Upward Bound Grantee-level Performance Results: 2004-05

Why is the U.S. Department of Education calculating grantee-level performance measures?

The Department is committed to continually improving its management of programs and improving the educational outcomes of students. Improvements are guided by monitoring and evaluating performance, improving the data used for evaluation, collaborating with stakeholders, implementing recommendations, and re-evaluating performance. The Office of Management and Budget's Program Assessment Rating Tool, or PART, is one tool for assessing the performance of every Federal program to make sure it is working well for the American people. Providing data to the public is a key element in promoting improvement and collaborating with stakeholders.

What are the performance measures for Upward Bound projects?

For regular Upward Bound (UB) and Upward Bound Math-Science (UBMS) projects, the performance measures are the postsecondary school enrollment rate and the gap between the cost per high school persister and college enrollee, on the one hand, and the cost per program participant, on the other. The attached table shows for each UB and UBMS project the number of participants who were expected (see explanation below) to graduate from high school in 2003–04 and the number and percentage of those who subsequently enrolled in a postsecondary education program by fall of 2005. That semester was used rather than fall 2004 because projects do not necessarily become aware of prior participants' postsecondary enrollments until a year or more after the students' high school graduation. Enrollment data submitted by projects can be supplemented or cross checked by postsecondary financial aid data, which indicates whether a student is enrolled if the student received financial aid. Unfortunately, postsecondary financial aid data are not available for analysis until approximately two years after high school graduation. Projects' awareness of postsecondary enrollment rates thus tends to increase over several years.

Table 1 shows all regular UB and UBMS projects that were funded in both the 1999–03 and the 2003–07 cycles alphabetically by grantee name. Projects funded in the first but not the second funding cycle were excluded because the projects no longer exist and therefore no longer provide performance report data on their participants. Projects that were first funded in 2003–04 (i.e., those that were starting a new UB or UBMS project and not continuing a previously established one) were excluded because they had very few participants expected to graduate from high school in 2003–04 and because the participants who were expected to graduate received only one year of Upward Bound services. Projects do not typically recruit high school seniors. Consequently, 674 UB and 110 UBMS grantees were included in the table; 53 UB (6 percent of UB projects) and 11 UBMS (8 percent of UBMS projects) projects funded only in the first funding cycle and 90 UB (11 percent of UB projects) and 17 UBMS (12 percent of UB projects) projects funded only in the second funding cycle were excluded.

How did the U.S. Department of Education calculate the Upward Bound project-level performance measure for 2004–05?

The project's postsecondary enrollment rate is calculated by dividing the number of participants who were expected to graduate from high school during 2003–04 who have evidence of postsecondary enrollment by the total number of participants who were expected to graduate from high school in 2003–04 and multiplying by 100.

These analyses examine participants who were expected to graduate from high school during the 2003–04 academic year. Participants were included in this group if their expected high school graduation date reported by projects on the APR was during 2003–04. For cases missing this information, expected high school graduation year was derived using project entry date and grade level at the time of project entry.

Data from Upward Bound Annual Performance Reports (APRs), which are submitted by UB grantees, supplemented by data from the federal financial aid database, are used to calculate postsecondary school enrollment rates. The following APR fields were used to determine a participant's postsecondary enrollment status: postsecondary grade level (field #97, values 1 through 11 and 77), enrollment status (field #96, values 1 through 3), financial aid (field #95, values 1 through 11), or institution code (fields #93 and #94, values greater than 000000 except 888888 and 999999). Additionally, the participant was classified as having enrolled in postsecondary education if financial aid was received (total disbursement greater than $0) according to federal financial aid records. If there is any evidence of postsecondary enrollment in any of these fields, a participant was considered to have enrolled in a postsecondary program. (The APR may be found at http://www.ed.gov/programs/trioupbound/report.html.)

What do the data show and what might account for the variation in postsecondary enrollment rates among grantees?

First, it is important to note that the postsecondary enrollment rate is an outcome measure of project performance. The limitations of the data set used for this analysis (the annual performance reports) do not permit us to determine project impacts, such as the extent to which the postsecondary enrollment rate can be attributed to participation in UB.

Postsecondary enrollment rates range from 14 percent to 100 percent for the projects (Figures 1a and 1b). Nearly two-thirds of all regular UB projects had postsecondary enrollment rates of 70 percent or higher; approximately 70 percent of UBMS projects had postsecondary enrollment rates of 80 percent or higher. An individual project director may wish to consider his or her participants' enrollment rates as shown in the table in the context of the frequency distributions shown in figures 1a and 1b. The Department's program goal for postsecondary enrollment is 65 percent.

While a number of factors are doubtless involved, at this time we want to draw attention to the role of **students' duration in the program**. Particularly in regular UB, if participants stay in the program for a long period of time, they tend to have higher

postsecondary enrollment rates, as is clear from figure 2. To show how this relationship is manifested at the level of the individual grantee, table 1 includes the percentage of participants in each project who were enrolled in the program for 36 months or more and the postsecondary enrollment rate for those participants. The role of persistence in the program is observable, but less pronounced, in UBMS. The difference is presumably due to inherent differences in the programs. Some UBMS projects operate as regional centers that typically serve students for only one or two summer sessions; also, the percentage of UBMS students entering the program as freshmen is smaller than that of regular UB (12.8 percent and 17.7 percent, respectively). Thus, for many UBMS projects, program participation for 36 months or more may not be a useful comparison.

Because we do not fully understand the role of the various factors that may affect postsecondary enrollment rates in individual projects, **the data should be interpreted with caution; comparing rates among specific projects could lead to unwarranted conclusions.** For example, a project may have a lower than average postsecondary enrollment rate because the project may be serving more students with a high risk of academic failure, who have low educational aspirations, and/or who are in low performing high schools.

Four important data issues that also could significantly affect outcomes are these:

- For some projects, only a small number of students were expected to graduate in 2003–04. Where only a small number of graduates exist, small changes in numbers can cause significant changes in percentages. For example, a grantee that expects five students to graduate in 2004 will have an enrollment rate of 100 percent if all enroll in postsecondary education, but a rate of only 80 percent if just one student does not matriculate.
- A couple of projects did not submit complete data on all students served by the project, resulting in no students included in the number of expected high school graduates for 2003-04.
- Some projects experienced difficulty in following up with prior participants and thus may have been unaware of enrollments that did, in fact, occur.
- Additional years of data could significantly change the picture.