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Executive Summary

College Advising Corps proposes to have 223 AmeriCorps members who will provide college advising to low-income, first-generation, underrepresented students in 223 underserved high schools in AZ, GA, MA, MI, NC, PA, and TX. At the end of the first program year, the AmeriCorps members will be responsible for increasing the college enrollment rates among economically disadvantaged youth at the schools served. In addition, the AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 1,200 volunteers that will be engaged in supporting college access initiatives in the schools and communities served.

This program will focus on the CNCS focus area of Education. The CNCS investment of \$336,000 will be matched with \$9,030,000 in leveraged resources, all of which is private funding, to cover the entire cost of running the program.

Rationale and Approach/Program Design

1. Problem/Need

Our nation is facing a crisis in access to higher education and opportunity. Too many low-income, first-generation-college, and underrepresented students are not applying or matriculating to college because they are not receiving the support they need to identify and enroll in colleges from which they are likely to graduate. A recent White House report entitled "Increasing College Opportunity for Low-Income Students: Promising Models and a Call to Action" noted that "every year hundreds of thousands of low-income students face barriers to college access and success. Low-income students often lack the guidance and support they need to prepare for college, apply to the best-fit schools, apply for financial aid, enroll and persist in their studies, and ultimately graduate."

College Advising Corps (CAC) serves a population of students at its participating high schools that is predominantly low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented. Among students served by CAC in 2014-15, 72% qualify for free/reduced lunch, and 72% are underrepresented minorities. In Boston, for example, where we propose to place 24 members in 24 Boston Public High Schools, 100% of the students qualify for free/reduced lunch, and 93% of the students are underrepresented minorities. In Georgia, serving 19 high schools primarily in and around Atlanta, the free/reduced lunch rate is 76%, and 92% of students are underrepresented minorities.

A study released in 2014 by the National Student Clearinghouse reveals that income level is the greatest indicator of whether a high school graduate will attend college. Graduates from schools in low-income communities are significantly less likely to attend college than their counterparts at

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schools with majority middle-to-upper income level students.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs today require post-secondary education, yet the U.S. lags behind other nations in young adults enrolled in higher education. This is disproportionately true for low-income students. Nearly a quarter of low-income students who score in the top quartile on standardized tests never go to college, and many of the remaining 75 percent who do attend college never attain bachelors' degrees. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, at low-income schools, defined as schools where more than 50% of students qualify for discounted lunch programs, the college enrollment rate ranged from 47-58% in the fall following graduation. At schools that the study categorized as "high-income," enrollment stood at 61-73%.

Why are disadvantaged students who are well qualified less likely to attend college than their more-affluent peers? In "From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College," the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago found that the complexities of college and financial aid applications are a serious barrier for low-income students, many of whom are the first in their families to consider college. These students may additionally lack role models and advocates who can help them navigate the college admissions process.

College counselors are critical to ensuring that students are encouraged and supported during the college application and matriculation processes; however, the national student-to-guidance counselor ratio of nearly 500:1 means that the average student spends 20 minutes per year talking to his or her counselor. The American School Counselor Association recommends a ratio of 250:1. Moreover, low-income and first-generation students are particularly underserved, with many never seeing a college adviser. When we add a college adviser to the school, we improve that ratio drastically.

A number of high-profile initiatives have focused on closing the education achievement gap between low-income, first-generation-college, and underrepresented groups and their more advantaged peers. However, the gap in college-going and completion rates will not likely be closed unless the gap in college advising is closed first. CAC proposes a program that will address this need by placing recent college graduates as full-time college advisers in the nation's most underserved urban and rural high schools.

2. Theory of Change and Logic Model

Theory of Change: CAC's theory of change is straightforward. Near peer advisers (AmeriCorps members) can a) help students complete a set of steps in order to attend college, b) enhance a college-going culture in schools, and c) utilize the call to national service to develop into the next generation

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of leaders.

The steps students must complete include formulating expectations about college, taking the correct coursework, preparing and submitting college applications, taking entrance exams, completing financial aid forms, and selecting an institution. If students complete these steps, they can attend college. Families and schools can help students accomplish these steps; however, despite their best efforts, some of the steps remain uncompleted. There are several potential reasons why these steps are uncompleted -- students and their families may lack information; they may require assistance in understanding the complexity of application and financial aid forms; schools may be overwhelmed or have ineffective outreach strategies; and so on.

CAC proposes an intervention that inserts AmeriCorps members as full-time, near peer college advisers in 243 targeted high schools. Their mission is to help students with the entire college search and application process, providing the support and assistance these students need to complete the process. The objective of the program is to increase the number of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students entering and completing higher education. CAC works in communities across the country to provide the advising and encouragement that students need to navigate college admissions. Advisers work full-time to help students plan their college searches, complete admissions and financial aid applications, and enroll at schools that will serve them well. Advisers supplement the work of school guidance counselors who often do not have adequate time to assist students with the college admissions process.

CAC partners with universities throughout the country and hires their graduates as college advisers. Partner universities include the University of Michigan, the University of Texas, Duke University, the University of Florida, the University of Georgia, the University of Arizona, and Franklin & Marshall College. One of the most exciting and effective aspects of CAC work is its "near-peer" model. Each adviser is a recent college graduate who can relate to the students in the high school in powerful ways. Over 70% of advisers are underrepresented or first generation students.

CAC advisers work with the stakeholders in the school to create and execute a plan that empowers students to achieve college access and success. By assisting students with completing the critical steps necessary to enroll in college, the members will increase college enrollment rates at targeted high schools. These steps include organizing college tours, fairs, and visits; conducting SAT/ACT workshops and help with exam registration; assistance with preparation of college applications and financial aid forms; and scholarship searches.

Sustained impact in this theory of change is afforded through the establishment of a strong,

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pervasive college-going culture in the school. Such a culture normalizes high postsecondary aspirations among students and college-going expectations, support activities, and resources throughout the school organization. Over time, the goal of the CAC program within schools and especially the collaboration between advisers and school staff is to create and sustain a college-going culture. Finally, we track our AmeriCorps members after their service and find they are becoming leaders in education, college admissions, and public policy as well as maintaining a deep commitment to national service. CAC' third-party evaluation team from Stanford University provides evidence that the intervention leads to the outcomes described in the theory of change.

Logic Model:

Activities and Outputs: Research on successful pathways to college highlights counselor/adviser roles prominently (McDonough, 1999,2004). These roles, identified in the activities part of the logic model chart, have been identified as instrumental for developing aspirations and successfully navigating the college choice activities as resulting in a number of outputs and outcomes. In collaboration with families and school staff, CAC advisers work full-time in underserved high schools to assist low-income, underrepresented, first-generation students with the college application process. Advisers use a student tracker data collection tool to record all of their activities and interactions with students. In addition to meeting with students 1:1, advisers help organize college campus visits, college visits, and meetings with college representatives. They help students register and prepare for the SAT/ACT. Advisers lead workshops and help students prepare college applications. Additionally, they help students complete the FAFSA (federal financial aid form) and assist them with other scholarship applications.

The output of all these activities is that students will be more likely to complete essential pathways or tasks in the college application process. Because they will have more information and assistance, students will be more likely to visit colleges, take the ACT/SAT, submit the FAFSA, and use a fee waiver for college applications. Parents are also more likely to be involved in the college application and decision process. Evidence of this impact is described below.

Outcomes: If students are completing more activities essential to college entry, then we expect that more disadvantaged students will apply and be accepted into college in the short-term. Because of our whole-school model, advisers will also be reaching out to underclassmen, and students will thus be more likely to aspire to go to college early in their education careers. They will also be more likely to apply to and be accepted into 4-year institutions. The effect of the increase in applications and acceptances is that we will see increased college enrollment rates among economically disadvantaged

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youth at service locations. Moreover, we will see more students enroll in colleges that are a "best fit" and "best match" for them. Because advisers have worked with students to select the best fit school, we also expect to see increased college persistence rates.

In the long-term, many benefits will be experienced by the increase in college enrollment and persistence. College-educated youth will be eligible for more jobs and will be less likely to be unemployed. College-educated individuals also earn, on average, \$1 million more over their lifetimes than individuals without a college degree. This college-educated workforce will help the United States be more competitive in today's global economy. Finally, schools will develop a college-going culture that can sustain our mission and further increase the number of low-income, first-generation students enrolling in college.

3. Evidence Base

Level of Evidence: Strong

Recently, scholars and research organizations have devoted significant effort to understanding the impact of various college access programs. Several studies validate our theory of change and show that college advising results in an increase in our primary outcome - college matriculation rates of low-income students.

Empirical, causal evidence:

In a What Works Clearinghouse study entitled *Late Interventions Matter Too: The Case of College Coaching in New Hampshire*, Carrell and Sacerdote (2013) ask whether mentors can have a positive impact on college-going even late in a student's high school career. They implemented a randomized controlled design and assigned 1,050 New Hampshire students into a treatment and control group. Similar to our near-peer model, students in the control group were matched with college students from Dartmouth University. These college student mentors helped seniors complete the college application process and worked with them on many of the same tasks as our advisers: FAFSA completion, 1:1 meetings, college applications, and SAT/ACT registration. Students who completed all of the required tasks received a \$100 cash bonus.

The researchers found that the intention to treat estimate for women was a 13 percentage point increase in college enrollment as compared to the control group. This finding was statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence interval. They also found that the cash incentive alone had no effect; mentoring was the strongest intervention.

In an ongoing evaluation of our own CAC program, researchers from Stanford University have implemented a randomized controlled trial to examine the causal effects of a full-time CAC adviser

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(Bettinger et al, 2014). Previous non-experimental results are suggestive that the program has positive effects on college enrollment, with many schools seeing a double-digit increase in enrollment three years after having an adviser. In the last two years, CAC used a randomized selection mechanism to choose schools for a large-scale expansion in Texas. This expansion supports a causal assessment at the school level of the effect of the program. 112 of Texas' lowest performing schools are involved in the RCT with 36 in the treatment group and 76 in the control group.

Preliminary results reveal school-wide positive college enrollment effects as students are 2 percent more likely to enroll in college, with larger effects seen for Hispanic students and low-income students. All figures are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence interval. Given our whole school model and historically low academic achievement at the treatment schools, the statistically significant findings are encouraging as our advisers are having a strong impact in large Texas schools. Student surveys distributed in both treatment and control schools also revealed that students in schools served by an adviser were 8 percent more likely to have completed the FAFSA and 6 percent more likely to have completed the SAT exam. The qualitative research team has also been conducting site visits and case studies to compare the college-going culture at control and treatment schools.

Other Advising Corps Evaluation Findings:

Each year, our external evaluators from Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE) at Stanford University employ a mixed methods evaluation design to determine the impact of our advisers. The evaluation team uses National Student Clearinghouse data to track our students' initial enrollment in college, the sector (two-year/four-year) of enrollment, students' persistence in college, and students' transfer rates from two to four year colleges. They have found that CAC is effective in both urban and rural markets. Compared to a three-year baseline enrollment average prior to having an adviser, many schools see a significant increase in college enrollment once CAC has been established.

In 2013, the evaluation team also distributed student surveys to measure the difference that is made by meeting with one of our college advisers. 33,662 students from across the country completed the survey. Compared to seniors who have not met with the CAC adviser at their school, students who have met with the adviser are: 23% more likely to apply to a college/university; 20% more likely to apply to a 4-year institution of higher education; 24% more likely to apply to a first choice college; 16% more likely to apply to 3 or more institutions; 18% more likely to take the ACT; 14% more likely to take the SAT I; 23% more likely to submit the FAFSA, and 18% more likely know of Pell Grants.

All of these findings were statistically significant over a 95 percent confidence interval and include

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demographic controls and school fixed effects.

4. Notice Priority

The proposed program falls within the Education focus area and meets the AmeriCorps funding priority of Increasing Enrollment in Postsecondary Education. The proposed intervention places AmeriCorps members as full-time college advisers to work in underserved high schools for the primary purpose of increasing college enrollment rates among low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students. CAC works to address the challenge of economic mobility through educational attainment -- improving the chances of breaking the cycle of poverty through post-secondary education.

5. Member Training

CAC provides a comprehensive, year-round training program for its college advisers. Members are oriented to CAC and AmeriCorps at both the state and national levels. Currently, each partner program leads its own summer training program for their advisers, planned and executed by the Program Director (the member supervisor). Summer training programs are 4-6 weeks in length and are hosted at the partner institution in order to leverage the resources and expertise of the partner higher education institutions.. AmeriCorps compliance issues are addressed during this period, and training covers topics such as prohibited activities and maintaining timesheets. National training takes place at the annual Adviser Summit hosted by the CAC national office. The goal of the Adviser Summit is to inspire commitment to public service, share powerful practices, and develop leadership skills among all advisers and further familiarize advisers with the barriers to higher education that low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students face.

All partner programs use local experts in admissions, financial aid, student engagement, cultural/ethnic sensitivity, and other topics to serve as faculty during summer training. Program directors at each partner institution are responsible for developing and implementing state-specific training curricula for their members. However, all programs are unified by a standard course of summer training topics including: A. Introduction to CAC and national service- (Mission, goals, objectives, core values, History of national service, AmeriCorps compliance issues, prohibited activities, timesheets) B. Position expectations- professional demeanor in schools (The adviser/student relationship, importance of data tracking, online data tracker, time management) C. Program goals- Developing work plan (key performance indicators and strategy, work plans, and best practices) D. Partner School- Understanding your school placement, diversity training, promoting services, demographics, in-school collaboration, fostering a college-going culture, collaborating with other

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college access programs, Supporting the work of school counselors, Entering and Exiting Communities. E. Your students-Adolescent Development, Motivating and engaging students, leveraging your near-peer strengths, Confidentiality and FERPA training, Best Fit and Match) F. Communicating with families - building a successful partnership, College Access Knowledge (test prep and fee waivers, career and major exploration, college application essays, letters of recommendation, at risk populations, tours of area colleges and universities, preparing for college fairs, student athletes, military and ROTC) G. Working with at-risk populations (Foster Care/Homeless students, Undocumented students, Students with Disabilities) H. Tools and resources in college advising (Bilingual resources, Data Tracker, Strategies for success with standardized tests, Career and major exploration tools, the Common Application, Local or state portals) I. Life as an adviser and professional development (Transition from College Student to Professional and AmeriCorps member to AmeriCorps alum, Personal budgeting, Life after the Corps, Individual consultations regarding resumes and statement of purpose for grad school, Exploring graduate school programs, Presentation skills).

In addition, Program Directors schedule regular (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly depending on the proximity of members) in-service trainings or professional development opportunities throughout the academic year.

6. Member Supervision

Members are guided and supported by the Program Director at the partner institution and an on-site supervisor at the service site. Each university partner selects and employs a full-time Program Director to lead the efforts of the local program including supervision of members and developing and maintaining relationships with partner high schools and school districts. Program Directors maintain close communication with members in a variety of ways including regular site visits, ongoing regional trainings, and phone call check-ins. The national office of CAC provides training and oversight of Program Directors through annual site visits, bi-weekly conference calls, bi-annual Program Director meetings, and an online toolkit and listserv for training and sharing of best practices. Training and orientation of Program Directors by the national office emphasizes AmeriCorps regulations and expectations including compliance issues and prohibited activities. The Program Director serves as the members' primary supervisor. However, the importance of an on-site supervisor cannot be diminished. Each partner school appoints an on-site supervisor for the college adviser. Most frequently the on-site supervisor is the school counseling chairperson or the senior counselor.

The on-site supervisor:

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1. Serves as the member's primary contact, resource and advocate within the school, facilitating the member's integration into the life of the school and providing appropriate advice and counsel.
2. Holds ongoing meetings with the member to provide updates on progress, solve issues that arise and explore opportunities for further strategic collaboration.
3. Works closely with the Program Director to ensure that the relationship between the member and the school remains strong and that the member is effectively serving students and advancing the goals of CAC and AmeriCorps.
4. Attends site supervisor orientation, regional meetings, or other required meetings/trainings.

Program Directors lead joint orientation meetings for on-site supervisors and members (college advisers) at the start of each academic year. This is an opportunity to further explain how the program operates and to provide essential information regarding high school policies and culture to the member. Furthermore, Program Directors establish, nurture, and sustain relationships, communication, and collaboration between the partner institution, advisers and partner high schools and school districts.

7. Member Experience

An ethic to engage in public and community service is a characteristic we seek in recruiting advisers to the program. This tendency is further developed during advisers' tenure with CAC with goal of CAC providing members with skills and experience that will be valued by future employers and building the next generation of leaders committed to the ideals of national service. We see our program as serving two key constituencies - (1) the students in the high schools we serve, and (2) the advisers themselves. This year, of our 456 near-peer college advisers, 70% identify as a person of color, 54% were the first in their family to attend college, and 64% were Pell grant eligible themselves in college meaning their families are classified as "low-income." In short, our advisers are our students. We recruit these recent graduates of 23 partner colleges and universities where we have campus-based program directors working year-round to identify service-minded young people. Most are first-generation college, from low-income backgrounds and/or underrepresented themselves. The advisers are from similar - and in some cases, the exact same, communities as the students they serve.

As an organization, we strive to provide professional development opportunities to all advisers and the results show we are having success in this area. According to our annual adviser survey, 80% of advisers said the CAC experience affected their future education and career goals and 99% of advisers report intentions to attend graduate school. Advisers report there are a number of professional development and leadership skills honed during their two years as a college adviser including but not

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limited to: (1) gaining social entrepreneurship skills in executing a school-level needs' assessment and then planning and executing a strategic plan to meet those needs, (2) experience working in a data-driven and collaborative environment, (3) soft skills training that is transferable to other fields including communications, presenting, project management, community organizing, and problem solving. In addition to the skills developed by advisers through the day-to-day service work in the schools, program directors deliver deliberate training sessions both pre- and in-service for advisers on professional development topics and also provide individualized consultations on graduate school or job placement. Our national network of colleges and universities affords advisers the opportunity to make connect nationwide.

To develop national esprit de corps, we hold an annual national Adviser Summit attended by all advisers from across the country. A full day of programming and informational sessions is dedicated to the future plans of members. Specifically targeting our 2nd year members, we offer informational sessions on numerous career and educational opportunities, including graduate school, law school, careers in education, public policy, and research. The Adviser Summit, as well as regular local meetings and in-service trainings throughout the year, provide members with opportunities to connect with each other and build esprit de corps. In each of the states where we have AmeriCorps members, the local programs are fully connected with the state service commissions. Participation in MLK Day of Service and September 11 Day of National Service are two ways our members connect to the broader national service movement. CAC recently joined the Corps Network as an affiliate member so we are getting to know our fellow corps organizations nationwide.

It is important to us that we build in reflection for our members throughout their time of service with CAC. Corps members engage in regular written reflections to both think through problems and potential solutions but also to internalize how the service experience is impacting them. Reflection time also occurs in regular 1:1 conversations with their supervisors (the program director and the on-site supervisor) and in small group discussions with fellow corps members during in-service trainings.

8. Commitment to AmeriCorps Identification

Members will know they are AmeriCorps members from the beginning of their recruitment, as ads for the member positions will note that these are AmeriCorps positions. Members will learn about AmeriCorps and its benefits and responsibilities throughout the initial training period. Members will participate in ongoing training throughout the year that stresses AmeriCorps regulations, prohibited activities, and compliance. Members will also sign and be provided with an AmeriCorps member contract, which will specify AmeriCorps benefits and responsibilities.

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The AmeriCorps logo is displayed proudly by CAC in numerous ways. All partner programs feature the logo prominently on the front page of their websites to acknowledge participation in AmeriCorps and recognize AmeriCorps support. All of our members will be provided with AmeriCorps pins that they will be asked to wear and display every day. In addition, our operating sites will be asked to include the AmeriCorps logo on polo and tee shirts provided to the members. The AmeriCorps logo also is included on programs for special events, and AmeriCorps leadership often presents at local and national gatherings.

Organizational Capability

1. Organizational Background and Staffing

CAC is well-equipped to plan and implement the proposed program and is experienced in administering AmeriCorps grants and other federal funds. CAC has just completed a three-year National Direct AmeriCorps grant with 203 MSYs in its final year. It also administers two Social Innovation Fund grants. CAC is the recipient of a 2012 National Service Impact Award from the Corporation for National and Community Service, as well as the National Association of College Admission Counseling's 2013 Excellence in Education Award. Letters of support from key university partners have been procured.

Dr. Nicole F. Hurd, CEO, leads CAC, which she founded in 2005. Dr. Hurd is recognized nationally as a leader in the field of college access. The Chronicle of Higher Education has just named Dr. Hurd to its 2014 Influence List. Dr. Hurd also was honored recently with the National College Access Network's Executive Leadership Award of Excellence, and she testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training at the hearing entitled Keeping College Within Reach: Enhancing Transparency for Students, Families and Taxpayers.

A Board of Directors oversees the governance of CAC, led by Peter Grauer, Chairman of Bloomberg LP. Other board members include Erskine Bowles, former UNC System President and White House Chief of Staff; U.S. Representative Joaquin Castro; Lisa Jackson of New Profit; Holden Thorp, Provost of Washington University; and Nicole Hurd.

The AmeriCorps program is administered by national office staff members who have been with the organization for the entirety of its previous AmeriCorps grant. These experienced staff members include Jennifer Cox Bell, National Director of Programs and Partnerships; Veniese Bradley-Mitchell, Training and Curriculum Manager; and Jim Mulvey, Director of Development, who has several years of experience managing the AmeriCorps grant. Overall, the national staff numbers 15 members, including a Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, an Evaluation Director, and a team of

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four Regional Program Directors. These Regional Directors manage and oversee local programs and support training, evaluation, and data collection, as well as implementation of the CAC strategic plan.

Each of our partner programs is based at a major university, often a state's flagship public university or a prestigious private university. Flagship and prestigious universities bring resources, brand, and a strong alumni base to the CAC network. All of these programs have the backing of the university administration and leadership, and these universities have a great deal of experience in administering federal grants and awards. Each partner programs employs a full-time Program Director to manage the program at the local level, including management and supervision of members. The Program Director maintains relationships with local school districts and partner high schools to plan and implement the work of the AmeriCorps members in their communities.

2. Compliance and Accountability

CAC has been extremely diligent in monitoring compliance issues and the activities of its higher education program partners and their AmeriCorps members. Monitoring of compliance issues at the national level begins with the development by CAC of a Memorandum of Understanding with each partner organization, an AmeriCorps member position description, and the member contracts. These documents stress compliance and emphasize the prohibited activities. The national office distributes a document to each partner program with an overview of AmeriCorps with guidance on key enrollment and compliance issues and samples of member timesheets.

CAC provides regular program support, training for AmeriCorps members at the national level, and assistance with local training for members. CAC also supports member selection and placement at the local level. Compliance issues and prohibited activities are stressed during the summer training program in which all members participate.

During the AmeriCorps application process, the national office of CAC ensures that local consultation with state commissions takes place and reviews the completion of the state consultation forms. And although not a requirement of a fixed amount award, CAC also monitors the budgets of its partner programs to ensure the financial stability of the local programs and their ability to meet all programmatic expenses.

At the start of the program year, CAC holds an informational conference call with the Program Directors from each partner program to review expectations, policies, and procedures. Ongoing monitoring activities include the following: bi-weekly calls to local Program Directors; semi-annual group meetings of the Program Directors; site visits during the year by a national staff member; and regular calls on specific AmeriCorps topics, including eligibility requirements, timesheets, prohibited

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activities, criminal history checks, and health benefits.

Local partner programs are required to submit Monthly Activity Reports to the national office, which track key performance indicators for the program, including performance measures for the AmeriCorps grant support, such as the numbers of students participating in and completing the CAC program. The local program partners also provide training opportunities for members throughout the year, in which AmeriCorps regulations are stressed. Particular emphasis is placed on prohibited activities and maintenance of timesheets. Finally, CAC, in conjunction with its evaluation team from Stanford University, monitors additional program outcomes and results through an annual member survey and a survey of students served by the members.

3. Past Performance for Current Grantees and Former Grantees Only

CAC is proud to report that it has exceeded all performance measures during all three years of its previous AmeriCorps grant, including the primary performance measure outcome, ED10, increasing the number of students entering post-secondary institutions. In 2013-14, the target outcome of enrolling 24,000 students was exceeded, with the actual number reaching 26,137. We are also pleased to report that we have experienced no significant compliance issues with any of our operating sites or service locations. The only minor issue concerned the late enrollment of two members, both of whom did complete the enrollment process just days after the 30-day enrollment period. One area of compliance that is being monitored closely is the citizenship requirements for members' participation in AmeriCorps; we are especially diligent to ensure that we are recruiting only those eligible to serve.

We are extremely proud to report that CAC experienced an enrollment rate of 100% and a retention rate of 100% among its members during the 2012-13 program year, the last full year of program operation. Our 100% enrollment rate is a result of the robust recruiting and selection process we have on each campus. We have more applications than we have slots. Our 100% retention rate is due to the strong culture we build in our program-- advisers are dedicated to CAC, their alma maters (our university partners), students, and AmeriCorps. They are also invested in receiving their full ed awards. In the 2013-14 program year, we added 163 no-cost MSYs to our original group of 40.

Budget/Cost Effectiveness

1. Cost Effectiveness: The CAC operating model is extremely cost-effective and highly scalable. Advisers serve one year, with the option of a second year of service upon agreement of the institutional partner and high school placement site. The annual cost to place an adviser averages \$42,000, which includes living allowance, regional program support, training, evaluation, health care, and criminal history checks. The annual adviser living allowance of \$25,060 is based on the

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AmeriCorps national service model, making CAC more cost-effective than other access and success interventions. The average cost to serve one student is only \$164, far less than any other college access initiative. The cost per MSY requested as part of this application is \$2,700.

CAC has developed a growth and strategy plan with the nonprofit consultant Bridgespan Group addressing personnel, financial resources, and management capacity. Plans are in place to continue growing the network of program partners in current and new states while sustaining quality and the essence of the near-peer model. CAC has raised substantial private funds and secured significant public support for its program. Since its national expansion in 2007, CAC has developed and is executing a plan to achieve long-term sustainability. Through commitments of the presidents and chancellors of its partner universities, CAC benefits from each partner's considerable development infrastructure, including major gifts officers, annual fund programs, corporate and foundation relations, and government relations staff. To date the organization has successfully secured diverse funding and support and built capacity with partner institutions to ensure sustainability.

At the national level, CAC enjoys the support of two Social Innovation Fund awards, one administered by New Profit (through 2016) and one by the GreenLight Fund (through 2018). Other existing commitments are in hand from major national funders such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Kresge Foundation, the Robertson Foundation, Bank of America, the John M. Belk Endowment, the Woodruff Foundation, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and the Robin Hood Foundation. CAC' Board of Directors is committed to raising the full balance of funding needed.

The total needed to operate the AmeriCorps program will be \$10,206,000. This is based on an average cost of \$42,000 per member for the 243 members included in this request. The fixed amount requested from CNCS is \$2,700 per member x 243 members, a total of \$656,000. The balance needed is \$9,550,000. The national office of CAC, in conjunction with its university partners, will fund the remaining balance.

2. Budget Adequacy: CAC is requesting funding in the amount of \$2,700 per MSY for 243 members, a total of \$656,000. Members will receive a living allowance of \$25,060, and CAC is prepared to provide the cash resources necessary to meet the balance of the living allowance, as well as all additional programmatic expenses. The amount of non-CNCS cash resources needed is \$9,550,000. The total program budget of \$10,206,000 covers the living allowance for 243 members plus benefits including health insurance, training costs, Program Director salaries, travel expenses, background checks, and supplies.

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Evaluation Summary or Plan

THEORY OF CHANGE

Many education scholars cite three fundamental obstacles to college access: academic, financial, and informational barriers. These hurdles impede many low-income, first-generation students from pursuing higher education at a great loss to them and to society. To address these barriers, the CAC has a simple model and theory of change.

The theory of change assumes there are various steps students must complete in order to successfully enter college. These steps include formulating expectations about college, submitting college applications, taking college entrance exams, completing financial aid forms, and selecting a college. If students complete these steps, they can attend college. Families and schools can help students accomplish these steps; however, despite their best efforts, some of the steps remain uncompleted. Several potential reasons explain why these steps are uncompleted -- students and their families may lack information; they may require assistance in understanding the complexity of application and financial aid forms; schools may be overwhelmed or have ineffective outreach strategies; etc.

CAC inserts a full-time college adviser whose mission is to help with the entire search and application process, providing the support and assistance students need to complete the process. The Advising Corps can influence college outcomes such as high school engagement, school culture, and access to post-secondary institutions. Sustained impact in this theory of change is afforded through the establishment of a strong, pervasive college-going culture in schools.

OUTCOMES

Our primary outcomes relate to access to and persistence in college, so we monitor the percentage of students enrolled in different types of higher education institutions. We also disaggregate the data by sub-groups such as race and ethnicity. Additionally, we evaluate and measure intermediary outcomes such as FAFSA submissions and college visits. A comprehensive list of outcomes is found below:

Key Outcomes:

College Enrollment (% enrolled in a 2-year vs. 4-year IHE, transfer rate 2-year to 4-year)

College Persistence

Intermediate Outcomes (Pathways to College):

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College Visits

College Rep Visits and College Fairs

SAT/ACT Registration

FAFSA Submission

Scholarship Dollars

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In collaboration with our external evaluation team from Evaluation and Assessment Solutions for Education (EASE) at Stanford University, we address the following research questions:

1. Does the presence of a CAC adviser lead to more students enrolling in college when they graduate and persisting in college thereafter?
2. Does the presence of a CAC adviser lead to more students entering the pathway to college as measured by course choice, grades, college applications, and other markers that lead to college attendance?
3. What role does the CAC adviser play in fostering a strong college-going culture in their high school?

PROPOSED RESEARCH DESIGN

Our analyses utilize a mixed methods approach to evaluation. Quantitative analyses allow us to track trends in students' outcomes. We can track easily identifiable metrics such as the number of steps students have taken to prepare for college, the number of colleges to which they have applied, etc. Quantitative analyses can also help us identify causal relationships between specific outcomes.

Our quantitative analyses, however, cannot shed light on many mechanisms which might be working in our schools. There are many variables which we cannot quantify, and there are many relationships for which we cannot design a survey. For these, we rely upon qualitative data to complement our quantitative analyses. Both strategies shed light on fundamentally different phenomena associated with the Advising Corps, so we focus our efforts on these complementary empirical methods.

Measuring College Enrollment and Persistence (Research Question 1)

Randomized Controlled Trial:

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In Texas, a rapid expansion of our program in 2011 and IES Grant 030612-006 provided us an opportunity to examine causal effects with a randomized controlled trial (RCT). 112 schools currently participate in the RCT, with 36 in the treatment group and 76 in the control group. Through a partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), we are able to measure the college-going rates of all graduating seniors. This experiment will allow us to compare the treatment and control groups to measure causal effects. Preliminary evidence indicates that students in treatment schools are 2 percent more likely to enroll in college. The finding is statistically significant over a 95 percent confidence interval.

National Student Clearinghouse matches

For all schools not participating in the Texas RCT, we still collect college enrollment data by running rosters of graduating seniors through the National Student Clearinghouse. We are then able to compare enrollment and persistence rates at each of our partner schools to the school's three-year baseline enrollment rates pre-adviser.

Measuring Pathways to College (Research Question 2)

Student Surveys:

Annually, EASE distributes student surveys in our partner high schools and in control schools. In 2013, more than 33,000 seniors completed the survey.

The student survey gives the Advising Corps an opportunity to track student decisions with respect to college preparation choices at partner high schools. We rely on these data to identify the specific steps that students have taken to prepare for college. The survey also provides insights into students' preparation for college and motivation to continue their education. Finally, the student survey allows the Advising Corps to identify potential levers where advisers can increase efficacy. Because we survey all seniors in a school, we are able to compare the college-going behaviors of students who did and did not meet with the Advising Corps adviser.

Soft Cohort RCT Study:

Dr. Brent Evans of Vanderbilt University has partnered with the Advising Corps to conduct a longitudinal study of the student level effects of working with an Advising Corps adviser. At participating high schools, 30 randomly selected students with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0 receive extra outreach from the adviser. Advisers are asked to increase the number of meetings with these particular students. The primary goal of this evaluation is to obtain an estimate of the impact of the number of meetings with the College Adviser on college enrollment outcomes for individual students.

Student Tracker:

Narratives

Each day, advisers track activities that are key performance indicators for increasing college enrollment rates on their student trackers. These indicators include college visits and college rep visits, FAFSA submissions, scholarships awarded, SAT/ACT registration, and college application completions. Measuring the adviser's impact in fostering a strong college-going culture (Research Question 2 and 3)

To determine the adviser's role in fostering a strong college-going culture within a school, our external evaluation team conducts numerous case studies at both partner and non-partner schools across the country. The team conducts interviews with advisers, school counselors, principals, students, and parents. In doing so, they identify shared challenges between the two types of schools, as well as the unique contributions that a college adviser brings to a school beyond providing college counseling.

EVALUATOR QUALIFICATIONS AND INDEPENDENCE

Dr. Eric Bettinger oversees the quantitative analyses. Dr. Bettinger is an Associate Professor of Education at Stanford University's School of Education. His expertise is on strategies to improve students' access and success in college. Dr. Bettinger (with Drs. Bridget Long, Philip Oreopoulos, and Lisa Sanbonmatsu) organized and directed a large-scale randomized evaluation of the FAFSA experiment, which streamlines the financial aid application process for low-income families in the United States. Dr. Bettinger's research has been funded by the Gates Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, the Lumina Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Education. Bettinger is also a Faculty Research Fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

Dr. Anthony Antonio oversees the qualitative analyses for this evaluation. Dr. Antonio is an Associate Professor of Education and Associate Director of the Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research at Stanford University. Dr. Antonio's research focuses on stratification and postsecondary access, racial diversity and its impact on students and institutions, and student friendship networks. His latest book is *Assessment For Excellence: The Philosophy And Practice Of Assessment And Evaluation In Higher Education* (2012), with Alexander W. Astin. Antonio has extensive experience designing and administering large-scale student surveys.

Dr. Rie Kijima oversees the project management activities for this evaluation. She received her Ph.D.

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in International Comparative Education from Stanford. She has previously worked at the World Bank as a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist.

BUDGET (annual)

EASE labor: \$98,000

EASE travel (site visits): \$10,500

Student surveys (distribution, incentives, transcription): \$81,090

NSC run: \$35,000

Site interview transcription: \$20,000

TOTAL: \$244,590

Amendment Justification

N/A

Clarification Summary

Clarification Items:

College Advising Corps is requesting a grant in the amount of \$336,000, 223 MSYs, 223 slots, at \$1,506.73 per MSY. Through this submission, we are requesting 20 no-cost MSYs in addition to the 203 MSYs referenced in the clarification letter.

A. The national time ratio of guidance counselor to student interaction is 20 minutes a year per student; please provide the increased ratio to be gained from the presence of the AmeriCorps college adviser position:

By introducing the AmeriCorps college adviser into a high school, the student-to-counselor ratio is cut in half, from an average of nearly 500 students to one guidance counselor, to a ratio of approximately 250:1. Moreover, unlike guidance counselors who have many responsibilities beyond college advising, the AmeriCorps adviser focuses solely on college advising. More than one-half of an AmeriCorps adviser's time is spent in one-to-one meetings with students, enabling the adviser to meet with each of the 250 students an average of 8 times per year, totaling nearly 3.5 hours. Thus, while the ratio of students-to-counselor is cut in half, in practicality it is actually cut greater than half with respect to impact; AmeriCorps advisers' focus is on advising alone and the interactions are more numerous and

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in-depth than a guidance counselor can have.

B. Budget Clarification - updates have been made directly in the Budget Narrative section.

1. Other Revenue Funds Field in the Funding/Demographics section. This figure has been updated in the Funding/Demographics section based on the number of MSYs requested. The new total is \$9,030,000. We recognize that this figure is high in relation to the amount requested from AmeriCorps. Our total programmatic cost per member is \$42,000 per year, which includes living allowance, training, travel, healthcare, and a pro-rated share of the Program Director's costs. Total program cost is \$9,366,000, with \$336,000 requested from AmeriCorps. Our cost/MSY is very low, leaving a high percentage of costs to be provided by our organization, which we are prepared to do.

2. Executive Summary, budget, and performance measures have been updated to reflect new grant request and number of MSYs.

3. Our cost/MSY has been lowered through this resubmission and is now \$1,507.

4. We will renew our CCR (SAM) registration promptly.

C. Performance Measure Clarification (also changed in the Performance Measure section).

1. ED2 Output Completion is identified as a measure. Please indicate how much time (i.e., dosage; how many days or hours) is required in order to complete the activity and what grade level/count of students are expected to meet program completion:

The ED2 output measures the number of 12th grade students who complete the program. For this measure, the number completing the program is the number of seniors graduating from high school and who are therefore eligible to enroll in post-secondary institutions. This measure will be recorded upon completion of the school year and after graduation. Each of these 12th grade students will meet with the AmeriCorps adviser an average of 8 times per year totaling nearly 3.5 hours of college advising in order to complete the activity and move forward with plans to enter post-secondary education.

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2. Please select an intervention other than Mentoring. All mentoring activities must meet the requirements and selection rules of the mentoring performance measures (ED3A and ED4A).

In the Performance Measures section, we have selected "Other" and added our own interventions: (1) college advising; (2) assisting with college applications; and (3) assisting with financial aid applications. Each of these interventions is intended to address and increase ED10, the number of students entering post-secondary education.

D. Strategic Engagement Slots:

1. What percentage of your slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities. What is your program's plan, if any, for outreach and recruitment of members of the disability community:

Approximately 5-10% of our slots will be targeted to recruiting members with disabilities. To do so, we work directly with each of our partner universities' respective Office of Equal Opportunity, ADA Coordinator, or office overseeing student and employee disability services to reach out and recruit members of the disability community. College Advising Corps is committed to providing equal opportunity to ensure diversity among its AmeriCorps members.

2. Additional MSYs: We are not requesting additional MSYs specifically for members with disabilities. The 5-10% of our members with disabilities have been accounted for in our initial and clarified request for MSYs.

E. No-Cost MSYs - as noted above, we are requesting 20 no-cost MSYs in addition to the 203 MSYs referenced in the clarification letter, a total of 223 MSYs. These additional MSYs will engage only in activities aligned with the proposed member activities outlined in the application narrative. College Advising Corps has commitments in hand from confirmed donors to provide the member costs and program activities. Non-CNCS funds for these 20 MSYs total \$840,000 and consist of private, cash donations. College Advising Corps is well-equipped with infrastructure in place to manage and monitor the additional members.

Continuation Changes

N/A

Grant Characteristics