REDEFINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UPWARD BOUND:
AN ANALYSIS OF ITS MEASURING STANDARDS AND A PROPOSITION FOR THE FUTURE

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Abstract:
Through the use of OHIO Upward Bound as a case study, the purpose of this research is to show how Upward Bound impacts low-income and first generation college students enrolled in the program. This data was collected by interviewing five recent alumni of OHIO Upward Bound, who concluded that Upward Bound helped them develop skills typically used to succeed in college. Upward Bound is a federally-funded program that is dependent upon grant-based funding from the Department of Education. The funding is given to Upward Bound programs based on the percent of students who earn a Bachelor’s degree within six years of their high school graduation. The interviews showed the value of participating in Upward Bound beyond learning the skills to earn a Bachelor’s degree. This research is used to highlight the value of participating in Upward Bound and to propose an alternate way of measurement for the program to earn funding from the Department of Education.
Many thanks to the support of my friends and family. I would like to give a special thank you to my adviser, Dr. Barry Tadlock, and my in-home editors and dearest companions, Kent Orr and Kalei Edenfield. You are all so wonderful.
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INTRODUCTION

The War on Poverty was the title given by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964 for a slew of policies and programming designed to combat the monumentally high poverty rates in the United States, a notably wealthy and developed country. President Johnson grew up in poverty himself, and was the immensely passionate figurehead for the War on Poverty. At the time of his presidency, the poverty rate in America was roughly 19%, but the poverty rate was also one of the lesser problems in America at the time, given the mood of the general public. At this time, America was in the thick of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement was at its peak, and Americans were still mourning the assassination of beloved president John F. Kennedy. Perhaps it was the relatively hostile political atmosphere that put the War on Poverty at the bottom of American concerns.

Even though the War on Poverty was launched at a somewhat inconvenient time, President Johnson wanted to tackle the plague of poverty through a variety of angles. He wanted to improve the health, education, job opportunities, and income for impoverished people in America. Many of the programs he implemented are still used today, such as Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, and TRIO. Then and now, Americans debate the effectiveness of such social programs and whether or not their taxes should be distributed to programs like these. Some programs are more vulnerable than others however. For example, TRIO programs, which are designed to service students from disadvantaged backgrounds, are always at risk to lose funding or get cut altogether.

The very first and most prominent TRIO program is Upward Bound. Upward Bound (UB) is a college preparatory program which serves high school students from low income families and potential first generation college students. In relation to UB, “first generation
college student” means neither of a participant's parents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher; the educational level of a student’s grandparents is not factored into the definition. Through monthly college-oriented workshops, tutoring, mentoring, and service learning, students are taught the necessary skills to enroll in and complete college. The program attempts to identify students with the greatest need for its resources by seeking out underrepresented groups in postsecondary education. As a result, most UB programs are situated in inner cities, where diversity rates are normally much higher as compared to suburban or rural areas of the United States. There are several UB programs scattered throughout rural America though. These programs target students living in rural poverty, where they are prone to disadvantages unique to rural America, such as access to high speed internet and nutritious food, both of which can affect a student’s ability to learn.

For this research, I will utilize Ohio University Upward Bound (OHIO UB) as a case study. OHIO UB is a unique UB program because it services students living in rural poverty, specifically in Appalachia. OHIO UB services 17 high schools in Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Meigs, Morgan, Perry, Ross, and Vinton counties. Within the past ten years, OHIO UB has had the resources to service approximately 100 students from the 17 high schools. Most of the students enrolled in the program are both potential first-generation college students and
students from low-income backgrounds. Additionally, most students are considered rurally isolated. Rurally isolated means that a student lives at least 25 miles from an urbanized area (Rural Education in America, 2006).

Though students enrolled in OHIO UB have their unique disadvantages, OHIO UB and other UB programs face similar difficulties from a programmatic standpoint. In order to increase, or even simply retain their funding, at least 15% of the students who were enrolled in the program must graduate college with a four-year degree. Essentially, this is the primary marker to determine the effectiveness of an Upward Bound program. Many UB programs seem to flourish while the students are enrolled in the program and attending workshops, but the moment those students graduate high school, they are no longer in the hands of OHIO UB. Students often lose motivation, lose intellectual stamina, and most often, run out of money.

Ultimately, 15% is an incredibly low college graduation rate for students coming out of a college preparatory program. Through interviews with alumni from OHIO UB, I want to determine if this method of measuring program success is adequate. Additionally, I want to seek out alternate ways of measuring program success because if anything is lingering from the program’s emergence from the War on Poverty, it is a negative stigma; in the eyes of many American citizens and members of Congress, programs like UB are a waste of money. My question is, if only approximately 15% of students enrolled in UB are actually graduating college, is the program effective? Is it serving its purpose--to help underprivileged students graduate college--to the best of its ability? If not, how should the program be changed to reflect its true successes and what would be a better way to measure its effectiveness?
LITERATURE REVIEW

Upward Bound is a college preparatory program that serves low income students, first
generation college students, and racial minorities, with the goal of preparing the students to
graduate from college. This program emerged out of the War on Poverty in 1964, with the intent
to educate disadvantaged citizens in hopes that their newfound higher education would help them
overcome poverty. As time forged on, many programs erected out of the War on Poverty proved
to be unsuccessful in terms of decreasing poverty rates nationwide. Upward Bound, however,
proved to be successful by way of connecting with disadvantaged students and equipping them
with resources to be better prepared for a post-secondary education. Its initial goal of decreasing
poverty rates fell to the wayside, though. Due to its rocky beginnings, the effectiveness of
Upward Bound has been debated for decades. The current goal of Upward Bound, to create
educational access for underprivileged students, is very different from its initial goal, which was
to decrease poverty in America.

The Benefits of Upward Bound

Many scholars debate the benefits and drawbacks of UB. The benefits seem to be
plentiful from an educational standpoint. The staff members at UB are trained in interacting with,
understanding, and assisting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a result, UB serves as
a model for educators, including teachers, guidance counselors, principals, coaches, and even
parents (Zulli, Frierson, & Clayton, 1998; Grimard & Maddaus, 2004; Cowan Pitre & Pitre,
2009). Additionally, according to several reports, college graduation rates have increased for
students enrolled in UB (Cowan, Pitre & Pitre, 2009). The graduation rate is compared to
previous cohorts enrolled in the UB program, and also to the graduation rates of students not
enrolled in UB. Upward Bound acts as an equalizer, bringing students who are enrolled in the
program to a level playing field with those students who are well equipped to succeed in college (McLure & Child, 1998; Dansby & Dansby-Giles, 2011).

Upward Bound also provides students with personal benefits, including confidence-building opportunities and professional development. UB gives students the opportunity to constantly continue to learn, through weekend workshops, afterschool programming, and summer residential phases (Dansby & Dansby-Giles, 2011). UB also connects students with opportunities to build a professional network, via UB staff, instructors, tutors, and guest speakers (Graham, 2011). The program equips students with the general knowledge of how to succeed in college, providing detailed workshops about majors, financial aid, test preparation, and study skills (Graham, 2011). Students enrolled in UB often learn the importance of attending meetings regularly and how to be dependable, which trickles into their college habits (Zulli et al., 1998). Lastly, UB equips students with the resources to connect with help and support, if needed (McLure & Child, 1998; Zulli et al., 1998; Graham, 2011).

**Critiques of Upward Bound**

It takes a critical eye to analyze the drawbacks or the ineffectiveness of Upward Bound, especially when the benefits are apparent. One group of scholars does not deny its positive impact, but does deny that UB increases college graduation rates (Walpole, Simmerman, Mack, Mills, Scales & Albano, 2008). On a similar note, scholars Richard D. Fording and William D. Berry claim that UB fails to meet its initial goal, which was to help decrease poverty, thus failing as a successful program (2007). Scholars do not all agree that UB is entirely ineffective, some claim that programs vary across the nation due to the environment that surrounds them. For example, an Upward Bound program in the middle of an urban area might suffer due to
increased frequency of crime and drug usage influencing their students (Bernick & Thompson, 2008).

The primary criticism of Upward Bound finds fault with the program’s narrow focus on college enrollment and completion. The claim is that UB does not have enough specific and thorough job training (O’Brien, Bikos, Epstein, Flores, Dukstein & Kamatuka, 2000). Additional critics draw attention to the program missing a critical period of learning. UB targets students who are too far into their education to change their educational track in order to prepare for college, unless that student was already preparing for college before they joined UB (Jackson, 2014). Ultimately, the consensus is that Upward Bound emerges too late in a student’s education to be legitimately helpful. Even if it is seemingly helpful, the program does not fulfill its requirements to increase college graduation rates and decrease poverty rates by a federal standard.

**The Need for Upward Bound**

Despite the criticism, many scholars still see a need for Upward Bound or a program like UB. Scholars almost universally agree that the challenges first generation college students, low-income students, and minority students endure are problematic, and some form of assistance is required to overcome these obstacles. According to Krista M. Soria and Michael J. Stebleton, disadvantaged high school students crave stability and consistency. They claim that there is a need for a program that focuses on these students’ needs directly, so they do not feel as though their issues are muddled within the slew of other issues plaguing high school students (Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Other authors draw on similar themes, saying that academic achievement is lost in the extended periods of time students are not studying or thinking about school. Therefore there is an immense need for a transition program, heavily focused on a student’s summer
vacation (Smith, 2004; Smith, 2006). Transition programs that take place during summer
vacation allow students to keep their academic skills sharp, leaving little room for a loss of
knowledge gained in the prior year. These programs are also seen as effective if they take place
on the weekend or after school (Smith, 2004; Smith, 2006).

Perhaps the greatest issue disadvantaged students face is that they lack the knowledge
and skills to find resources and ask for them. First generation college students often struggle with
discovering the academic, professional, and personal resources a university offers because they
often do not have many people with whom they feel comfortable asking those types of questions
(Lightweis, 2014). Lightweis argues that there is a need for programs like UB, which directly
focus on a select group of disadvantaged students and educates them on how to effectively
communicate with university faculty, staff, and educators, in order to get the knowledge, support,
and resources they need to succeed in their post-secondary educational pursuits (2014).

Analyzing the Effectiveness of Upward Bound

Those scholars who express a need for transitional programs may not be aware that
Upward Bound exists. Those who do recognize its existence, positively or negatively, largely
focus on individual aspects of the program that are either successful or unsuccessful. Few
scholars have thoroughly analyzed individual aspects of the program and analyzed them in sum
to determine its overall drawbacks and benefits. Critiques fail to recognize that the goals of UB
have evolved since its emergence in 1964. They also fail to recognize that UB students are
disadvantaged and in many cases, other students get a head start on preparing for their collegiate
pursuits. As a result, if a disadvantaged student and a student from a middle class, educated
family both earn a college degree, the disadvantaged student made significant gains along the
way because they did not get a head start. Since both students completed the end goal of earning
a degree, metaphorically finishing the race at the same time, it may not seem as though UB is
giving its students any large advantage.

On the flip side, scholars who analyze Upward Bound in a more positive light also
largely focus on the beneficial individual aspects, such as networking, supplying students with
academic resources, and mentoring. Looking at the program from this angle also fails to analyze
effectiveness as a whole, even if the program meets the benchmarks that the U.S. government
requires of the program in order to secure funding. This leaves room for the question, how
effective is Upward Bound as a federally funded college preparatory program?

The effectiveness of Upward Bound can be defined in two parts. The first part is how the
program meets its federal requirements, which requires students to graduate from college with at
least a Bachelor’s degree. The goal of getting students to graduate from college is to minimize
the American population that is seen as disadvantaged, by increasing the amount of college-
educated people and decreasing poverty rates. The second part of analyzing effectiveness
requires students, educators, and policymakers to look at the impact of UB separate from college
graduation. How are students positively impacted by Upward Bound, even if they did not earn a
college degree, and will their knowledge obtained through the program equip UB alumni with
the skills to succeed in a different capacity and also increase their quality of life? UB is not a
perfect program and may or may not accomplish the goals it was designed to accomplish, but it
generally has a positive impact on its students, which says something positive about the program,
even if it lacks a positive impact in other places.

METHODS

The interview research conducted was comprised of five interviews, in which the
interviewees varied in race, gender, and age. In order to have been selected, the interviewees
must have completed the OHIO Upward Bound program and they must have lived in or near
Athens, so I could interview them in a timely manner. Additionally, I attempted to strategically select students who would likely have varied perspectives of their Upward Bound experience. All interviews were conducted by myself in Athens, Ohio during the first two weeks of September 2016. Three of the five interviews were conducted at Alden Library, and the other two were conducted at the interviewee's place of employment. The goal of the interviews was to explore each alumnus experience, determine skills acquired from UB by each alumnus, and analyze how UB influenced each person’s current position in their lives.

Two of the five interviewees were not enrolled in college for the fall semester, and three were students at Ohio University, but two of those three transferred to Ohio University. My expectation was that those who were not enrolled in college would have a more negative perception of Upward Bound because they were defying the mission of Upward Bound, which is completing a four year degree. I expected mixed opinions from those who transferred because they might feel as though Upward Bound adequately prepared them to transfer, or that UB failed to guide them to the appropriate college fit from the beginning of their college career. Lastly, I expected the student who started their collegiate career at OHIO to have a relatively positive outlook on Upward Bound, especially since the student was also currently employed by UB.

Of the five students interviewed, three were male and two were female. One of the males was African American, while all other participants identified as white. One student was from the 2012 UB cohort, meaning that student graduated from high school and Upward Bound in the spring of 2012. Another student was from the 2013 cohort, two were from the 2014 cohort, and one was from the 2016 cohort. The two participants who are not currently enrolled in college have completed approximately 30 credit hours of college credit each, which means all five participants have some college experience. The goal of the participant selection was to offer a
diverse range of perspectives in the interviews, while simultaneously choosing participants who
would have enough shared experiences that I could find patterns among each interview.

Each interview began with a brief introduction of my research and my goals for the
research; then each participant was informed that their interviews would remain confidential. All
participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. The names Denny Sams, Will
Dutch, Katie Smith, Hannah Heyworth, and Ryan Kopp are all pseudonyms used to discuss the
findings of these interviews. Lastly, I asked permission to record the interviews, which all five
participants allowed me to do. During the interview, I used a set list of questions to ensure that
each interview had comparable data and that they were relatively consistent. The interview
questions were centered on asking alumni about the pros and cons of their experience, about the
skills and tools acquired from UB, and about the impact UB has had on their lives. Each
interview varied in length, but the average length was approximately 25 minutes.

After the interviews were conducted, I transcribed them and then analyzed their content
to discover patterns. In order to do so, I coded each interview, using the codes
“friendships/relationships,” “help/guidance,” “transferable skills,” and “college
graduation/degree.” The purpose of these particular codes are to find patterns which help
determine how UB impacts students beyond teaching them how to graduate from college.
Additionally, I want to determine the primary skills that each student learned in UB and how
those skills impact their current life positions. I will explain these themes further in future
chapters.

Interviewing UB alumni offers many advantages to collecting data about UB, but there
are a few drawbacks. This technique allowed me to get a deeper explanation of an individual’s
answers and allowed for the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. Additionally, in-person
interviews allowed me to build a relationship with the participants, which gave me a chance to develop a deeper understanding of and connection to my research and their responses. In this particular case, a primary disadvantage of collecting my research via interviews is that I heavily relied on the participant’s speculation and memory. For example, I asked them to imagine where they would be if there were not an Upward Bound, and to try to recollect their feelings about college before they started the program. I do not have any data that demonstrates the participant’s knowledge about college before entering the program.

Additionally, it is important to note that I interviewed only five subjects, which is not enough interview data to develop generalizable findings. Though the interviews were helpful in developing a deeper understanding of the benefits of the program, I could not find any patterns among the participants due to there being too few subjects. Because all five subjects were from OHIO Upward Bound and all five graduated between the years 2012 and 2016, this is not a representative sample of all students who have participated in Upward Bound, neither nationwide, nor through OHIO UB. Student perspectives could vary depending on the when and where they participated in Upward Bound. Lastly, the interview findings could be biased given the interview process. All participants knew me prior to the interview which could have an impact on their answers. This interview data is still valuable, but it is important to consider the sample size and the potential bias while reading the findings.
GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS AND UPWARD BOUND SUCCESS

Upward Bound is a federally funded college access program, which is funded by grants through the U.S. Department of Education. Like many federally- and grant-funded programs, each individual Upward Bound program must jump through an assortment of hoops to secure funding. These specific “hoops” or requirements to apply for and earn a grant are detailed in the Code of Federal Regulations under Part 645 of Chapter VI of Subtitle B of Title 34. The grant cycle lasts five years, which means program security only lasts five years. If a program director fails to meet certain requirements in the grant application, their correlating UB program will cease to exist.

Currently, there are 964 active Upward Bound programs throughout the United States and its territories (COE, 2017). Every five years, each of these programs must reapply for a grant in order to continue their program at their affiliated university. In 2015, the average award granted was $324,001 which serviced approximately 75 participants each year for five years. This makes the average cost per participant $4,293 per student (Funding Status, 2016). Since the program services high school students in all grades, as students graduate from high school and thus UB, the program must fill those participant spots to maintain consistent program participant numbers. As a result, UB programs have a recruiting process each year to maintain the number of students that they are supposed to service, which is determined by what the program specified in the grant.

In the case of OHIO Upward Bound, the program was funded to serve 87 students. Due to the large amount of qualified applicants in the fall of 2012, OHIO UB admitted three students more than they were funded to serve, making the total enrollment in 2012-2013 90 participants.
Essentially, this means that the program funds were distributed among more students than the federal government intended. Fortunately, UB programs are free to seek out additional funding. In the case of OHIO UB, several colleges within the university donated funds to support specific programming for a small portion of students. For example, in the summer of 2016, the Russ College of Engineering sponsored two UB students to participate in the Step-Up program, which is a program in which students can take engineering classes during the summer before their freshman year begins in the fall. Additionally, the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism sponsored three students to participate in the High School Journalism workshop, which served as a career exploration workshop in which students could earn college credit. In the past, the Honors Tutorial College has given money to UB, which was intended to be used for students to participate in the summer Honors Academy. Other departments at the university have been financially generous to the Upward Bound program, such as Transportation Services, Dining Services, and Housing and Residence Life have all been flexible with their prices and scheduling. If outside funds are being used on a portion of the students, more of the grant funds can be allocated to standard UB participants.

As previously mentioned, the grant application process is competitive. In 2015, there was $263,412,436 in funds allocated to Upward Bound (Funding Status, 2016). The amount of money given in a grant is based on program success, which is measured by a point system. Existing UB programs begin with a specific number of points, giving them the competitive edge against startup UB programs that are applying for a grant for the first time. From that point, points are given based on how each program meets the guidelines outlined by the U.S. Department of Education. These guidelines are used to measure program success.
According to the U.S. Department of Education, the success of the UB program is “measured by the percentage of low-income, first generation college students who successfully pursue and complete postsecondary education opportunities” (Frequently Asked Questions, 2011). This statement would imply that each individual program has the freedom to teach their participants what they deem necessary in order to complete this goal. In reality, UB has strict guidelines they must follow in order to receive funding. Program success is not only measured by the percentage of students who graduate with a bachelor's degree, but it is also measured on a program’s ability to follow the guidelines given to them by the federal government. Each UB has some flexibility in their program structure, but the federal guidelines must be prioritized in order for the program to continue to receive grants.

When applying for an award, a UB program must ensure that at least two-thirds of program participants are low-income individuals and potential first generation college students.

The U.S Department of Education details what income levels will qualify as low-income depending on the number of people living in a household. A family’s adjusted gross income is used to determine if a family is low-income. For example, for a family of two, if a student’s parent/guardian adjusted gross income falls at or below $24,030, they qualify as low-income for federal TRIO programs (Federal TRIO Programs Current-Year Low-Income Levels, 2017). A student qualifies as a potential first generation college student if neither of their parents or guardians have earned higher than an associate’s degree. Two-thirds of UB participants must meet both of these requirements. The remaining students must be either a potential first generation college student, a low income student, or a student with a high risk of academic failure. This leaves a small degree of flexibility in the recruitment process for each program.
In order to be selected to receive a grant, the Secretary analyzes the income levels, the educational attainment rates, the high school dropout rates, the college-going rates, and the student/guidance counselor ratio in the region that the program will serve. As a result, UB programs applying for grants must also highlight these factors, and if applicable, how UB has positively impacted those factors for each participant. Programs that have proved they are successfully impacting their participants are more likely to receive funding, and depending on how successful they are, will receive more funding per student or funding to serve more students.

In 2013 through 2014, OHIO Upward Bound was funded to serve 87 students, which exceeds the national average. OHIO UB actually served 90 students that year. Eighty-eight percent of those students were both low-income and first generation college students. Eighty-nine percent of those students had a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. All of the students who took a standardized test in 2013-2014 passed the test with at least a proficient level in reading and math. Ninety-one percent of graduation-eligible participants graduated from high school, which exceeded the goal of 85%. Seventy-eight of the students who graduated that year enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Perhaps most importantly, 29% of OHIO UB participants graduated from a post-secondary institution in 2013-2014 (OHIO Upward Bound Educational Attainment, 2017).

OHIO UB services 17 high schools in nine counties in southeastern Ohio. Each county falls in the Appalachian region of the United States. Graduation and educational attainment rates in these counties are generally lower than the rates in the rest of the state of Ohio and even the rest of the United States. Given these statistics (see Figure 1), the counties OHIO UB serves are in need of help in order to boost high school graduation rates and educational attainment rates, specifically for bachelor’s degrees. In the grant application process, OHIO UB showed that it
helped boost both rates, with a 29% educational attainment rate for a four year degree, as compared to the average among the counties OHIO UB serves at 14.64%. Additionally, nearly 91% of OHIO UB students graduated from high school in 2014, which exceeds the national, state, and local averages at 86%, 89%, and 85% respectively (Ryan & Siebens, 2015).

These numbers circle back to this notion of success. Federal guidelines want UB programs to equip students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the tools to graduate with a four year degree. Each program’s level of success is measured on how their students’ educational attainment rates compare to the educational attainment rates in the regions from which the students come. In the case of the nine counties in southeastern Ohio that OHIO UB serves, the educational attainment rate for a bachelor’s degree is just short of 15%. Given that UB students are already at a disadvantage of being low income and first generation college students, the benchmark for most UB programs is that their students meet their region’s educational attainment rate. For example, in the grant proposal in 2013, the OHIO UB program objective for postsecondary completion was 15%, which equates to the actual educational attainment rate in the region. From a program standpoint, the goal is to put program participants on an equal level, to give students

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<table>
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</table>

Figure 1: Educational Attainment Rates for Bachelor’s Degrees in OHIO UB Counties (2009-2013)

Figure explains educational attainment rates in reference to OHIO UB student population (Education-High School and College Completion Rates, 2009 & Bachelor’s degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years, 2015).
an edge to overcome their disadvantages, at least in reference to their home regions. Though the postsecondary completion rate often mirrors the rate within the region each UB program serves, a more successful program often exceeds its benchmark.

The programs that fulfill and exceed federal guidelines are the UB programs that will most likely stay afloat. If a program fails to fulfill or even exceed guidelines, its existence is in jeopardy. When applying for grants, existing programs are given an edge over newly created or revived programs. As a result, if a program loses its grant, it is highly unlikely it will be given another grant in the future. It is vital to each individual Upward Bound that they work in every way possible to meet federal expectations.

FOSTERING SUCCESS

Most Upward Bound programs have two phases: the academic year and the summer residential phase. Each of these components plays an important role in not only maintaining student retention, but also preparing the participants for college. Across the United States, each UB executes these two phases unique to their own circumstances. I will use OHIO Upward Bound as an example.

OHIO Upward Bound has historically had nine academic workshops throughout the academic school year. There has typically been one workshop on one Saturday each month spanning from September to May. In the 2015-2016 school year, OHIO UB covered topics such as time management, organization skills, financial aid, ACT preparation, stress relief, volunteerism, cultural diversity, and the overall college experience. Additionally, two of the workshops were college tours for student participants to determine which colleges and universities they were interested in applying for, and which colleges and universities best suited their academic and personal needs and interests.
The second phase of OHIO UB usually starts at the end of June, directly following the academic year. All current UB students interested in this phase can apply for the Summer Residential phase. The Summer Residential phase is the component in which OHIO UB students move into a residence hall on the Ohio University campus for five weeks. During this period, they take classes created by the UB staff, which are designed to develop the students’ mathematics, English, chemistry, and critical thinking skills while mimicking life as a college student. The students who earn the highest grades in their classes earn a seat on the out-of-state college tour, which takes place during the week after the summer phase ends. The goal of the Summer Residential phase is to help students become acquainted with life as a college student, while simultaneously assisting them with honing their academic and interpersonal skills.

Each of these phases is designed to give UB students a holistic guide to applying for and succeeding in college. Each phase uses a selection of strategies to accomplish this goal. The academic phase attempts to cover a variety of topics at strategic points of the year. For example, the Financial Aid workshop was scheduled for early November because the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opened in October. The hope is that OHIO UB could invite FAFSA experts and college admissions counselors to that workshop to confidently guide students through the often tedious and daunting process. By strategically scheduling workshops, OHIO UB guides students through the college application and college preparation process as they progress through high school. This ensures that students stay on schedule to graduate on time and submit all college materials on time. The Summer Residential phase takes an immersive hands-on approach, in which students can experience first-hand what it is like to be a college student. The purpose of this phase is to allow students to determine if college is the best fit for them, by participating in a college simulation. Both strategies help students determine if they
want to attend college, how to attend college, and how to adequately prepare for college while in
high school.

Fostering success through these two phases is vital in the overall measuring of program
success. Because program success is measured by the number of students who graduate college
with a Bachelor's degree, it is important that each workshop focuses on the logistics of applying
for and being successful as a university student. Both phases have proven to be immensely
valuable and each play an essential role in developing participants’ knowledge in regards to
college success.
Chapter 2: Who is Impacted By Upward Bound and How?

For better or for worse, Upward Bound touches the lives of new students every year. In the 2016 recruitment year, OHIO UB sorted through over 70 applications to choose 30 students who were best suited for the program. The staff must take a strategic approach in selecting new students for the program, which means they must strike a balance between selecting those students with a high need for the assistance from UB and selecting students who are likely to graduate from college to help the program maintain funding. With that being said, all students who participate in the program are either a low income student, a potential first generation college student, or both. Upward Bound still plays a role in helping students who were likely to graduate college independent of the program, by showing them ways to reduce stress, apply for scholarships, and network effectively.

As previously mentioned, there are two types of students who are typically recruited for OHIO UB: those who will likely go to college without the help from the program and those who are not likely. In order to gain a broad perspective of opinions about the impact of OHIO UB, I asked alumni who fell into both of these categories about how UB has affected their lives. To my surprise, the results were not overwhelmingly positive. Of the five students, three of them were able to pick out specific personal benefits of participating in the program, but also expressed a level of indifference about having participated in the program. Overall, students claimed that UB helped them develop lifelong friendships, helped them overcome anxiety and depression, helped them establish study and time management skills, helped them visualize the college experience, helped them connect with resources beyond UB, and helped them expand their worldviews.
Every student who was interviewed claimed that they met lifelong friends by participating in Upward Bound. Each of these students claimed that these friendships were likely as a result of participating in the summer phase. During the summer phase, nearly 50 students (the numbers vary every year) live in a residence hall on the OHIO campus. Each student has a roommate and those roommates are paired so that two people sharing the same room do not attend the same school. All of the students in the program not only live in close quarters, but also eat three meals a day together, participate in extracurricular activities together, and take classes together. Upward Bound students who participate in the summer phase live in close quarters and share personal experiences that are affiliated with spending an extended amount of time together. During each interview, each student referred to their UB friends as “family” at least once.

One student, Denny Sams, said, “one of my sisters--she is like my best friend--we don’t get to talk a lot because we are both so busy, but I was just in her wedding.” Sams was referring to a student he met while participating in UB. He did not hesitate in referring to his friend as his sister. He graduated from UB five years ago and is still close enough to one of his UB friends to be in her wedding. He felt a familial bond with her, all developed at UB. Sams later revealed that he was comfortable sharing personal experiences of struggle and his insecurities with her, which is likely how the bond developed. While at the summer phase of UB, Sams felt unprepared to embrace the element of independence in the program without support, and quickly forged strong relationships with his fellow students. His experience is not unique; many UB alumni have gone on to marry the significant others they met in the program, to room with their UB while in college, and to stay connected as their friends progressed through milestones in their lives.
Two of the five students who were interviewed were dating students they met in the program. One of those couples was engaged to be married. Both of the interviewed students expressed an immense sense of gratitude towards UB, claiming that they likely would not have met their significant others otherwise, considering the two referenced couples did not attend the same high schools. One student, Will Dutch, stated, “I owe it to Upward Bound for introducing me to the love of my life.” In this particular case, the two students were not dating while they were in the program; in fact, the two students did not even identify as friends. They connected after they both graduated from UB, but still used their connection with the program to establish common ground.

One student claimed that Upward Bound introduced him to mentors, some of which still influence his life today. The mentor he cited as having the greatest impact on his life was the former director of OHIO UB, who encouraged him to step outside his comfort zone. This student suffered from extreme anxiety and as a result, feared speaking in front of people. He claimed that the director consistently encouraged him in a way that he had never experienced before. By the end of his journey with UB, the student gave a speech to all of the UB students and claimed to have overcame his fear. He said that he still struggles with anxiety, but when he is feeling incapable of action, he thinks about his experience with that UB director, which encourages him to overcome his fear.

Through romantic relationships, friendships, and mentors, Upward Bound has helped facilitate worthwhile relationships for students. Every interviewed student claimed that they met at least one person through the program who has changed their life for the better and who they probably would not have met without the program. Each student cited that these relationships have given them some form of emotional and academic support, which is one of the many
unexpected ways in which Upward Bound has helped students through their academic journeys, and hopefully through their paths to college graduation.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

OHIO Upward Bound alumni claimed that UB helped them overcome mental and emotional struggles. Several students discussed their struggles with anxiety and depression while they were in the program. They mentioned that the UB staff and their friends played a major role in helping them through these situations. Many also described a phenomenon in which they felt very comfortable expressing their feelings to people in the program who were not their personal friends, because UB tended to promote ideas of acceptance, open-mindedness, and support. The program built a very comfortable environment in which students were open and willing to share their current, past, and expected struggles.

Denny Sams explained that he struggled with public speaking, which was a problem rooted in his social anxiety. The first UB summer he participated in, he gave a speech in front of all of the students, which was something he personally requested so he could practice in an environment in which he felt comfortable. He spoke about three sentences of his speech before he began to have an anxiety attack and he left the room. Sams claimed that he received an overwhelming amount of support from his peers, which helped rebuild his confidence. The next year, he was able to give a speech in front of his UB peers. Though it was still a struggle, he was able to overcome his fear due to the continued support of the students and staff, he claimed. Sams stated in the end, “I think my anxiety would have been a lot worse if I didn’t go to UB, especially in a social aspect.”

Another student, Katie Smith, claimed that she struggled with depression. She stated that the structure of the UB summer was difficult because there was little room for alone time, but
this also forced her to interact with her peers. She said she struggled with her self-image, her sense of self-worth, and her stress levels. Similar to Sams, Smith said that she felt an outpouring of support for her from her peers. They made her feel confident, loved, and wanted as she progressed through the program. She claimed that her support system at UB was ultimately what made her feel happy and healthy again. By the end of her second summer with the program, Smith won the Blossom Award, which was the award given to a student who displayed “the courage to significantly improve emotionally by positively adapting to a new environment, accepting change over the course of the summer program, and blossoming into a model student.”

Both Katie Smith and Denny Sams are still attending college, and both claim that their experience with UB very likely impacted their happiness, comfort, and success while attending college. Smith and Sams both have moments in which they struggle, but they both stated that they feel like they can rely on their UB family if they need support. These two students were not the only students involved with the program who struggled with anxiety and depression, so my hope is that the others felt the same support and acceptance as these students. Emotional stability and health are vital to one’s ability to succeed academically, and students who have participated in UB seem to succeed in better academic standing with the help of better mental health.

**ACADEMIC SKILLS**

Every student interviewed claimed to have learned or enhanced some type of academic skill by participating in OHIO Upward Bound. Most students claimed to have developed study skills, time management skills, and core subject skills. Students claimed that they were able to hone these skills during both the academic phase and the summer phase of the program. In the academic phase, there were several workshops centered on enhancing study and time management skills. Additionally, there were tutoring sessions at every workshop, where students
could participate in one-on-one tutoring in any subject they chose. During the summer phase, students participated in classes which were designed to enhance each student’s skills in their core subjects at school. These subjects included calculus, geometry, algebra, English, chemistry, Spanish, French, career development, and civics. Before the summer phase began, each student took a placement test to see which math and English classes best suited their abilities.

The summer classes are designed to not only prepare students for their upcoming classes at school by giving them a glimpse of what to expect in the following year, but also tie up the loose ends of the students’ classes from the previous year. Students can take advantage of their summer to polish and refine skills they learned in the previous year to optimize their performance in their respective classes the following year. It is not uncommon for a student to test in an upper level class they have never taken before though. The program is designed to help these students by introducing them to basic concepts in the subject, so by the time they take that class in high school, they have an upper hand and they are able to develop a deeper understanding of the subject.

One student, Hannah Heyworth, had only taken an algebra, geometry and pre-calculus at her high school. When she took the math placement test for the UB summer phase, she tested into calculus. She asked the UB staff if she could switch out of the class because she did not feel adequately prepared to begin calculus, even though it was the class she would begin in the fall of the upcoming school year. The UB staff urged her to stay in the calculus class and embrace her uncertainty about the subject, which she obliged. At the end of the summer, she had won the award for being the most improved calculus student. She also claimed that she had the upper hand in her high school class following the summer. She said that she remained at the top of her class for the remainder of the year because she already had a firm grasp on many concepts in
calculus. She does not think that she would have earned as high of a grade without the UB calculus class, and by the end of the school year, she was the only person in her high school class to pass the Advanced Placement exam, which earned her college credit. UB has helped many students, not just Heyworth, hone skills in their core subjects at school.

OHIO UB also caters to students during the school year by offering students tutoring in their subjects at school. UB pairs students with college students who are majoring in the subject in which the student needs help. UB students bring their homework to the workshop and the college students coach the high school students through their homework, helping explain key concepts so students can apply their knowledge to future homework assignments. Unfortunately, tutoring is only offered once a month at each academic workshop, but it still provides students with help throughout the academic year. Ultimately, the goal of tutoring is to help students maintain or raise their GPAs, and prepare them for the rigor of college-level coursework. OHIO UB offers guidance at workshops to students who need help in other skill sets too.

Katie Smith, a recent OHIO UB graduate, claimed that without the regimented college planning schedule UB enforced, she probably would not have gathered her college application materials in time to be eligible for scholarships. Smith said, “At each workshop, the UB staff checked in with me to see where I was at in my FAFSA, college applications, and letters of recommendation. I was not really sure if I would have been on track otherwise.” At each OHIO UB workshop, especially in the Fall when students should be in the thick of the college application process, each workshop has some element of connecting with the seniors about their progress. Additionally, each student is held responsible to complete their tasks before each workshop. UB does not do the students’ work for them, instead it encourages students to stay on
track and emphasizes that the program is the most useful if students fulfill their end of the bargain.

Every student mentioned that they learned some type of academic skill by participating in the program. Those skills varied from student to student based on need, but every student said that they felt better prepared for the academic rigors of college by participating in Upward Bound. All but one of the students felt that they could succeed in college without the help of UB though. Of course, these students cannot truly imagine an alternate reality without UB, but they speculated nonetheless.

**COLLEGE EXPERIENCE & BEYOND**

When OHIO UB alumni begin to talk about the fun of participating in the program, they usually mention the excitement of being immersed in the college experience. Students live in residence halls, eat in dining halls, take classes with OHIO professors, and are free to roam about campus during their free time. When OHIO UB alumni mention the greatest takeaways by having participated in the program, they often mention the support system they developed and the resources beyond UB to which they were connected. UB serves as an extensive crash course of what it is like to be an actual university student and prepares students for their future by giving them this glimpse.

To most of the OHIO UB participants, living on a college campus is a completely foreign concept because most participants are potential first generation college students. Their understanding of college comes from pop culture, educators, and friends, but most UB students do not have the luxury of learning about college from their immediate family. Katie Smith, a freshman at Ohio University and UB alumna, said, “When I moved into Johnson Hall my first summer, my mom was just as surprised and excited as I was because it was all new to her too.”
Smith discussed how living in the residence halls before actually attending college helped her prepare for the freedom she had when she began the semester, the homesickness from living away from home, and the struggle of having a roommate. She already understood the intricacies of balancing her free time because she had overcome those hurdles while participating in UB. She already knew how to remedy her homesickness because she experienced it over the summer. Lastly, she already experienced a roommate relationship and its fragility. Unlike many incoming 1st year students, Smith was already aware of potential problems she may have to overcome because of her experience with UB.

Smith also mentioned how OHIO UB opened her eyes to her personal diet, hygiene, and overall health. By eating in the dining hall with UB, Smith said that she learned how to better balance her diet. She had gained several pounds after her first UB summer, and for following summers she learned that she should better balance her meals and eat more healthy foods. Smith also recognized that living in close quarters with a residence hall full of people can get messy, so she learned early on that the optimal time to shower was before 9 AM because less people were awake and the bathrooms were freshly cleaned. Lastly, Smith recognized that specifically on OHIO’s campus, she must be relatively fit to make it to her classes on time without feeling exhausted or winded by the time she made it to class. Because of her experience with UB, Smith learned how to balance her diet, prioritize her personal hygiene, and incorporate exercise into her schedule.

Like Smith, another OHIO UB alumnus, Ryan Kopp, stated that UB, “helped him understand the rigors and stress of a college schedule.” Kopp said that participating in the coursework in UB was unlike any class he took at his high school. The classes were at a quicker pass, the students met less frequently with the professors, and there was more homework. Kopp
said he never fully recognized how much time in his schedule he would have to devote to
completing homework and UB helped open his eyes to that. He also mentioned that he would not
know how to reach out to a professor if it were not for UB. Kopp said, “Upward Bound was a
place where you can make mistakes and not be penalized. Everything was an opportunity to
learn.” Kopp and several other students mentioned that they felt as though there was little margin
for error once they actually enrolled in college and they were thankful for the trial and error
atmosphere of Upward Bound.

Throughout the rigor of the coursework and the acclimation to the newfound
independence, many UB alumni looked to a system of support for guidance. Every student who
was interviewed stated that they have built a network of support through OHIO UB in some way.
Sams mentioned that he still connects with the UB staff and seeks out their counsel when
needed. Students Dutch, Heyworth, and Kopp mentioned that they sought out support from their
fellow UB alumni because they knew they likely had the same struggles as they persisted
through college. As previously mentioned, many students utilized skills they learned while
participating in the program, such as time management skills, study skills and interpersonal
skills, to help guide them through their academic and personal struggles. Each student mentioned
that UB helped support them in one way or another after they graduated from the program. One
of those ways was by connecting alumni to more resources.

Alumnus Denny Sams discussed that the UB staff connected him to Student Support
Services (SSS), another TRIO program, while he was a student at Hocking College. Sams
completed an associate’s degree while studying at Hocking College and transferred to Ohio
University to finish his bachelor's degree. Sams said, “I think I would have completed my
associates degree without UB and SSS, but there is no way I would have successfully transferred
to OU. I just had no idea what to do or how it would benefit me.” SSS provided Sams with continued support after high school, which helped him progress through his college career. Upward Bound connects students to many outside resources, whether it be a professional in a student’s field of interest, a club of interest, or an office or organization designed to help students. Sometimes the UB staff must pass the torch to a support system that can better help the student.

OHIO UB has helped guide students through college by exposing them to the college experience while they were in the program and by connecting them to resources once they graduated the program. Whether the interviewed student was currently enrolled in college or not, each student claimed that UB continues to help them and at least check in on them even after they graduated the program. Students claim that they feel comfortable to look to their “UB family” for support even years after they graduated.

EXPANDING WORLDVIEW

Upward Bound creates realities for students that would likely not exist if the student had not participated in the program. For example, UB coordinates college tours, both in-state and out-of-state, which provides students with opportunities to travel. This is one of the few ways that students have explained that UB has expanded their worldview. Students also mention how the annual multicultural workshop, and the relatively diverse student population helps them have a broader understanding of the world outside of southeastern Ohio.

At the end of every summer phase, the students with the highest GPAs are invited on the out-of-state college tour. In the past five years, students have visited Chicago, Washington DC, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland. Each trip averages about three days, in which students and staff visit the major universities in the cities, sightsee within the cities, and
enjoy some type of entertainment, whether it is a visit to an amusement park or a viewing of a Broadway show. These trips allow students to explore the United States, as well as explore potential college options and speak with representatives from their universities of interest.

There have been very few students who have graduated from OHIO UB who have actually attended one of these universities though. Ryan Kopp, a UB alumnus, said, “Even though I did not actually attend any of the schools we visited, actually seeing these schools I was interested in like Harvard, University of Chicago, and Northwestern helped me be more realistic in my decision-making process.” Kopp continued to describe how participating in the tours helped him to better understand how cost, especially for an out-of-state student, and distance were important factors to consider when determining college fit.

Throughout the school year, OHIO UB often does two in-state college tours though, which have helped students explore more realistic, affordable options for college. In recent years, UB has visited Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Dayton, and Akron to visit universities. Several students have claimed that they chose to attend a university based off of a college tour they went on while in Upward Bound. Students have also claimed that visiting other cities in Ohio helped them visualize what life outside southeastern Ohio would be like. Visiting these cities help expose students to urban atmospheres and to a more diverse population.

Each academic year, OHIO UB holds a diversity and multicultural workshop. In recent years, the staff has invited international students to the workshops to share with students elements of their culture, knowledge about their education systems, and a glimpse into what life might be like in their respective countries. Most students find these workshops to be fun, compared to the rest of the workshops, which can sometimes be information-heavy. These workshops are more interactive, allowing students to learn dances, new languages, try on
traditional clothing, and taste foods from other parts of the world. One student had this to say about the multicultural workshop, “it was the first time I have ever heard someone speak a different language in person.” These workshops are designed to expose students to cultures they might not learn about if they were not in UB.

Southeastern Ohio is relatively racially and culturally homogenous, so exposing students to new cultures allows them to expand the personal interests and their understanding of the world. Additionally, OHIO UB attempts to expose their students to cultural differences while they are in high school, so they are less likely to experience a culture shock in college. Students in the program have been known to regurgitate slurs and statements that seem to derive from ignorance. By exposing students to cultural, racial, and religious diversity, hopefully UB can teach students to maintain an open mind and strive to develop a deeper understanding about those who differ from them. Maintaining an open mind and a desire to learn are transferable skills which will help any college student succeed.

WOULD STUDENTS HAVE ATTENDED COLLEGE WITHOUT UPWARD BOUND?

Every student interviewed stated that they would have attended college without the help of Upward Bound, but each student reflected more deeply on whether they would have completed a four-year degree without the help of Upward Bound. Several students admitted that they probably would have dropped out early in their college career if they had not participated in UB. UB alumnus, Kopp, dropped out of college his junior year, but said that he would not have made it that far without the help of UB. He also said that he plans on going back to school once he becomes more financially stable. Two of the five interviewed students transferred to Ohio University, one from Hocking College and the other from Wilmington College. Both students
claimed that part of the reason they transferred to Ohio University was because they knew they could look to UB for support.

Perhaps Upward Bound does not better encourage students to enter college, but according to the alumni, it did help them complete college. One student said, “Applying for college is easy. You write down information about yourself and press send. Of course Upward Bound did not help me with that. College is not as easy. Nothing is nearly as intuitive and UB helped me work through that frustration.” Students talked about how there are step-by-step instructions on how to apply to college. If those instructions were not clear enough, there were guidance counselors and teachers to guide students through the process. Teachers and guidance counselors, at least in the majority of southeastern Ohio, do not have the time or resources to inform each student on the rigors of college, to teach them about scholarships and financial aid, and to assist them with career guidance, among other things that UB provides to students. It is the skills that UB teaches students that ultimately helps them complete their four year degrees.

Though high school can provide a similar function, UB helps students forge valuable friendships. According to the interviewed students, the friendships they developed at UB have been much stronger and longer lasting than any of their high school friendships. Perhaps these friendships are more resilient because the students have a slew of difficult shared experiences. Because of the strength of these relationships, UB students also have a unique network of support, helping them successfully progress through college. Similar to high school, UB teaches students academic success skills, like study skills and time management. Because UB has a smaller student-to-staff ratio, students can receive more one-on-one attention, so students might better retain knowledge learned at UB. Unique to UB, the program provides students with a relatively realistic perspective of college, by giving students a chance to live on campus and take
college-level classes as a high school student. Lastly, UB allows students to explore life outside of southeastern Ohio. Though some of these resources are available at students’ respective high schools, UB seems to impact student success for the long term. According to the students, OHIO UB has helped them graduate college.
Chapter 3: How Measuring Standards Should Change

The success of each individual Upward Bound program is measured based on the number of students who graduate from a post-secondary educational institution within six years of graduating from their respective UB program. At OHIO UB, the success rate varies from year to year. On average, approximately 25% of OHIO UB student participants graduate from college, which is in line with the national average of college graduates. This is often regarded as an impressive number because the students in UB are at a disadvantage; that is to say, their likelihood of attending and completing college is lower than that of a student who comes from a more financially stable background and/or has a parent or guardian who has previously attended college (Who We Are, 2017).

Because UB is working with a population of students who often begins the program with minimal knowledge of how to achieve postsecondary goals, the program should be measured accordingly. For example, every student I interviewed was taught in their personal and educational lives that college is the primary key to success. None of the students who participated in my research were taught before joining that there are other logical and respectable career routes one can take after high school, that deviate from attending college. Many students join UB and discover that college may not be the best fit for them. They discover that they may be more apt to go to trade school, join the military, or earn an Associate's degree. UB is designed to teach students about how to be successful in college, but it also teaches students that college is not best suited for every mind. Although college is a reasonable and respectable route to long-term career success, UB teaches students that there are alternate reasonable and respectable routes. This is one of the many barriers as to why many UB students do not succeed in college.
Upward Bound allowed them to expand their knowledge on alternate postsecondary options, which they may find to be a better fit for them.

As expected when working with a low income population, many UB participants cannot afford to attend college or do not have the resources to take out a loan. It is no secret that college is expensive. Although many UB students receive financial aid, financial aid does not always cover the price of tuition. This forces students to find the resources to pay for the remaining expenses. A common tale in OHIO UB is that a student takes off an entire semester to save up money for the following semester and they never re-enroll because they never save up enough. The cost of living is too high to simultaneously save for college. Another common issue is finding cosigners for student loans. Oftentimes, UB students have not established their own credit and need a cosigner for their loans. Unfortunately, it is very common for low income parents and guardians to have poor credit, which often results in their inability to cosign on loans. Upward Bound students have very little financial support from their families, which causes a chain of financial struggle for many students. Because Upward Bound is not a scholarship program and cannot provide funds for students to attend college, financial obstacles often prevent students from attending or finishing college. UB can teach the financial skills, but this is where the financial help stops.

One of the other barriers preventing students from succeeding in college is their academic ability to learn. Students may have a desire to attend college, but their actual ability to learn may not be optimal for a college environment. UB teaches students who believe they are college bound how to get to college. Not all minds flourish in a collegiate learning atmosphere. Some students are better suited for a more hands-on approach to learning or even better suited for a career that may not be offered at the college level. Several students have joined UB with the
understanding that they would go to college to pursue a career typically taught at a trade school, such as being a welder, a veterinary technician, or a cosmetologist. Although their career interests do not always fit into what is typically taught at a university, they insist on attending a university. It is common that an Upward Bound student’s skills and interests do not align with earning a Bachelor’s degree, which is a barrier that impacts UB’s success rate.

Another barrier, very commonly associated with a student’s financial ability to attend college, is the student’s ability to get to and from their institution. Transportation is a common problem for students while they are in UB and when they actually attend college. Many low income families do not have reliable vehicles or they only have one vehicle, with multiple people who need to use it at once. It is common that low income students choose to commute to their university because it typically saves money. As expected, when one drives their own vehicle daily, their car will begin to accumulate normal wear and tear. This can lead to expensive repairs or it can leave a vehicle out of commission altogether. If a student cannot make it to their classes, it is likely their grades will suffer, potentially causing the end of their college career.

Even if a student has a reliable vehicle, commuter students also drive through poor weather or sometimes cannot make it to class because of poor weather. In order for a student to successfully commute, they must time their journey accordingly, endure potentially dangerous weather, and have a reliable vehicle to drive. These are all variables that commuter students must have in order to ensure they can actually make it to class. Because commuting to class is often cheaper than living on campus, many UB alumni choose the option to commute. As a result, many former UB students struggle to get to class, which typically negatively impacts their education. This is a variable that the UB program cannot combat, and one that often negatively impacts college graduation rates.
The issues plaguing college success for UB alumni almost always directly relate back to income levels. For example, it is very common for former UB students to struggle while they are in college because they are responsible for taking care of a loved one at home. This may come in the form of something as small as cooking meals for someone, or something as large as working a job in order to financially support someone. Either way, family responsibilities can keep a student busy enough that they cannot focus on their studies. They may even be in the position in which they cannot leave their home to attend class. This directly relates with income because families with higher income can afford additional care and help, allowing the individuals within the families to carry on with their lives. UB alumni often feel a sense of responsibility to support their families first and foremost, and pushing their college education to the back burner. It is common for former UB students to cite their home responsibilities as the reason why they did not complete their degree. Once again, this is an issue that Upward Bound does not attempt to tackle as a college access program.

Nearly every student has difficulties in their personal lives that might interfere with their academic lives. Because all OHIO UB students are first generation and low income college students, their circumstance offers a unique set of challenges that impact their academics. Unfortunately, Upward Bound teaches students about the logistics of attending college, and does not thoroughly teach students how to tackle these problems they may encounter in their personal lives. Oftentimes, UB cannot help with these problems, even though they may severely impact a student’s ability to complete college. Because there are variables which UB cannot prevent or fix that can impact educational attainment rates, UB should be measured differently.

NEW MEASURING STANDARDS
Success is defined differently in every realm of life. Upward Bound is a college access program, but perhaps it is time to change this terminology to encapsulate different possibilities of what it means to advance one's education. There are career opportunities that do not require a Bachelor’s degree that will offer students financial success. Upward Bound emerged out of the War on Poverty, and its mission was to help people from disadvantaged backgrounds move out of poverty. With the original mission in mind, UB should expand its goals to teach students how to be successful with or without a Bachelor’s degree.

The first measuring standard of program success that should change is measuring by the number of students who earn a Bachelor’s degree. Just because a student earns a four year degree does not mean that they will get a job that will require a degree. A Bachelor’s degree does not mean that a person will automatically move out of poverty, and it does not guarantee progressive career growth. There are careers using technical and trade skills that can serve as a catalyst for progressive career growth and substantial salaries. Specializing one’s education in a field with positive job outlook is what seems to be the most likely to help students move out of poverty. For this reason, the measuring standards should measure the progression of a student’s education beyond their degree.

Because UB was founded to aid in moving students out of poverty, the program should instead track initial career trajectory and income to measure success. This may take into account cost of living variables as well. This would require that UB maintain an active line of communication with all alumni, until career trajectory has been measured. UB strives to help students move out of poverty, so the program should be measuring if students actually move out of poverty.
Measurement of each student’s progression should begin early. When a student enters the program, they should take a pretest, indicating to the program what they do not know, so they program can direct its programming accordingly. The pretest would also be helpful in tracking a student’s long term progress and development. It is important that UB measures the student’s progress, talents, and abilities while they were in UB, so there is data to compare when the students enter the workforce. Though collecting data would be more time consuming and even costly, a longitudinal study of each cohort of students would paint a more accurate picture of program success.

RESULTS OF NEW MEASUREMENT PROCESS

The largest issue with the current measuring process is that many UB alumni do not earn their Bachelor’s degree. Many students attend college, many earn Associate’s degrees, and many have productive careers in their fields of choice. If the guidelines indicating program success expanded, then it is likely that success rates would increase. Additionally, the guidelines would better fit what the program was initially designed to do. Many UB alumni encounter problems in their personal lives which cannot be prevented by participating in UB. As a result, they often find career paths that are better suited to their circumstances. Though not all students are financially successful, expanding the definition of program success would include more students who were financially successful.

It is difficult to communicate Upward Bound’s strategy and purpose when there are alumni who earn Bachelor’s degrees, but the program can say nothing about their students’ post-degree success. Post-degree success is the long term goal for UB administrators. The hope is that a Bachelor’s degree will serve as a catalyst for long term success, which is what is primarily taught by UB. Though a Bachelor’s degree can give students access to careers they may not have
otherwise, there are other routes a student can take in order to achieve financial success. For example, students can explore military careers, careers utilizing an associate's degree, or careers requiring trade school.

If UB strives to focus on career success solely through obtaining a Bachelor’s degree, then the admission process should be more thorough, targeting students who will likely succeed in college if given the tools to succeed. From a programmatic standpoint, the goal is to maintain a high success rate, so the program can maintain their funding. UB needs to optimize their strategies to maintain high success rates, especially as a program within the vulnerable Department of Education.

The number of participants is largely dependent on the amount of funding each UB program receives. UB would likely appeal to a larger group of students if it rebranded its mission. Perhaps UB should change from a college access program to a career access program. Many students are aware that they do not want to attend college, but want a strategy to enter a productive career. An appeal that is directed to a broader group of students will allow each UB to be more selective in the application process, which can lead to greater program success.

Essentially, the current measurement process to determine program success generates results that often seem as though the program is not productive. For example, the educational attainment for a Bachelor’s degree in the US is approximately 32%, while the educational attainment rate for a Bachelor’s degree at OHIO UB in the past five years is about 30%. A comparison of the two numbers would make it seem as though UB is not producing positive results because it is a college access program that is producing educational attainment rates that are in line with the national average. The reality is that that UB is working with a disadvantaged group of students who are less likely to attend college. The educational attainment rates from
their home counties are much lower than the national average. Though given this data comparison, it is easy to underestimate the impact of Upward Bound. This is why finding a new way of measuring program success is vital to show to legislators that the program is valuable.
Conclusion: The Future of Upward Bound

**FUNDING**

The federal budget is malleable. New politicians are regularly elected and new agency directors are regularly appointed. The political atmosphere and its relation to education in the United States is dependent upon the goals and ambitions of the politician, the needs and desires of the people they serve, and the skill of the director to implement those changes. Each politician comes into office with new goals, new passions, and new skill sets. Education and poverty, two issues that are integral in the maintenance of Upward Bound, are not always a political priority. It is vital that equal access to education is a priority in all branches of government in order for UB to continue to exist.

Strategies to improve education are controversial. People from different political, economic, and educational backgrounds all have different perspectives as to how the system can improve. Additionally, there are some elected officials who see no blaring issue with the current state of education, meaning that there is minimal need for improvement. Both fortunately and unfortunately, this political stalemate causes the slow movement to make changes within the educational system. This is fortunate because there are some programs and educational tactics that have proven to be successful, but have yet to have been amended or cut entirely. This is unfortunate because there are current practices in education that seem as though they do not foster the intellectual growth of school-aged children.

Disagreements over how education could improve will likely continue to be prevalent, alongside another prevailing issue: funding. As different political parties come into power, the importance of education begins to fluctuate. Although education tends to be a bipartisan issue, only a fraction of politicians truly prioritize education. Taking all of this into account,
educational funding fluctuates with each federal budget. If funding is increasing in one area, it
must decrease elsewhere. Education is often one of the many victims when these funding cuts
come. Upward Bound cannot exist if the funding does not exist. Many would categorize Upward
Bound as a nonessential program, and if the goal is for students to complete high school, then it
is not essential. This is why it is important to have politicians who are passionate about
education. There needs to be people who see post-secondary education as valuable and even
essential.

If there is no money in the federal budget for Upward Bound, it will not exist unless it is
funded differently. Funding can become an issue even if there is money in the federal budget
though. Ultimately, each Upward Bound program is responsible for applying for their own
grants. If a program chooses not to apply, or if their application is not approved, then on an
individual level, UB cannot exist. Responsibility to keep UB afloat comes from all angles. It is
important that each UB met the goals of their prior grant to the best of their ability. It is
important to prove that an individual program is successful and will continue to be successful if
given the funds. Grant writing is a skill because one must showcase their program, and develop
new ideas for the future, all to ask for more money within the parameters of the grants given to
fund UB programs. Many would argue that adequate funding is vital to the success of the
program, so each program must maintain success, otherwise they are at risk of losing funding
and perhaps never gaining that success back.

Due to the nature of the program, UB participants and staff utilize their host university’s
resources, which almost always comes at a cost. The student stipends, room and board, faculty
and staff wages and salaries are a few of the things that make the program costly. The program
cannot survive without some element of funding, so it is important that equal access to education
is a priority to politicians at federal, state, and local levels. Additionally, it is vital that administrators and staff at their respective UB programs see potential in their students and the development of the program, enough potential that they will continue to apply for funding and manage their program. Lack of funds will put any program in a vulnerable state; unfortunately, Upward Bound is one of the programs that lives on the edge of being cut year after year.

**POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE & THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The political atmosphere in the US has never remained constant and likely never will. Political ideologies have evolved since the moment American government was founded. Issues in education have arisen, and then diminished as they were solved, forgotten, or overshadowed by something more pressing. Upward Bound emerged out of the War on Poverty, but the War on Poverty was a series of policies and programs that were largely supported through the Civil Rights Movement. The issues identified in education in 1964 were centered on educational access. Racial and socioeconomic minorities did not have an equal opportunity to attend college, which results in a generational cycle of poverty. Although UB helps students move out of poverty and obtain a higher education, issues of educational access still persist over 50 years later.

Unfortunately, the lack of equal educational access is not a problem recognized by all politicians. As a result, there are theories that shift the blame for this problem away from the government, and there are theories that education is equal and there is no problem at all. For example, on February 7, 2017, Republican senators proposed a bill to abolish the Department of Education by December 31, 2018 (H.R. 899, 2017). In his speech regarding the bill, Congressman Massie (R-KY 4th District) said that education should be controlled at the state and local levels, as opposed to the federal level. He was specifically referring to K-12 education, and
he did not acknowledge the hundreds of other programs funded by the Department of Education. He did not mention how racism and poverty affect educational attainment rates. Instead, he proposed to push the responsibility to control education to the state level, diverting the responsibility to fix the problems.

It is difficult to hypothesize the fate of Upward Bound if the Department of Education is successfully abolished. UB is one of many federally funded educational programs. Each of these programs attack different issues in education, such as healthy eating, physical education, art and music education, and higher education. While some of these programs can easily work in conjunction with public school education, other cannot due to the lack of time and resources. With the abolishment of the Department of Education, all the programs within the department are vulnerable to be cut. Programs with similar missions to UB could be run at the state level, but once again, funding is vital to the program’s success.

Although UB can function at the state level, there are benefits for the program being federally funded and housed in the Department of Education. For example, UB gains awareness at the national level. There are UB programs in nearly every US state, which increases awareness at the state level. Additionally, so long as UB remains a federal program, the network of current TRIO students and alumni will continue to grow. Professional networks are essential in finding new career and educational opportunities, which serves as another opportunity for students to move out of poverty. Lastly, UB can rely on centralized federal funding. As long as there is a Department of Education, there will be an opportunity for UB to gain funding. Due to the widespread nature of the program, there is a precedent for how much each program should receive in order to be successful. It is vital that education continues to improve and the Department of Education has assisted in that improvement.
CONCLUSION

Upward Bound is in a vulnerable state as political tensions flare and funding disputes inevitably continue. It is important to remember why UB exists though. There are students across the United States who are in need of help. The status of being a first generation college student is intimidating, especially when that status is paired with a low income status. There are some students who can make it through these obstacles without assistance, but most struggle to attend college, let alone complete a Bachelor’s degree.

Upward Bound may need programmatic edits in order to continue to be successful and even reach more students in need, but those changes will be worthwhile if UB can continue to function. Not every UB participant exits the program with the feeling that it positively impacted their life, but most OHIO UB students walk away feeling a positive impact one way or another. Students cite having developed personal, academic, and professional skills by participating in the program. Upward Bound is an opportunity to continue to positively impact student lives and impoverished America. Those involved with the program, such as students, staff, and alumni must be vocal about the impact of the program, so legislators can understand its value.

The future of Upward Bound is unstable, simply because funding and political backing are not consistent. Students need to be vocal about how UB is currently impacting their lives, to draw attention to its current positive impact. Staff members need to communicate the growth they see as they watch a high school freshman inch their way closer to a college degree. The UB alumni network needs individuals to emerge as program success stories. As a team, each group of people involved with UB need to connect with their federal legislators. Elected officials are supposed to represent the needs of the people within their jurisdiction, so those affiliated with UB and TRIO need to make it abundantly clear that it a need to keep UB afloat. There needs to
be a viable opportunity for a student to attend college, no matter their socioeconomic background or familial educational background.
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