

## Initial Findings on College Success with Supplemental Coaching and Grants

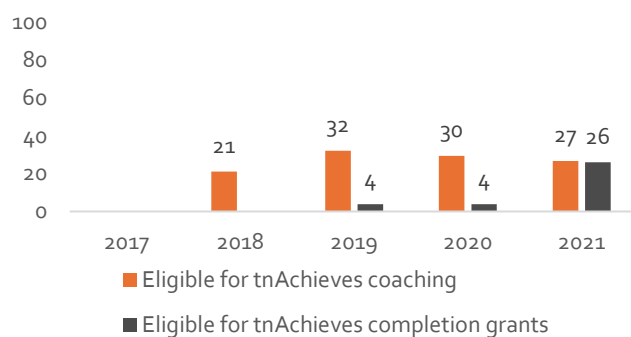
**Abstract** - College coaching and completion grants were available to some Tennessee community college students starting in Fall 2018. We study how supplemental coaching and grants are associated with persistence into a second year of college or receipt of an early college credential in the first year. We find that students who connected more often with their coaches were significantly more likely to re-enroll in college for a second year or complete an early credential. Students who received supplemental grants, often for emergencies or unanticipated expenses, were not more or less likely than others to persist into a second year of college or earn an early postsecondary credential.

**Background** – tnAchieves is a nonprofit organization that coordinates “free community college” tuition grants for over 30,000 Tennessee Promise students each year. They also help students get additional support, including college coaching and completion grants worth up to \$1,500 for expenses beyond tuition. Eligibility for tnAchieves coaching and completion grants grew over time (Figure 1) and depended on income, summer program participation, and residence.

**Analysis** – We estimate the relationship between student take-up of coaching or completion grants and their status one year after starting college. Coaching and grants were both positively associated with persistence into a second year of college or receipt of an early postsecondary certificate or degree (Figure 2). After we control for student income, ACT score, first-generation status, demographics, and county economic conditions, we still find a significant gap in persistence and/or early completion between eligible students who connected with their coaches and eligible but non-connecting students. Students who connected with coaches a typical 4 – 5 times during their first year in college were up to 23% more likely to remain enrolled or have a postsecondary credential one year later. These short-term persistence and completion outcomes were not significantly different for students who received completion grants, once we control for student and county characteristics.

**Ongoing work** – Findings so far are descriptive. We do not yet know if coaching contributed to Figure 2 gains in student outcomes, or if completion grant recipients would have fared worse without supplemental aid. Future reports in this series will take on these and other questions, reporting estimated effects of tnAchieves coaching and completion grants on postsecondary persistence, completion, type of credentials completed, transfer, and transitions between college and the workforce.

**Figure 1. Just over one quarter of tnAchieves students were eligible for coaching and completion grants by 2021.**



**Figure 2. First-year students who engaged with tnAchieves coaching or received completion grants were more likely to re-enroll for a second year or complete a credential by that time.**

