



InsideTrack[®] Coaching

Earning a college degree is one of the primary pathways to economic success. Median weekly earnings of full-time workers with an associate degree in 2017 was 17 percent higher than full-time workers with a high school diploma only. Yet, large numbers of students who enroll in college do not complete a degree. Many programs and practices aim to improve college persistence and completion, including *InsideTrack® Coaching*.

InsideTrack® Coaching provides proactive, personalized coaching to help students identify and overcome both academic and non-academic barriers to college persistence and graduation. This What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) report, part of the WWC's Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area, explores the effects of InsideTrack® Coaching on students' persistence and degree attainment. The WWC identified 10 studies of InsideTrack® Coaching, one of which met WWC standards. The evidence presented in this report includes a study of the impact of InsideTrack® Coaching on four-year college students.²

What Happens When Students Participate in InsideTrack® Coaching?3

The evidence indicates that implementing InsideTrack[®] Coaching:

- · may increase students' persistence in college
- · may result in little to no change in students' degree completion

Findings on *InsideTrack® Coaching* from the one study that meets WWC standards is shown in Table 1. For each outcome reviewed by the WWC, an effectiveness rating, the study findings, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings is presented. These findings are based on 3,527 students on the persistence outcome and 1,346 students on the attainment outcome. See Box 1 for a description of WWC effectiveness ratings.

Table 1. Summary of findings on InsideTrack® Coaching from the study that meets WWC Standards⁴

		Average pe (study fi		Evidence meeting WWC standards (version 3.0)	
Outcome	Effectiveness rating	Intervention group	Comparison group	Number of studies	Number of students
Credit accumulation and persistence	Potentially positive effects	66.4% retained	61.4% retained	1	3,527
Attainment	No discernible effects	35.2% graduated	31.2% graduated	1	1,346

Table Note: Average performance figures from study findings are based on one analysis conducted for each outcome, as reported by Bettinger & Baker (2014). These outcomes include retention in college at 12 months (credit accumulation and persistence) and completing a degree (attainment). The effects of *InsideTrack® Coaching* are not known for other outcomes within the Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area, including college access and enrollment; college attendance; academic achievement; and labor market outcomes.

BOX 1. HOW THE WWC REVIEWS AND DESCRIBES EVIDENCE

The WWC evaluates evidence based on the quality and results of reviewed studies. The criteria that the WWC uses for evaluating evidence are defined in the **Procedures and Standards Handbooks** and the **Review Protocols**. The studies summarized in this report were reviewed under WWC Standards (version 3.0) and the Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area protocol (version 3.0).

To determine the effectiveness rating, the WWC considers what methods each study used, the direction of the effects, and how many studies tested the intervention. The higher the effectiveness rating, the more certain the WWC is about the reported results and about what will happen if the same intervention is implemented again. The following key provides a link between effectiveness ratings and the statements used in this report:

Rating Interpretation	Description of the Evidence Strong evidence of a positive effect, with no overriding contrary evidence		
The intervention is <i>likely to change</i> an outcome			
The intervention <i>may change</i> an outcome	Evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence		
The intervention <i>may result in little to no change</i> in an outcome	No affirmative evidence of effects		
The intervention <i>has inconsistent effects</i> on an outcome	Evidence includes studies in at least two of these categories: studies with positive effects, studies with negative effects, or more studies with indeterminate effects than with positive or negative effects		
	The intervention is <i>likely to change</i> an outcome The intervention <i>may change</i> an outcome The intervention <i>may result in little to no change</i> in an outcome The intervention <i>has inconsistent</i>		

How is InsideTrack® Coaching Implemented?

The following section provides details of how <code>InsideTrack® Coaching</code> was implemented. This information can help educators identify the requirements for implementing <code>InsideTrack® Coaching</code>, and determine whether those implementation requirements would be feasible at their institutions. Information on <code>InsideTrack® Coaching</code> presented in this section comes from the study that meets WWC evidence standards (Bettinger & Baker, 2014), from the developer's website, and from correspondence with the developer.

- **Goal:** Goals for *InsideTrack® Coaching* programs differ depending on the students served at each institution. These goals include increasing the college enrollment of admitted students and preparing students to succeed at a given institution; improving engagement, persistence, completion, and satisfaction of currently enrolled students; increasing rates of re-entry for students who have left a given institution; and supporting students' and alumni's career development. *InsideTrack®* also offers capacity building, training, and consulting services to institution staff; these services are outside the scope of this review.
- Target Population: InsideTrack® offers different coaching options for students enrolled in college, prospective students who have not yet enrolled, and recent graduates. All students are eligible to receive InsideTrack® Coaching, including traditional undergraduates, first-generation, low income, minority, graduate students, online and distance learners, adult learners, and military and military-connected students.
- **Method of Delivery:** *InsideTrack®* partners with universities to deliver its coaching program, supplying the personnel and technology. *InsideTrack®* provides coaching through phone, video, email, text, and mobile apps. The coaches gather relevant materials from the universities, including course syllabi, transcripts, and other student information to tailor the coaching to the student. *InsideTrack®* also supports institutions in building their own coaching programs.
- Frequency and Duration of Service: The intensity of InsideTrack© Coaching depends on students' needs and responsiveness to coaches' outreach. Intensity of coaching may also depend on the institution's goals, such as whether InsideTrack© Coaching is targeted to help students have a strong start at college or to improve rates of completion. In the study that meets WWC standards, students generally worked with coaches over two semesters and met with coaches at least five times.
- Intervention Components: The InsideTrack© Coaching intervention has two primary components, as noted in Table 2.

Comparison Group: In the one study that contributes to this intervention report, students in the comparison group had access to regular academic counseling and tutoring services that were already available at their college.

Table 2. Components of InsideTrack® Coaching

Key component	InsideTrack [©] Coaching
Coaching	InsideTrack® Coaching offers multiple types of coaching including prospective student coaching, "strong start" coaching, retention coaching, and career coaching. Coaches provide tailored, technology-enabled support to students. This support includes helping students clarify their goals; identify academic and non-academic obstacles to success; keep track of institutional deadlines; find and access resources; build time management and study skills; and learn to strategize and advocate for themselves. Coaches focus on students' lives outside of school, including personal time commitments, caregiving obligations, and finances, as well as their academic experience in school.
uCoach® Technology Platform	The uCoach® Technology Platform enables <i>InsideTrack® Coaching</i> to deliver proactive, one-on-one coaching through multiple channels; send automated messages at predefined intervals; track student engagement and coach observations; and predict when to reach out to students on particular issues. Students can reach out to coaches through the platform at any time, and vice versa. Automated messages remind students about deadlines, opportunities, and resources, and the platform also includes self-directed resources that students can access for guidance on key topics. The platform can be integrated with other institutional systems (e.g., learning management systems), increasing possibilities for monitoring students' needs and delivering tailored information and resources.

What Does InsideTrack[©] Coaching Cost?

The cost of *InsideTrack® Coaching* varies depending on the objectives, scale, intensity, and duration of the program. The one study summarized in this report (Bettinger & Baker, 2014) reported that in 2004 and 2007 *InsideTrack®* charged about \$500 per student per semester for its most comprehensive program. This included a fixed charge for the cost of customizing its program to a particular university and a variable charge that depended on the number of students coached. A more recent *InsideTrack® Coaching* program launched in 2013 was reported to cost \$390 per student per semester.⁵

The WWC also identified several cost components from the intervention description in the studies reviewed. This preliminary list of costs is not designed to be exhaustive; rather, it is designed to provide educators an overview of the major cost components of implementing *InsideTrack® Coaching*.

- **Personnel Costs:** All *InsideTrack*® coaches have college degrees, and most have advanced degrees. They undergo a rigorous, formal credentialing process that includes an average of over 100 hours of professional development per year. Coaches' interactions with students are recorded, and they regularly receive feedback on these interactions.
- Facilities Costs: InsideTrack® Coaching does not require physical facilities because most services are provided via phone, email, text messaging, and mobile apps.
- **Equipment and Materials Costs:** The uCoach® Technology Platform is one of the primary components of the *InsideTrack® Coaching* intervention. This platform can be directly licensed to institutions, even if *InsideTrack® Coaching* services are not purchased.
- **Costs Paid by Students or Parents:** Students need access to personal technology (e.g., mobile phone, computer) to communicate with their coach. They do not pay user fees for coaching services.
- In-Kind Supports: Colleges provide information to InsideTrack® to help customize coaches' interactions with students. This may include information such as student transcripts, course syllabi, or data on course performance. Colleges may also work to integrate their existing institutional systems (e.g., student information systems and learning management systems) with the uCoach® Technology Platform.
- Sources of Funding: Colleges typically contract with InsideTrack® to provide coaching services to their students.

For More Information:

About InsideTrack[©] Coaching

121 SW Salmon Street, Suite 800, Portland, OR 97204

Web: https://www.insidetrack.com/. Phone: (800) 884-6371

About the cost of the intervention

Bettinger, E. P. & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, *36*(1), 3–19. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1019184

RevUp Montana. (2017). RevUp Montana. Project executive summary: Final report to Montana Board of Regents. Retrieved from https://mus.edu/board/meetings/2017/Sept2017/TwoYear/BoR RevUp FinalReport Sept2017.pdf

Research Summary

The WWC identified 10 studies that investigated the effectiveness of InsideTrack® Coaching (Figure 1):

- 1 study meets WWC group design standards without reservations
- 0 studies meet WWC group design standards with reservations
- 7 studies do not meet WWC group design standards
- 2 studies are ineligible for review

The WWC reviews findings on an intervention's effects on eligible outcome domains from studies that meet WWC group design standards, either with or without reservations. Based on this review, the WWC generates an effectiveness rating, which summarizes how the intervention impacts, or changes, a particular outcome domain. Findings from studies that either do not meet WWC standards or are ineligible for review do not contribute to the effectiveness ratings.

The one study of *InsideTrack® Coaching* that meets WWC group design standards reported findings on (a) credit accumulation and persistence and (b) attainment. This study did not report findings on the following four domains in the Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area: access and enrollment, college attendance, academic achievement, and labor market outcomes. Citations for the 10 studies reviewed for this report are listed in the References section, which begins on page 8.

Figure 1. Effectiveness ratings for InsideTrack® Coaching

- study meets WWC standards without reservations
- 0 studies meet WWC standards with reservations
- 7 studies do not meet WWC standards
- 2 studies are ineligible for review

Contributes to Effectiveness Ratings

Do Not Contribute to Effectiveness Ratings

InsideTrack® Coaching has potentially positive effects on credit accumulation and persistence

The WWC determined that one study that meets WWC group design standards without reservations showed evidence of a positive and statistically significant effect of $InsideTrack^{\bigcirc}$ Coaching on college persistence (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

InsideTrack® Coaching has no discernible effects on attainment

The WWC determined that one study that meets WWC group design standards without reservations showed evidence of an indeterminate effect of *InsideTrack* Coaching on college degree completion (Bettinger & Baker, 2014).

Main Findings

Table 3 shows the findings from one *InsideTrack® Coaching* study that meets WWC evidence standards, and includes WWC calculations of the mean difference, effect size, and improvement index. Note that because only one study of *InsideTrack® Coaching* meets WWC standards, the summary information for the outcome will match the individual study findings for that outcome. Based on findings from that study, the effectiveness rating for the credit accumulation and persistence outcome is *potentially positive effects*, indicating that there is evidence of *InsideTrack® Coaching's* positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence. This finding is based on 3,527 students. The effectiveness rating for attainment outcomes is no discernible effects. This finding is based on 1,346 students.

Table 3. Findings from the study of *InsideTrack® Coaching* by outcome domain

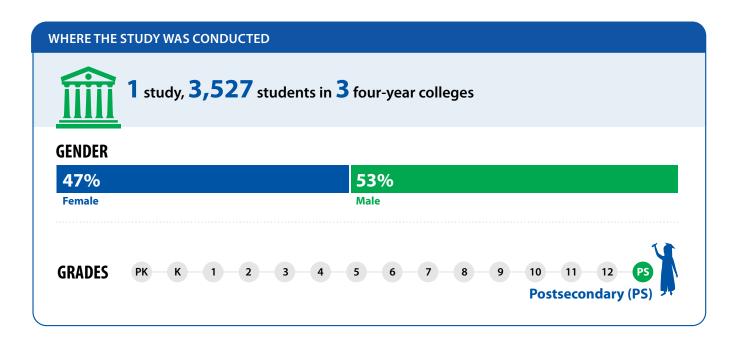
			Mean (standard deviation)		WWC calculations			
Measure (study)	Study sample	Sample size	Intervention group	Number of Students	Mean difference	Effect size	Improvement Index	<i>p</i> -value
College retention (%) (Bettinger & Baker, 2014) ^a	7 lotteries / 12 month follow-up	3,527 students	66.4	61.4	5.0	0.13	+5	<.01
Outcome average for	r credit accumulation	and persistence				0.13	+5	
Completed a degree (%) (Bettinger & Baker, 2014) ^a	3 lotteries / 24 month follow-up	1,346 students	35.2	31.2	4.0	0.11	+4	<.10
Outcome average for	rattainment					0.11	+4	

Table Notes: For mean difference, effect size, and improvement index values reported in the table, a positive number favors the intervention group and a negative number favors the comparison group. The effect size is a standardized measure of the effect of an intervention on outcomes, representing the average change expected for all individuals who are given the intervention (measured in standard deviations of the outcome measure). The WWC-computed average effect size is a simple average rounded to two decimal places; the average improvement index is calculated from the average effect size. The improvement index can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention. The statistical significance of the domain average was determined by the WWC. Some statistics may not sum as expected due to rounding.

In What Context Was InsideTrack® Coaching Studied?

The following section provides information on the setting and participants involved in the one study of *InsideTrack® Coaching* that meets WWC evidence standards. This information can help educators understand the context in which the study of *InsideTrack® Coaching* was conducted so that they can better determine whether the program might be suitable for their setting.

^a For Bettinger & Baker (2014), no corrections for clustering or multiple comparisons and no difference-in-differences adjustments were needed. The intervention group mean was calculated by adding the OLS coefficient to the unadjusted comparison group mean. This study is characterized as having a statistically significant positive effect on credit accumulation and persistence because the estimated effect is positive and statistically significant. The study is characterized as having no discernible effect on attainment because the mean effect reported is not statistically significant. For more information, please refer to the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (version 3.0), page 26.



Details of Each Study that Met WWC Standards

This section presents details for the study of *InsideTrack® Coaching* that meets WWC standards. These details include the full study reference, findings description, findings summary, and description of study characteristics. A summary of findings for each outcome domain examined is presented in Table 4. Table 5 provides a description of the study characteristics; it includes contextual information around the study setting, methods, sample, intervention group, comparison group, outcomes, and implementation details. For additional information, the reader should refer to the original study.

Research details for Bettinger & Baker (2014)

Bettinger, E. P. & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis*, 36(1), 3-19. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1019184

Additional Source:

Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. B. (2011). The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (NBER Working Paper No. 16881). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881

Findings from Bettinger & Baker (2014) show evidence of a potentially positive effect of *InsideTrack® Coaching* on credit accumulation and persistence (Table 4). The improvement index is a measure of the effect of the intervention. For example, the improvement index of +5 means that the percentile rank of the average comparison group student would improve by 5 points on credit accumulation and persistence outcomes if they received *InsideTrack® Coaching*. This finding is based on one outcome and 3,527 students. The finding on attainment shows evidence of no discernible effects. This finding is based on 1,346 students.

Table 4. Summary of findings from Bettinger & Baker (2014)		Meets WWC group design standards without reservations			
		Study findings			
Outcome domain	Sample size	Average effect size	Improvement index	Statistically significant	
Credit accumulation and persistence	3,527 students / 7 lotteries	0.13	+5	Yes	
Attainment	1,346 students / 3 lotteries	0.11	+4	No	

Table 5. Description of study characteristics for Bettinger & Baker (2014)

WWC evidence Meets WWC Group Design Standards Without Reservations. The study is a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with low attrition in seven of the 17 lotteries described. In the other 10 lotteries, students were reassigned to treatment and comparison groups rating after randomization took place, which compromised random assignment. Because baseline equivalence was not established on the analytic sample, findings from these 10 lotteries received a rating of Does Not Meet WWC Group Design Standards. Setting The study was conducted with 17 different cohorts in eight participating universities during the 2003–2004 and 2007–2008 school years. **Methods** Each institution had its own eligibility criteria and provided a list of potential students for InsideTrack® to randomly assign into two groups. *InsideTrack*[©] then performed two types of randomization: (1) For institutions that wanted equally sized groups (7 of 17 lotteries, referred to by the authors as "50/50 lotteries"), InsideTrack® created two randomly assigned groups of approximately equal size and the institution decided which of the two groups would receive the intervention through a coin flip. Following the coin flip, the institution was notified which students were in each group. *InsideTrack*® monitored the randomization to make sure that the two groups were balanced across observable characteristics. In some cases, students were moved between groups to achieve balance; however, this rebalancing occurred prior to the coin flip. (2) For institutions that wanted a smaller control group (10 of 17 lotteries), the institution provided *InsideTrack*[©] with a predetermined size for the control group, and InsideTrack® then randomly assigned two groups to meet those size restrictions. There was some rebalancing in these lotteries as well, but no coin flip followed the rebalancing (because the largest group received treatment). Across the 17 lotteries, 8,049 students were assigned to Inside Track $^{\circ}$ Coaching services and 5,506 students were assigned to the comparison group. **Study sample** Seventeen lotteries were conducted across eight postsecondary institutions in the 2003-2004 and 2007-2008 school years. Only seven of the 50/50 lotteries were determined by the WWC to be effectively randomized and produce findings that meet standards. The study sample for the retention outcome includes seven 50/50 lotteries. At baseline, this sample included 1,768 students in the InsideTrack® Coaching group and 1,768 students in the comparison group. The study sample for the attainment outcome included three 50/50 lotteries. At baseline, this sample included 675 students in the InsideTrack® Coaching group and 675 students in the comparison group. The analytic sample for the retention outcome included seven 50/50 lotteries comprised of 1,763 students in the *InsideTrack* $^{\circ}$ *Coaching* group and 1,764 students in the comparison group. The sample for the degree completion outcome included three lotteries comprised of 673 students in the *InsideTrack® Coaching* group and 673 students in the comparison group. Characteristics of the study sample were not presented separately by lottery. The analytic sample included 47 percent female and 53 percent male students. **Intervention group** Students in the intervention condition were paired with an InsideTrack® coach, who worked to help students prioritize their studies, plan for academic success, and identify and overcome barriers to academic success. Significant time was spent assessing students' lives outside of school in such areas as personal time commitments, primary caregiving responsibilities, and financial obligations. In addition to regular contacts, coaches sometimes had access to course information and student performance in their specific courses. This information was used in an algorithm which directs coaches to specific issues that need to be addressed. Coaches generally worked with students over two semesters. Each coach communicated with his or her students via phone, email, text messages, or social networking sites. Students' engagement with InsideTrack® coaches was not mandatory. About 98 percent of the students in the InsideTrack® Coaching group received at least one brief contact from a coach that typically lasted less than five minutes. About 77 percent of the students in the InsideTrack® Coaching group received at least five contacts of less than five minutes each. InsideTrack® coaches also held longer meetings with students to address topics and identify next steps. **Comparison group** The comparison condition received no individualized coaching through *InsideTrack*[®]. All students had access to regular support services provided through the college. **Outcomes and** The study measured two primary outcomes: college retention and degree completion. College retention was measured using semester measurement enrollment data provided by participating institutions. Retention outcomes were measured at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months after initial enrollment. In this report, we report the 12 month retention outcome, as this is the most distal outcome reported for the seven 50/50 lotteries. Degree completion was defined as the completion of a certificate, an associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree. Degree completion was measured 24 months after initial enrollment, and data were available for three of the 2003-2004 lottery cohorts, all of which were at four-year colleges. **Additional** InsideTrack® provided coaches with a large library of tools and resources. Coaches were trained in using these proprietary methodologies implementation and programs to help students navigate decisions. Coaches received feedback from InsideTrack® staff on the content and tone of their

details

calls, and ongoing professional development was available.

References

Study that meets WWC group design standards without reservations

Bettinger, E. P. & Baker, R. B. (2014). The effects of student coaching: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student advising. *Educational Evaluation & Policy Analysis, 36*(1), 3-19. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1019184

Additional Source:

Bettinger, E. P., & Baker, R. B. (2011). The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring (NBER Working Paper No. 16881). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from http://www.nber.org/papers/w16881

Study that meets WWC group design standards with reservations

None

Studies that do not meet WWC group design standards

- InsideTrack. (2016). Coaching for inquiry conversion & strong start at Penn State World Campus. Portland, OR: Author. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because the measures of effectiveness cannot be attributed solely to the intervention.
- InsideTrack. (2017). Start strong: Coaching for yield and class shaping at University of Alabama at Birmingham. Portland, OR: Author. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because equivalence of the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary and not demonstrated.
- InsideTrack .(2017). Student engagement: Coaching for persistence and completion at Indiana State University. Portland, OR: Author. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because equivalence of the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary and not demonstrated.
- InsideTrack. (2018). Minnesota Office of Higher Education + InsideTrack coaching. Portland, OR: Author. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because equivalence of the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary and not demonstrated.
- InsideTrack. (2018). Old Dominion University + InsideTrack: 2018 case study. Portland, OR: Author. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because equivalence of the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary and not demonstrated.
- Staklis, S. (2018). RevUp: Empowering Montana's workforce. InsideTrack student outcomes study. Portland, OR: RTI International. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because equivalence of the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary and not demonstrated.
- Tripp, A. (2008). Closing the distance: Success coaching for online education goes mainstream. *Distance Learning*, *5*(1), 37-42. The study does not meet WWC group design standards because equivalence of the analytic intervention and comparison groups is necessary and not demonstrated.

Studies that are ineligible for review using the Supporting Postsecondary Success Evidence Review Protocol

- InsideTrack. (2017). Coaching, capacity building, & innovation at Brandman University. Portland, OR: Author. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use an eligible design.
- InsideTrack. (2017). Minding the gap! Coaching to close the achievement gap at Ivy Tech Community College. Portland, OR: Author. The study is ineligible for review because it does not use an eligible design.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). Measuring the value of education. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/careerout-look/2018/data-on-display/education-pays.htm
- ²The descriptive information for this intervention comes from Bettinger & Baker (2014). The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) requests developers review the intervention description sections for accuracy from their perspective. The WWC provided the developer with the intervention description in December 2018 and the WWC incorporated feedback from the developer. Further verification of the accuracy of the descriptive information for this intervention is beyond the scope of this review.
- ³ The literature search reflects documents publicly available by April 2019. Reviews of the studies in this report used the standards from the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (version 3.0) and the Supporting Postsecondary Success review protocol (version 3.0). The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions could change as new research becomes available.
- ⁴ This report was revised following a routine WWC internal audit, which found that one study originally rated as Does Not Meet WWC Group Design Standards should be classified as ineligible for review (InsideTrack, 2017: Brandman University). This did not change the conclusions of the original report.
- ⁵The RevUp Montana study (2017), which received a rating of *Does Not Meet WWC Group Design Standards*, reported the annual cost of *InsideTrack*[©] *Coaching* to be \$781 per student.
- ⁶ Data required to establish baseline equivalence were not available for these 10 lotteries; although baseline data were available for a subset of lotteries, it was unclear which lotteries had all required data points to establish baseline equivalence.

Recommended Citation

What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. (2019, November). Supporting Postsecondary Success intervention report: InsideTrack® Coaching. Retrieved from https://whatworks.ed.gov