

# Single Stop USA’s Community College Initiative

Intervention Brief | Supporting Postsecondary Success Topic Area

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE™  
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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 were 17 percent higher than full-time workers with a high school diploma only. Yet, over two-thirds of students who enroll in community college do not either graduate or transfer within three years.<sup>1</sup> Many programs and practices aim to improve college persistence and completion, including *Single Stop USA’s Community College Initiative*, hereafter referred to as *Single Stop*. *Single Stop* supports community college students with screening and applications for public benefits and other wraparound services that can include housing, food

assistance, tax preparation, child care, financial and legal services, and immigration consultations.<sup>2</sup>

This What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) report, part of the WWC’s Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area, explores the effects of *Single Stop* on persistence in college and academic achievement. The WWC identified three studies of *Single Stop*. Two of these studies meet WWC standards. The evidence presented in this report is from studies of the impact of *Single Stop* on first-time community college students—including Black, Hispanic, and White students—in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

## What Happens When Students Participate in *Single Stop*?<sup>3</sup>

The evidence indicates that implementing *Single Stop*:

- may increase college persistence
- may increase academic achievement

Findings on *Single Stop* from two studies that meet WWC standards are shown in Table 1. The table reports an

effectiveness rating, the improvement index, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings. The improvement index is a measure of the intervention’s effect on an outcome. It can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention.

**Table 1. Summary of findings on *Single Stop* from studies that meet WWC Standards**

Outcome domain	Effectiveness rating	Study findings	Evidence meeting WWC standards (version 4.0)	
		Improvement index (percentile points)	Number of studies	Number of students
Progressing in college	Potentially positive effects	+8	2	10,231
Academic achievement	Potentially positive effects	+3	2	10,213

Note: 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. For example, an improvement index of +8 means that the expected percentile rank of the average comparison group student would increase by 8 points if the student received *Single Stop*. The improvement index values are generated by averaging findings from the outcome analyses that meet WWC standards, as reported by Daugherty et al. (2016) and Zhu et al. (2018). A positive improvement index does not necessarily mean the estimated effect is statistically significant. Progressing in college outcomes reported in these studies include persistence in college for at least one year, persistence in college for at least three years, and college-level credits earned after two semesters. Academic achievement outcomes reported in these studies include the percentage of attempted college credits that were completed among first-time community college students and cumulative grade point average. The effects of *Single Stop* are not known for other outcomes within the Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area, including college enrollment, college attendance, postsecondary degree attainment, credential attainment, employment, and earnings.

## BOX 1. HOW THE WWC REVIEWS AND DESCRIBES EVIDENCE

The WWC evaluates evidence based on the quality and results of reviewed studies. The criteria 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 4.0) and the Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area protocol (version 4.0).

To determine the effectiveness rating, the WWC considers what methods each study used, the direction of the effects, and the number of studies that 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 explains the relationship between effectiveness ratings and the statements used in this report:

Effectiveness rating	Rating interpretation	Description of the evidence
Positive (or negative) effects	The intervention is <i>likely</i> to change an outcome	Strong evidence of a positive effect, with no overriding contrary evidence
Potentially positive (or negative) effects	The intervention <i>may</i> change an outcome	Evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence
No discernible effects	The intervention <i>may result in little to no change</i> in an outcome	No affirmative evidence of effects
Mixed 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

### How is *Single Stop* Implemented?

The following section provides details of how *Single Stop* was implemented. This information can help educators identify the requirements for implementing *Single Stop* and determine whether those implementation requirements would be feasible at their institutions. Information on *Single Stop* presented in this section comes from the studies that meet WWC standards (Daugherty et al., 2016 and Zhu et al., 2018), a separate implementation study of *Single Stop* (Goldrick-Rab, Broton, & Frank, 2014), the developer’s website, and correspondence with the developer.

- **Goal:** *Single Stop* is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping low-income students address nonacademic barriers to college. *Single Stop* helps connect students and their families to public benefits by offering screening and application support. They also connect students and their families to wraparound services, such as tax preparation, child care, and immigration consultation through “one-stop shops” located within community colleges. These supports are designed to increase college persistence and completion.
- **Target population:** *Single Stop* services are open to all students enrolled at the community colleges in which they are located. Since 2009, the program has expanded to 30 colleges across the United States and has served over 250,000 students.

**Comparison group:** In the two studies that contributed to this intervention report, students in the comparison group did not have access to any *Single Stop* services but could access other resources both on campus and off campus.

- **Method of delivery:** Site coordinators meet with students at the local *Single Stop* office on campus. Site coordinators assess students’ needs and connect them to a variety of programs and services. Students may also choose to self-serve through the use of *Single Stop* software.
- **Frequency and duration of service:** The intensity of *Single Stop* supports depends on the needs of each student.
- **Intervention components:** *Single Stop* site coordinators offer benefits screening, wraparound services, and case management. Refer to Table 2 for additional details.

**Table 2. Components of *Single Stop***

Key component	Description
<b>Benefits screening</b>	<p><i>Single Stop</i> uses a web-based benefits screening program called Single Stop Technologies 3.0 that incorporates thousands of pages of regulations and statutes into a single screening tool, provides a case management platform for handling student cases, and offers a comprehensive mapping tool to connect students to resources in their area.</p> <p><i>Single Stop</i> site coordinators or volunteers conduct a preliminary screening of students' needs using the benefits screening software to determine whether they qualify for federal, state, or local benefits. For qualifying students, site coordinators then collect more in-depth information to determine a student's eligibility for the programs flagged in the preliminary screening and provide application assistance. Benefits may include food stamps; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Medicaid; as well as assistance with housing, unemployment, child care, transportation, and utilities.</p>
<b>Wraparound services</b>	<i>Single Stop</i> works with its college partners to identify additional wraparound services that may benefit their student populations, including legal services, financial counseling, and transportation programs. <i>Single Stop</i> also offers free tax preparation services and ensures students claim all credits for which they are eligible, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the American Opportunity Tax Credit.
<b>Case management</b>	<i>Single Stop</i> staff follow up with students through the benefits application process and will advocate with agencies if a student is wrongly denied. Staff also help students access other programs and services on campus.

### What Does *Single Stop* Cost?

This preliminary list of costs is not designed to be exhaustive; rather, it provides educators an overview of the major resources needed to implement *Single Stop*.

The program costs described in Table 3 are based on the information available as of April 2020.

**Table 3. Cost ingredients for *Single Stop***

Cost ingredients	Description	Source of funding
<b>Personnel</b>	<i>Single Stop</i> sites have dedicated staff and site coordinators, paid for by the community college. Staff are expected to have experience and degrees in social work, counseling, student services, or other related fields. The number and responsibilities of the staff depend on the size of the campus and needs of the students. Site coordinators are trained through an eight-week online launch curriculum led by the national office. Site coordinators receive ongoing support through a national learning platform that connects partners engaging in similar activities, webinars, and access to data that summarizes site-specific performance.	Community college; <i>Single Stop's</i> national office
<b>Facilities</b>	<i>Single Stop</i> establishes an office on each college campus that provides a range of services to students. These may be small, private offices or they may be embedded within other support services.	Community college
<b>Equipment and materials</b>	<i>Single Stop</i> uses a software program called Single Stop Technologies 3.0. The cost of a Single Stop Technologies 3.0 software license ranges from \$5,000 to \$45,000 annually depending on the scope of services, the number of schools in a cohort, and whether or not there is a statewide license.	Community college
<b>Direct assistance</b>	<i>Single Stop</i> does not provide any direct financial assistance to students.	N/A
<b>Other</b>	College administrators and site coordinators are supported in planning the model at each site and in setting up the Single Stop Technologies 3.0 software. They also receive technical assistance throughout the implementation process.	<i>Single Stop's</i> national office

#### For More Information:

##### About *Single Stop*

123 William Street, Suite 901, New York, NY 10038

Attn: Sarah Crawford

Email: [scrawford@singlestop.org](mailto:scrawford@singlestop.org) Web: [singlestop.org](http://singlestop.org) Phone: (919) 230-1693

##### About the cost of the intervention

Web: <https://singlestop.org/newpartners>

##### About the studies reviewed

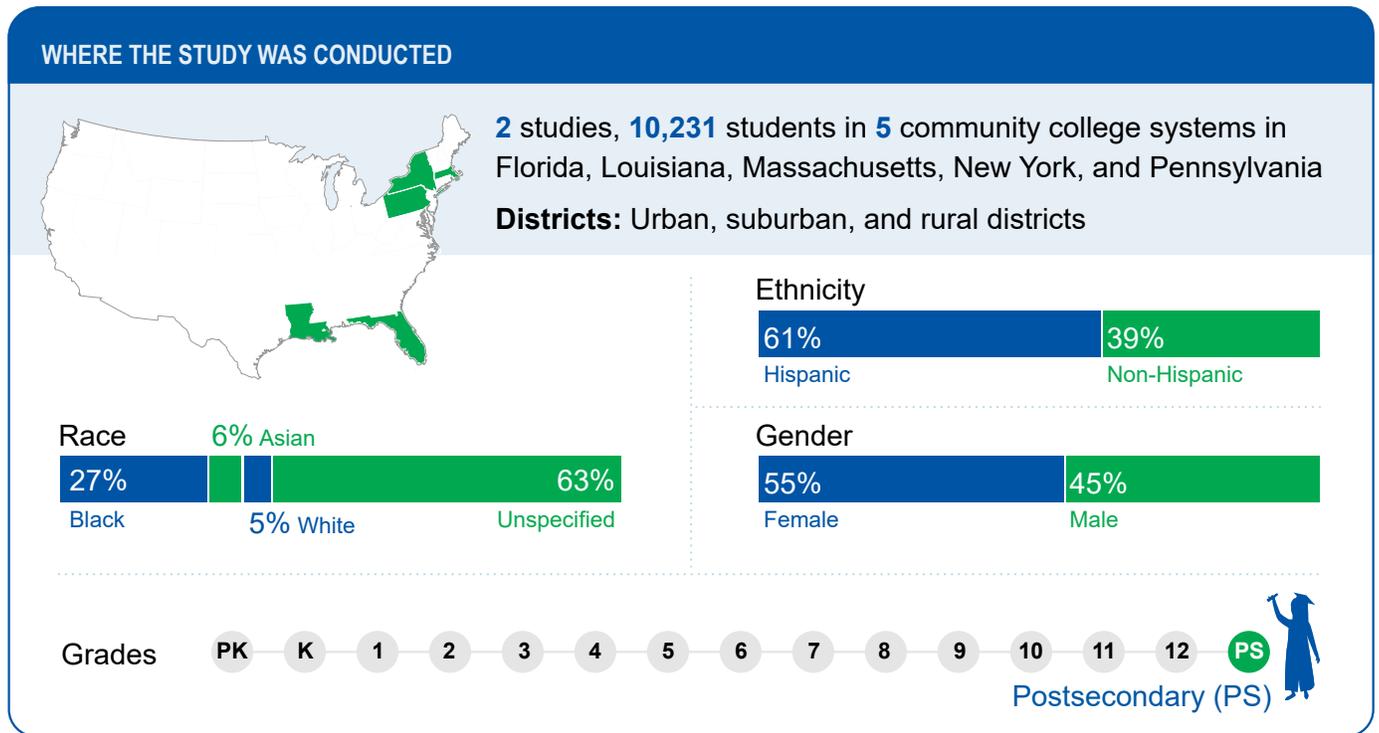
Daugherty, L., Johnston, W.R., & Tsai, T. (2016). *Connecting college students to alternative sources of support: The Single Stop Community College Initiative and postsecondary outcomes*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED570946>

Zhu, J., Harnett, S., & Scuello, M. (2018). *Single Stop final impact and implementation report*. New York: Metis Associates. Retrieved from [https://www.metisassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Metis\\_09-18\\_Single\\_Stop\\_Final\\_Impact\\_and\\_Implementation\\_Report.pdf](https://www.metisassociates.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Metis_09-18_Single_Stop_Final_Impact_and_Implementation_Report.pdf)

## In What Context Was *Single Stop* Studied?

The following section provides information on the setting of the two studies of *Single Stop* that meet WWC standards, and a description of the participants in the research. This information

can help educators understand the context in which the studies of *Single Stop* were conducted, and determine whether the program might be suitable for their setting.



## LEARN MORE



Read more about the *Single Stop* intervention and the studies that are summarized here in the [Intervention Report](#).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018). Measuring the value of education. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2018/data-on-display/education-pays.htm>

<sup>2</sup>The descriptive information for this intervention comes from the developer's website, from the studies that meet WWC standards, and from an implementation study by Goldrick-Rab, Broton, & Frank (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 April 2020 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.

<sup>3</sup>The literature search reflects documents publicly available by February 2020. Reviews of the studies in this report used the standards from the WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook (version 4.0) and the Supporting Postsecondary Success review protocol (version 4.0). The evidence presented in this report is based on available research. Findings and conclusions could change as new research becomes available.