Test-taking and study-skills development	91	9	29
Assisted (computer) labs	71	29	21
Tutoring	78	22	15
Personal and career development services			
Referrals	94	6	0
Counseling	97	3	0
College orientation activities	80	20	11
Visits to college campuses	81	19	25
Mentoring	75	25	33
Cultural activities	68	32	21
Family activities	77	23	10

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Financial aid services. Virtually all EOCs provided financial aid counseling, workshops and scholarship searches, and a large majority also provided assistance with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); 44 percent provided all seven of the financial aid services listed in the survey (see table D.25).

Table D.25—EOCs' provision of financial aid services: 1998–99

	Host institution			
	All centers	4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers providing:				
Individual financial aid counseling for participants	100%	100%	100%	100%
Participant financial aid workshop	99	100	95	100
Scholarship searches	99	97	100	100
Assistance with pencil-and-paper FAFSA*	94	91	95	100
Assistance with Internet-based FAFSA*	83	86	75	87
Individual financial aid counseling for parents	64	63	50	87
Parent financial aid workshop	54	57	30	80
Percentage of centers providing:				
All seven of the above	44	43	25	73
Six of the above	14	14	15	13
Five of the above	31	37	40	7
Four of the above	10	6	20	7

*Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Fee waivers. Just over one-half of EOCs provided participants with waivers for college application fees, and 37 percent provided waivers for SAT or ACT registration fees (see table D.26). Nationwide, EOCs provided SAT/ACT fee waivers to over 1,100 participants and application fee waivers to over 2,500 participants.

Table D.26—EOCs' provision of fee waivers

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers providing waivers for:				
SAT or ACT registration fees ^a	37%	45%	0%	58%
College application fees ^b	52%	69%	8%	64%
Average number of participants provided with waivers for:				
ACT or SAT registration fees	24	11	0	73
College application fees	50	56	2	94
Total number of participants provided with waivers for:				
ACT or SAT registration fees	1,126	251	0	875
College application fees	2,516	1,456	25	1,035

^aNumber of EOCs with data on this survey item = 46.

^bNumber of EOCs with data on this survey item = 50.

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Summer services. Only two EOCs, one hosted at a 4-year institution and one hosted at a community organization, reported providing a summer component that is different from their fall and spring services.

Current and future service priorities. Forty-seven percent of EOCs currently place a high priority on using technology to facilitate college admissions and financial aid, but 79 percent reported a high likelihood of increasing their emphasis on this service if they had more resources (see table D.27). In addition, only seven percent currently place a high priority on college campus visits, but 43 percent reported a high likelihood of increasing their emphasis on this service if they had more resources.

Table D.27—EOCs' ratings of current priorities for working with various participants and providing various services, and how likely they would be to increase their emphasis on these groups and services if they had more resources

	Current priority level			Likelihood of increasing emphasis if center had more resources		
	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Low
Participants						
Work with welfare recipients or former welfare recipients	69%	24%	7%	90%	8%	2%
Work with dropouts or returning students	57	38	6	80	12	8
Work with veterans	15	31	54	33	48	19
Senior high component	11	23	66	35	22	44
Serving more target schools	8	21	70	22	35	43
Work with parents	5	26	69	23	30	46
Services						
Time for EOC counselors to meet one-on-one with participants	79	17	4	76	24	0
Workshops	47	36	17	73	23	5
Use of technology to facilitate college admissions and financial aid	37	47	16	79	19	2
Campus visits	7	32	60	43	42	15
Tutoring services	6	16	78	27	52	21
Provision of mentors	2	12	86	28	47	25

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Use of computer technology. A majority of EOCs use computerized career guidance programs, help with online college applications, and have a Web page, but less than half use e-mail to communicate with participants (see table D.28).

Table D.28—EOCs' use of computer technology in services and communications

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers that had or made use of:				
Assistance with Internet-based FAFSA	83%	86%	75%	87%
Computerized career guidance programs	79	71	100	67
College applications online	67	74	65	53
Project Web page	60	63	45	73
Assisted (computer) labs	44	38	52	47
E-mail communication with target school	44	37	55	47
E-mail communication with participants	33	37	30	27
Interactive distance-learning activities	3	3	5	0
Percentage of centers that had or made use of:				
Seven or eight of the above	9	12	5	7
Six of the above	13	9	11	27
Five of the above	19	21	26	7
Four of the above	25	21	32	27
Three of the above	19	24	16	13
Two of the above	10	15	11	0
One or none of the above	4	0	0	20

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

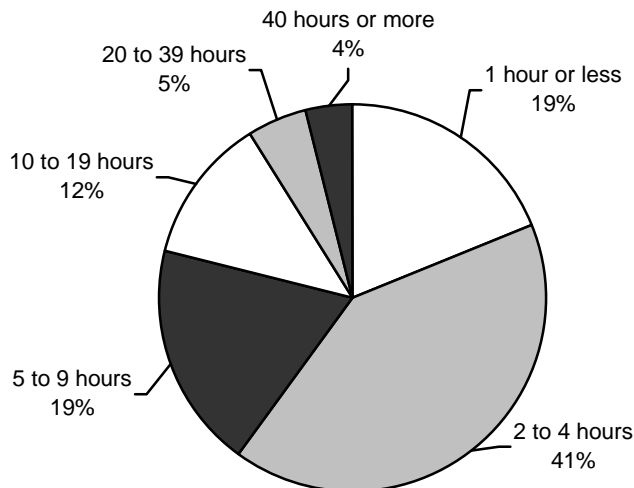
Services for persons with disabilities. Less than one-fourth of EOCs provide special services to participants with mental or physical disabilities (see table D.29).

Table D.29—EOCs' services to participants with mental or physical disabilities

Percentage of centers providing special services	22%
Of all centers providing special services, percentage providing:	
Assistive devices/educational technology	54
Transportation	15
Specialized instruction	8
Of all centers providing special services, percentage providing:	
All three of the above	8
Two of the above	8
One of the above	42
None of the above	42

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Hours of service received. EOC participants typically receive a small amount of service—measured in terms of hours—during the course of a year. According to directors' estimates, 60 percent of participants spent four hours or less in EOC activities during the 1998-99 program year, including 19 percent whose involvement with the program lasted one hour or less (see figure D.9). Only nine percent received 20 or more hours of service.

Figure D.9—Percentage of EOC participants receiving various amounts of service: 1998-99

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES, AND EVALUATION DATA

Survey data on outcome objectives. Far more centers set goals concerning postsecondary application/admission (100 percent) or financial aid application (97 percent) than for high school re-entry (48 percent) or high school graduation (34 percent) (see table D.30).

Table D.30—EOC survey data on the percentage of centers with specific performance objectives concerning various outcomes

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Postsecondary applications/admission	100%	100%	100%	100%
Financial aid applications completion	97	97	95	100
GED completion	61	69	48	60
High school reentry	48	46	38	67
High school graduation	34	29	33	47
Participant college retention rates	31	34	24	33

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

APR data on outcome objectives. EOCs' average goals for the percentage of percentage of high school graduates and equivalency recipients who will enroll in a postsecondary education program was 49 percent; the average goal for the percentage of postsecondary “stopouts” who will re-enter a postsecondary education program was 46 percent (see table D.31). But there was variability around these averages; for example, one quarter of EOCs set their postsecondary admissions goal at or below 33 percent, and a quarter set it at or above 65 percent.

Table D.31—APR data on goals set by EOCs for major participant outcomes: 1998–99

Outcome objective	Average goal	25th percentile	75th percentile
Secondary school retention^a (percentage of secondary school participants who will continue in secondary school)	55%	45%	70%
Secondary school graduation^b (percentage of high school seniors and GED or alternative education students who will graduate or receive equivalency certificate)	58	40	78
Secondary school re-entry^c (percentage of secondary school dropouts who will re-enter secondary education program)	51	35	64
Postsecondary admissions^d (percentage of high school graduates and equivalency recipients who will enroll in postsecondary education program)	49	33	65
Postsecondary re-entry^e (percentage of postsecondary “stopouts” who will re-enter postsecondary education program)	46	30	60

^aNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 8.

^bNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 13.

^cNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 18.

^dNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 65.

^eNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 55.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: February 2002, and additional analyses of APR data.

Success in meeting outcome goals. Nationwide, 51 percent of high school graduates (and equivalency recipients) served by the EOC program enrolled in a postsecondary education program, and 56 percent of postsecondary “stopouts” served re-entered a postsecondary education program (see table D.32). The results for individual centers show that 62 percent of EOCs met their goals for postsecondary admission, while 76 percent met their goals for postsecondary re-entry.

Table D.32—EOCs' success in meeting goals for major participant outcomes: 1998–99

Outcome objective	Aggregated, national-level data		Disaggregated, center-level data		
	Average goal	Percentage of participants that achieved the outcome	Percentage of centers that met or exceeded their goal	Percentage of centers that missed their goal by five percentage points or less	Percentage of centers that missed their goal by more than five percentage points
Secondary school retention ^a	55%	86%	100%	0%	0%
Secondary school graduation ^b	58	93	100	0	0
Secondary school re-entry ^c	51	35	39	0	61
Postsecondary admission ^d	49	51	62	5	34
Postsecondary re-entry ^e	46	56	76	5	18

^aNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 8.

^bNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 13.

^cNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 18.

^dNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 65.

^eNumber of EOCs with information on this outcome objective = 55.

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: February 2002, and additional analyses of APR data.

NOTE: Like other analyses Mathematica has performed on APR outcome data (e.g., U.S. Dept. of Education, February 2002), the analyses followed a two-part strategy. First, centers were included only if they reported data on their outcome goal, number of relevant participants, and number of participants achieving the outcome. Second, apparently erroneous data were corrected. Specifically, when the number of participants reported as achieving an outcome exceeded the relevant number of participants reported earlier in the APR, we capped the outcome number as equal to the participant number, resulting in a 100 percent success rate for these cases. Data problems such as these should be eliminated with the new, Internet-based APR form.

Survey data on postsecondary placements. For participants who had graduated from high school or received a GED by spring 1999, the most common expected outcome for the following fall was to enroll in a community college (35 percent), while 19 percent were expected to enroll in an 4-year college (see table D.33). However, 21 percent were not expected to continue in school, and centers reported not knowing the education status for 11 percent.

Table D.33—Expected fall 1999 status of participants who had graduated from high school or received a GED by spring 1999

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Average percent who would:				
Enroll in a 4-year college	19%	22%	12%	22%
Enroll in a community college	35	28	52	24
Enroll in a vocational or proprietary school	10	12	7	13
Enroll in a tribal college ^a	1	2	*	0
Enroll in some other program or institution	3	5	*	3
Not continue their schooling	21	24	13	29
Education status unknown	11	8	16	10

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

^aThe survey noted that participants who would be entering a tribal college that was also a community college should be listed in the tribal college response category.

*Less than .5 percent.

APR data on postsecondary placements. Of all the eligible participants who reportedly were going on to a postsecondary program, more than half (55 percent) were expected to enroll at a 2-year institution, and about a quarter (26 percent) were expected to enroll at a public 4-year institution (see table D.34). EOCs hosted by 2-year institutions were especially likely to have their participants go on to 2-year colleges.

Table D.34—APR data on postsecondary placements: 1998–99

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage admitted or readmitted to:				
Public 4-year institution	26%	29%	11%	33%
Private 4-year institution	5	6	4	5
Public or private nonprofit 2-year institution	55	47	73	49
Proprietary school or public or private nonprofit vocational/technical institution	14	18	11	12

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, *A Profile of the Educational Opportunity Centers Program: 1998–99*, Washington, DC: February 2002.

GED preparation and outcomes. All responding EOCs reported that they had one or more participants preparing for a GED. The average number preparing was equal to about 68 percent of the average number of secondary school dropouts served (see table D.35).

Table D.35—GED preparation and outcomes: 1998–99

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers with participants preparing for a GED	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average number of participants who were preparing	153	156	155	141
Number preparing as a percent of number of secondary school dropouts served	68%	77%	82%	43%
Average number that received a GED	86	85	77	100
Number of GED recipients as a percent of the number who were preparing	56%	54%	50%	71%

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Keeping track of what participants do in preparing for college enrollment. Nine out of ten of EOCs have attempted to measure whether their participants complete financial aid forms and college applications, but only about one in four have attempted to measure the college preparatory classes that participants take in secondary school or whether they take the SAT/ACT (see table D.36). In addition, 80 percent of EOCs track enrollment in college for all participants and 70 percent monitor completion of college applications for all participants, whereas 73 percent do not monitor high school grades for any participants and 80 percent do not monitor year-to-year progression through high school for any participants (see table D.37).

Table D.36—Participant information that EOCs have attempted to measure

	Host institution			
	All centers	4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers that have attempted to measure:				
College financial aid form completion	91%	91%	95%	87%
College application completion	90	89	95	87
GED course preparation completion	70	69	60	87
College aspirations	57	46	60	80
Financial aid awareness	54	49	55	67
Participant self-esteem	39	37	35	47
SAT/ACT test taking	27	29	10	47
Number of college preparatory courses taken	26	20	30	33
Percentage of centers that have attempted to measure:				
All eight of the above	10	9	5	20
Seven of the above	7	9	0	13
Six of the above	17	14	15	27
Five of the above	20	20	30	7
Four of the above	13	6	25	13
Three of the above	17	23	15	7
Two or fewer of the above	16	20	10	13

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Table D.37—Information that EOCs tracked or monitored on program participants

	Yes, for all participants	Yes, for some participants	Not for any participants
Percentage of centers that tracked or monitored:			
Enrollment in college	80%	16%	4%
Completion of college applications	70	27	3
Contact hours participation in program	49	14	37
High school graduation	28	28	44
Graduation from college	26	32	42
Year-to-year progression through high school	9	11	80
Course selection of participants	6	45	49
Grades	4	23	73
Percentage of centers that tracked or monitored:			
All eight of the above	9		
Seven of the above	10		
Six of the above	13		
Five of the above	23		
Four of the above	16		
Three of the above	19		
Two or fewer of the above	11		

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

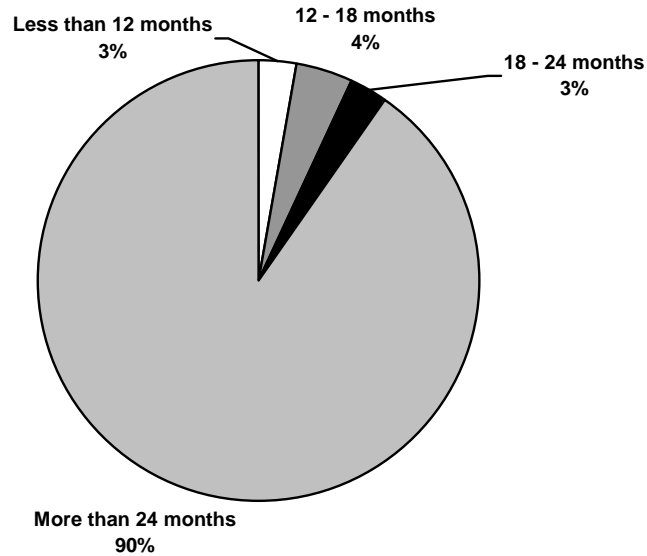
Paper versus computer records. A majority of EOCs maintain only paper copies of participants' career survey results, financial aid applications, and college applications, but about 30 percent of centers maintained these records in both hard copy and in a computer database (see table D.38). A majority maintain the following participant records in both paper and computerized formats: demographic data, services received, postsecondary enrollment, assessment forms, and follow-up data on former participants.

	Maintained on paper only	Maintained in a computer database only	Maintained both on paper and in a computer database	Not maintained in either form
Demographic information	1%	1%	97%	0
Records of services received	15	2	84	0
Individual participant contact sheets	33	0	65	2
Career-survey results	70	0	28	2
Financial aid applications	52	2	41	6
College or postsecondary school enrollment	18	3	72	7
Project's assessment records	39	0	54	7
Follow-up data on former participants	22	0	69	8
College or postsecondary school applications	56	2	31	11
Recommendations or commendations	47	0	14	40
Other standardized test scores	40	0	18	42
Diagnostic test data	39	2	14	45
High school or postsecondary transcripts	41	2	11	46
ACT scores	25	4	14	57
SAT scores	19	4	14	63
Attitude scale profiles	22	2	5	71

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Retaining participant records. Ninety percent of EOCs retain the kinds of information mentioned above for more than 24 months (see figure D.10).

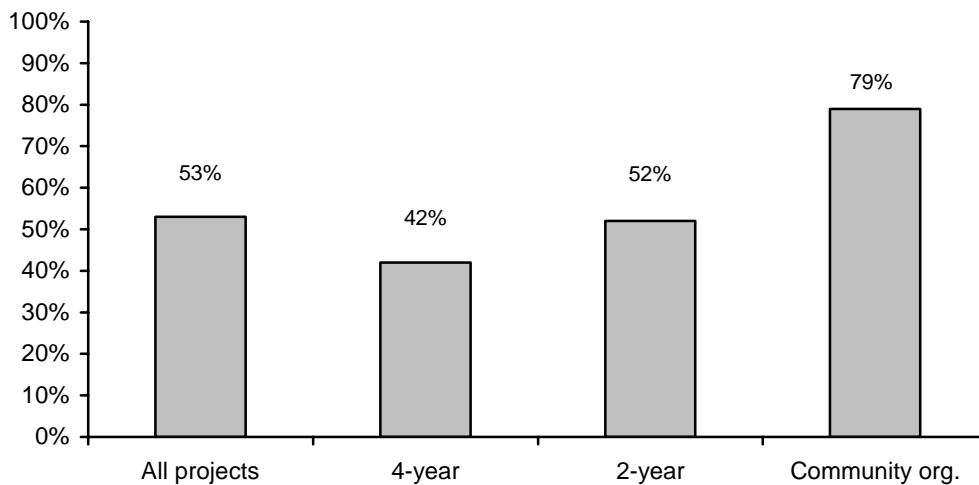
Figure D.10—How long EOCs retain information after participants are removed from active files



SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

External evaluations. At the time of the survey, 53 percent of all EOCs had undergone an external evaluation (see figure D.11).

Figure D.11—Percentage of EOCs that have had an external evaluation conducted



SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Formative versus summative evaluations. About 90 percent of EOCs utilize ongoing assessments of their operations and 64 percent utilize a comprehensive year-end study; 63 percent use both methods (see table D.39).

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers using:				
Ongoing assessment of program operation and success	91%	91%	86%	100%
Comprehensive year-end study	64	72	55	60
Percentage of centers using:				
Ongoing assessment only	28	22	30	40
Year-end study only	1	3	0	0
Both of the above	63	69	55	60
Neither of the above	7	6	15	0

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.

Data used in evaluating center success. To evaluate EOCs' success in meeting program goals, a variety of indicators are used. For example, virtually all centers consider the percentage of applicable clients that enroll in a postsecondary program and apply for financial aid (see table D.40). In addition, about three-fourths rely on written evaluations by staff and/or clients. Twenty-four percent of EOCs use all six of the types of information listed in the survey.

Table D.40—Information used to evaluate EOCs' success in meeting their goals and objectives

	All centers	Host institution		
		4-year	2-year	Community org.
Percentage of centers using:				
Analysis of postsecondary enrollment for applicable clients	100%	100%	100%	100%
Analysis of financial aid application completion rates for applicable clients	96	97	95	93
Analysis of GED completion rates for applicable clients	82	85	75	86
Written client evaluations of services	75	76	65	86
Written staff evaluations	73	73	70	79
Analysis of high school reentry rates for applicable clients	36	36	35	36
Percentage of centers using:				
All six of the above	24	21	30	21
Five of the above	28	36	5	43
Four of the above	33	30	40	29
Three of the above	15	12	25	7

SOURCE: National Survey of Educational Opportunity Centers, 1999–2000.