



Kentucky | Campus Compact

Investing in the Future:

Evaluating the Kentucky College Coaching Program
2012-2014



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"I see a way I can go to college now."

(A student as quoted from Madison Southern High School)

Assessment Overview

This is a second year assessment performed on the Kentucky College Coaches (KCC) program. This assessment builds upon the previous research data collected and performs analysis to determine if there are any changes on effectiveness with the program. This assessment in particular has utilized more data than has been available to the researchers in the past. This assessment for the time period analyzed has added data in the form of additional qualitative data with site visits as well as quantitative data in the form of additional cohort data not previously available to the researchers with additional National Student Clearinghouse data provided to the researchers. The assessment collected additional qualitative data on how administrators with the KCC program can assist administrators with operational aspects of the program. An unexpected focus of this evaluation was to perform an assessment of the organizational structure of the KCC program.

This research evaluates the effectiveness of the Kentucky College Coaches (KCC) program during the academic year 2012-2014. The KCC program is structured to assist a select group of “core” students in selected high schools across the Commonwealth of Kentucky prepare for the college admission process through a near-peer mentoring program and to enhance the likelihood those students will be successful in college. Additionally the KCC program is to aid, emphasize and expand a cultural tradition among high school students of the value of further formal education beyond high school.

To undertake such a comprehensive evaluation, the research focuses mainly on evaluating if the KCC program has made a positive impact upon a core group of students who participated in the program compared to non-core students at the same high school who did not participate in the KCC program. The program evaluators use additional qualitative data to the evaluation in an effort to gain insight into whether a cultural value of going to college is growing within Kentucky.

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Introduction and Purpose

This assessment is to determine the state of the KCC program as well as delve deeper into characteristics that make the program successful with the “ignored cohort” that the evaluators discussed in the last assessment report. To restate the purpose of this assessment, the program evaluators were contracted through the Kentucky Campus Compact (paid by AmeriCorps) to provide an evaluation of the KCC program and to assess whether the KCC program has been effective in achieving its three main program goals:

1. To increase the number of Kentucky high school students graduating from high school;
2. To increase the number of Kentucky high school graduates choosing to pursue postsecondary education;
3. To help build a college-going culture among Kentucky high school students.

The evaluation of the first two goals, increasing high school graduation rates and the rate of high school students going to postsecondary education, is addressed using quantitative data provided to the program evaluators by the Kentucky Campus Compact and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority (KHEAA).

The third goal, measuring the building of a college-going culture in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, is addressed by analyzing quantitative data provided by the various departments involved in the administration of the KCC program and qualitative data collected from interviews conducted by the program evaluators. The data collected and provided has allowed the program evaluators to determine the effectiveness and impact of the KCC program. However, during this year’s assessment, the evaluators identified a fourth area that needed assessment, which was the organizational structure of the KCC program itself. Therefore, the evaluators have added sections on organizational structure assessment as well as recommendations to assist in improving organizational operations and communications. For background and information on the KCC coaches program, funding for the KCC coaches program, site selection and identifying core students, college coaches selection process benefits and training, please refer to last year’s report [Pursuing Pathways: Evaluating the Kentucky College Coaches Program 2011 – 2012](#).

Research Design and Methodology

The methodology employed in this year’s assessment is consistent with last year’s assessment except that the evaluators were able to add more data components to this year’s evaluation. The methodology for this evaluation has both qualitative and quantitative

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components to determine if the Kentucky College Coaches (KCC) program has made a positive impact upon high school students graduating from targeted high schools, which would allow those graduates to successfully transition to and perform at the college level. Did the program achieve its goals, and did the money allocated to the program make the intended difference for the students that participated in the program? Due to administrative issues encountered during the evaluators' site visit, it was deemed necessary by the evaluators that the organizational structure of the KCC program should be reviewed in addition to the other aspects of the program.

Program goals for the KCC program as stated are the following:

1. Increase the number of Kentucky high school students who graduate from high school.
2. Increase the number of Kentucky high school graduates who go on to postsecondary education.
3. Build a college-going culture in Kentucky high schools.

For the evaluation period 2012-2014, the following research questions were asked (based on the program's goals:

1. Did the Kentucky College Coaches (KCC) program have a positive impact upon high school students graduating from targeted high schools?
2. Did the Kentucky College Coaches (KCC) program increase the participating students' chances of successfully performing at the college level?
3. Through case study analysis and using qualitative and quantitative data, attempt to answer the question of, "Is a culture of college-going being built in the Commonwealth of Kentucky?"
4. How do the four partners in the KCC program operate and function together? Are there issues of organizational structure and control that need to be addressed?

The qualitative data analysis consists of interviews with personnel involved with the program and archival documentation in the form of reports, data captured in Excel Spreadsheets from the Kentucky Campus Compact, program proposals, site visits to KCC participant schools and other documentation (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest, 1966.) For the purpose of this study, and with the hope that persons interviewed would answer questions and describe their experiences with the KCC program more candidly, confidentiality of the interviewees was considered vital. Confidentiality was enforced throughout the process as the program evaluators conducted the interviews. Notes were taken

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by hand, and the interviews were conducted both in person and by conference phone. The interviews were free flowing, open discussions; and the program evaluators allowed the interviewees to deviate from basic questions the program evaluators asked the respondents. The location for the site visits were chosen by the KCC personnel, which has potential selection bias that were beyond the control of the evaluators in regard to the assessment. Ideally the researchers would have preferred to have site visit locations include other schools that were not KHEAA sponsored institutions. For future assessments, the issue of site evaluation will need to be addressed and are in the recommendation section.

Unfortunately, the survey administered in 2012 (Appendix B) to the college coaches was not as detailed as the coaches' survey information collected in the 2011 – 2012 evaluation. The lack of information leaves a gap in consistency for qualitative data that the evaluators used earlier. Additional qualitative data consists of published KHEAA Outreach documents, which are available on KHEAA's website, used by the coaches in the KCC program as well as data provided to the researchers in the form of Excel spreadsheets that were monthly college coaches' reports.

Kentucky College Coach financial program data was provided to the program evaluators by the Executive Director of the Kentucky Campus Compact. The information gathered allows the program evaluators to compile a comprehensive picture of the financing of the KCC program.

While quantitative data is critical to this assessment, the qualitative data collected and analyzed is equally important to determine if certain goals of the program are being achieved. Quantitative data alone is unable to adequately assess the effect of the KCC program on Kentucky's college-going "culture" *per se*. Data on culture is best obtained through interviews, KCC monthly reports, site evaluations and, later on, using a survey process. The interviews used in the present evaluation were documented to provide a case study analysis of the KCC program, which is now in its second assessment cycle. To ensure that the information is unbiased and unrestricted, the program evaluators have concealed the identities of the respondents interviewed for this evaluation.

Significant Findings

- * *The College Coach Program makes a Positive Difference.*

The percentage of individually mentored students enrolled in college (36.7%) is higher than the percentage of those not individually mentored (12.9%).

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35.1% of the students who received individualized mentoring applied successfully to college as opposed to only 12.4% of students who did not receive individualized mentoring.

Students who met with a mentor in a group were more likely to apply to college (28.3%) than students who did not meet with a mentor in a group (24.1%).

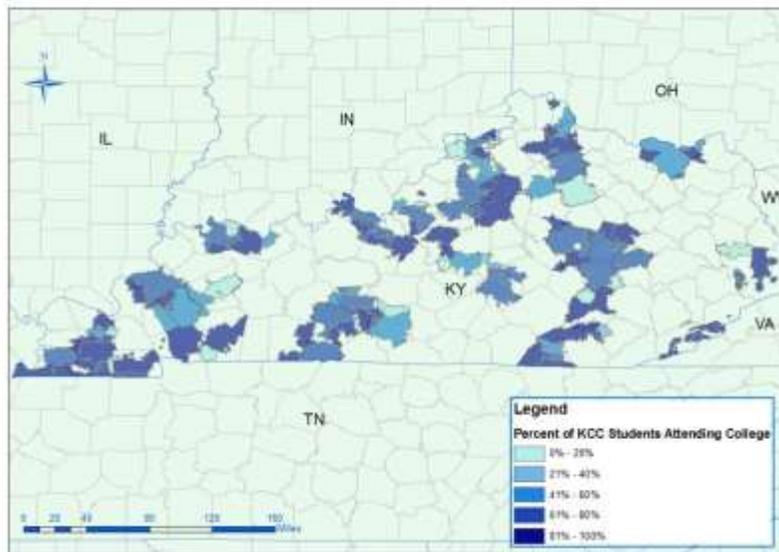
27.6% of the students who received any group mentoring applied successfully to college as opposed to 22.7% of the students who did not receive group mentoring.

The amount of time that mentors and student spent together in a relationship, either individually or in a group, was also related to increase in students' enrollment and successful college application.

For each one hour increase in average time spent with a mentor individually, the odds of having successful application increase by 84.8% when all other variables are held at constant.

* *Coverage of the KCC Program throughout the Commonwealth has shifted over time.*

In GIS Map 1, the Commonwealth has the KCC program serving the central, Northern, Western and Southern parts of the Commonwealth. The majority of communities where the KCC program has been implemented have over a 40 – 60 percent college attendance rate.



Kentucky College Coaching Students Percent Going to College in 2012 by Zip Code

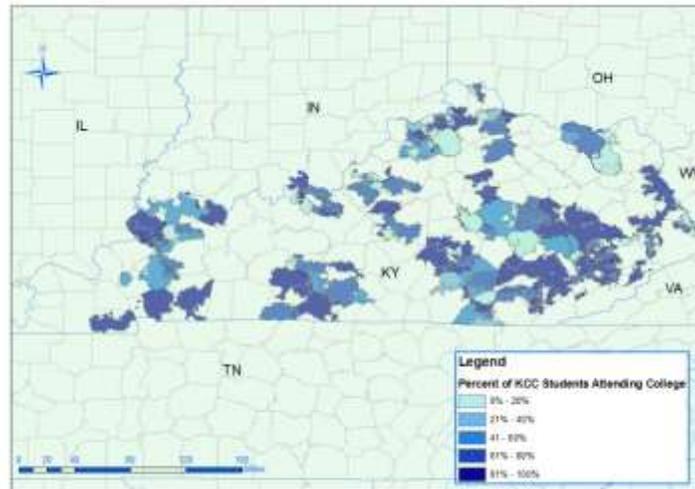
GIS Map 1

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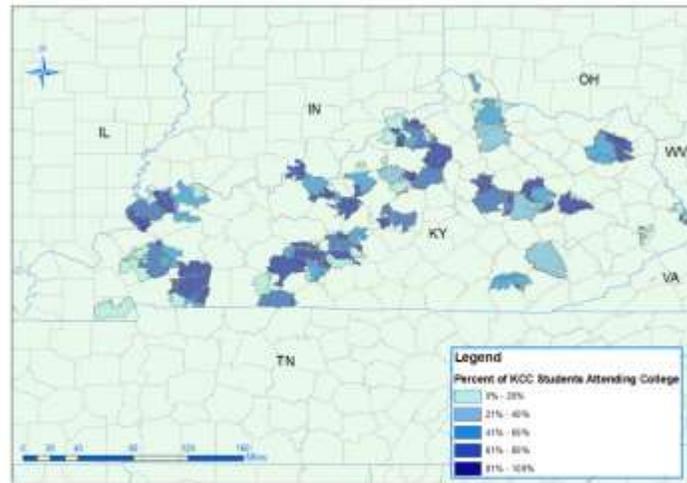
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As seen in GIS Map 2, coverage of the KCC Program has shifted more to the central, Eastern and Northern parts of the Commonwealth from 2012 to 2013, which has left large communities in the Western part of the Commonwealth unserved by the KCC program. As can be seen in GIS Map 2, the majority of the KCC Program served communities are over 40% for students attending college.



Kentucky College Coaching Students Percent Going to College in 2013 by Zip Code

GIS Map 2



Kentucky College Coaching Students Percent Going to College in 2014 by Zip Code

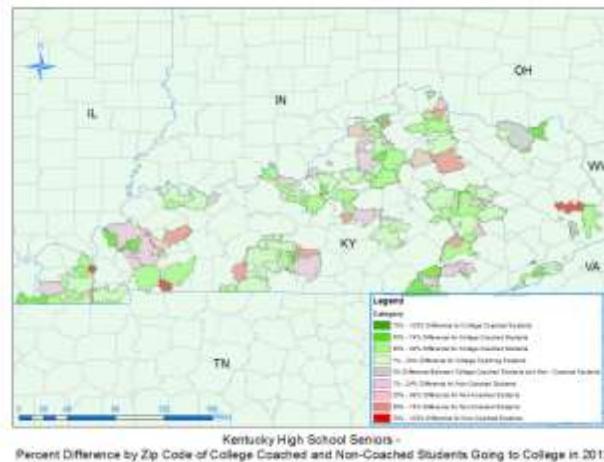
GIS Map 3

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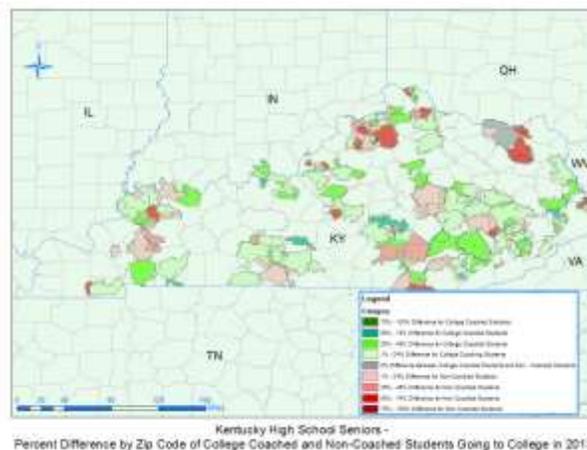
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In GIS Map 3, geospatial analysis had identified a decrease of coverage of the KCC program geographically in the Commonwealth from 2013 to 2014. Communities where the KCC program is active show a high degree of college attendance by high school seniors. However, the geospatial analysis does identify where the KCC program needs to investigate why some areas of the Commonwealth participating in the KCC program have lower college attendance rates (under 60%).



GIS Map 4

When compared to non-college coached students geographically for 2012, 2013 and 2014 (GIS Map 4, GIS Map 5 and GIS Map 6), the KCC students compare favorably with most of the communities showing a benefit over non-college coached students as seen in the follow GIS maps.



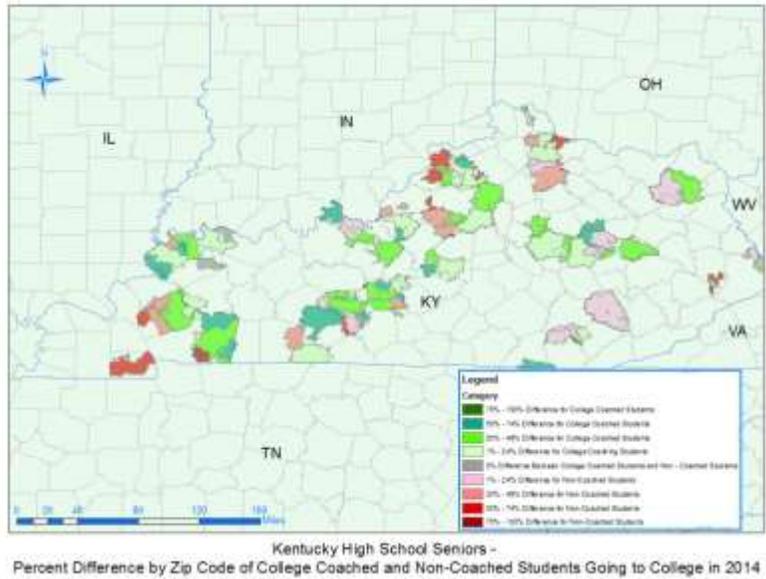
GIS Map 5

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After reviewing geospatial data, questions for future research should be posed: “Does median household income influence communities where non-college coached students had a higher rate of college going rate than the KCC students?” “Does the KCC program have more of an impact on communities with a lower median household income?”



GIS Map 6

As can be seen in the above GIS Map 4, GIS Map 5 and GIS 6, the number of communities sending their children to college is higher if their children are participating in the KCC program. This also does not account for students in the KCC program that in fact went successfully into a technical or vocational trade after high school, which is also a goal of the program. This aspect of the KCC program was lost in 2014 with the non-participation of the area technology centers (ATC) schools for that year.

* ***The College Coach Organizational Structure needs more formalized Operational and Communication Plans.***

The KCC college coaches program is a relatively new program. As such, the KCC coaches program has already had great success in attaining its goals and making a difference in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It is important, however, to ensure that the organizational structure is sound going forward, which will make expansion possible as well as keeping organizational structure stable among all four partners. The evaluators found that the administration overseeing the KCC college coaches program has made adjustments in several

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areas based on last year's assessment report. This indicates that the administrators do respond positively to issues raised and are committed to ensuring the success of the program. The quantitative data collection has not only improved over last year's assessment but has also been enhanced by collecting data from other sources (i.e. National Student Clearinghouse). The qualitative data collection still needs improvement, but all four organizations involved with the KCC college coaches program are striving to improve in this area of data collection, which can only benefit the program in the future.

The KCC college coaches program experienced growing pains as the program developed over the years. These growing pains are expected and the evaluators stress that these organizational issues are easier to address at this early stage in the program than later on if and when the program expands. It is a little disconcerting that Office of Career and Technical Education (OTCE) had no schools participating in the KCC college coaches program for this previous year. The evaluators would highly recommend that OTCE recommit to the KCC college coaches program, which would increase the number of schools hosting college coaches. The evaluators believe that the KCC college coaches program is reproducible in other states and regions outside of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, which bodes well for the overall future of the program.

*** *The assessment did reveal that the diffusion of a college going culture is ongoing and is disseminating throughout surrounding communities, which is a very positive sign.***

However, there are still cultural signs that indicate there is much more that needs to be done to improve the perception of college among parents of first-generation students. Parental statements such as, "Enjoy your senior year, it's the best year of your life" can cause high school seniors to delay applying to college and entering in the following fall semester, which creates a gap of continuous attendance in a school environment. These parental perceptions will be an on-going issue that the KCC college coaches program will need to change by informing first-generation college students that there is life after high school. Gaining a college degree opens more doors for their children and this point needs to be accentuated with parents as much as possible if the core students intend on going into college and not into a technical or vocational pathway. Changing the perception of parents that have not pursued an education after high school will take generations of college coaches to alter within the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Without programs such as the KCC college coaches program, the chance of altering the perception of those parents is very low. This is another point in favor of why the KCC college coaches program should not only be funded, but also funded at even a higher level than the program is presently. In short, the KCC college coaches program is proving to be a

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successful AmeriCorps program that should continue to have support from governmental officials.

* ***The KCC program has actually developed a professional workforce.***

The KCC program has been an economic engine for workforce development of recent graduates from Kentucky postsecondary programs. The coaches in fact work with students and families alike that are outside the students in the KCC program (when the rules permit such assistance), which has created an increase in how the program impacts the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The KCC program in essence provides additional on-site job training for those new graduates that were unable to be employed in the teaching profession, which in many coaches' cases allowed them to be employed in the teaching profession after their KCC program experience.



Conclusions

In summation the KCC program did have the desired effect on the years from 2012 to 2014 with a positive impact upon high school students graduating from KCC high school students in the program. Since the rates of college-bound KCC students surpassed those of non-college coached students in a number of communities, the KCC students' chances have increased their chances at successfully performing at the college level. Based on the data collected throughout this research, the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data would suggest that there is a college-going culture that is being instilled by the KCC program in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. However, the research also indicates the need for some attention given to the manner in how the four partners are operating organizationally in administrating the KCC program with overall organizational structure and organizational controls.

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Recommendations

- * ***Obtain more qualitative data in the form of surveys or interviews from high school graduates.***

By obtaining more qualitative information, better decision-making can be made on improvements to the KCC program. This information can also be used to assist in expanding the program, which can positively impact more students in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

- * ***Upgrade or replace the current KCC information system.***

A newer or improved KCC information system would allow for a decrease in workload as well as being able to collect data in a uniformed format for improved analysis. The new information system should allow for the collection of qualitative data (surveys) from students, administrators and college coaches. An online training component for new coaches could also be added to a new information system.

- * ***A ten-year evaluation of the KCC program is highly recommended.***

A longitudinal study can be invaluable in improving the KCC program and determining other benefits and positive outcomes of the KCC program. A ten year window also allows for assessment to see if a “College going culture” has truly been instilled in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. An evaluation period continuing through 2020 would provide five years of data on six-year graduation rates for the earliest cohorts participating in the KCC program.

- * ***A new survey targeted for the KCC program coaches is highly recommended.***

A survey with the college coaches on their professional development, could reveal how the program has enhanced their career prospects after serving with KCC. This information is an economic indicator that should be valuable to the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

For future analysis, collecting data on KCC cohorts as they go into higher education institutions will be important to analyze whether or not the KCC participants are ready for college level coursework. If data can be gathered on the retention and graduation rates of KCC participants in higher education institutions, then the retention rates can be compared to the overall retention and graduation rates in the higher education institution that KCC cohorts are attending. This data would assist greatly in analyzing the success of the KCC program at higher education institutional levels.

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*** Please refer to the complete *Investing in the Future: Evaluating the Kentucky College Coaching Program 2012 - 2014* report for more detailed information. ***

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