Virtual Advising for High-Achieving High School Students

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Overview

- Persistent gaps in college success by income
  (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; Bastedo & Jaquette, 2011)

- Issues of undermatch, college selectivity rates
  (Cohodes & Goodman, 2014; Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Smith, Pender, & Howell, 2013)

- Driven by complexity of application processes and lack of support (Klasik, 2012; Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016)

- Tension between "low" and "high" touch interventions (Bird et al., 2019; Castleman & Page, 2015; Castleman, Page, & Schooley, 2014; Gurantz et al., 2019; Hoxby & Turner, 2013; Hyman, forthcoming) and (Barr & Castleman, 2017; Bettinger & Evans, forthcoming; Carrell & Sacerdote, 2017; Castleman & Goodman, 2018; Page, Kehoe, Castleman, & Sahadewo, 2017; Phillips & Reber, 2019)

This paper

- Identify ~16,000 high-achieving low/middle-income students in 2018 HS cohort
  - Achievement: Top 10% on PSAT/SAT scores
- Randomly offered "virtual advising"
  - 1-on-1 college counseling done remotely
  - Single adviser can serve broad geographic region
- Focus on ~290 "CollegePoint" colleges; graduation rates above 70 percent
  - https://ogurantz.github.io/website/Gurantz_2019_VirtualAdvising_Colleges.pdf

- 3/4 assigned to treatment
  - 12000 T vs 4000 C
- Randomly assigned to 23 advisers
- 44% offered treatment engaged with a counselor
  - Caseload ~230

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and covariate balance

	Control group mean	Test for statistical difference
Individual characteristics		
Female	47.4%	-0.006
		(0.009)
Parent has bachelor's degree	39.5%	0.003
		(0.009)
White	38.4%	-0.004
		(0.009)
Hispanic	17.6%	0.005
		(0.007)
African-American	5.2%	-0.003
		(0.004)
Asian	32.7%	-0.001
		(0.008)
School characteristics		
City	36.8%	-0.001
		(0.009)
Suburb	37.0%	-0.009
		(0.009)
Town	5.8%	-0.003
		(0.004)
Rural	9.6%	0.006
		(0.005)

Notes: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01.

Appendix Figure 1. Geographic distribution of low- and middle-income high-achieving students in the experimental sample

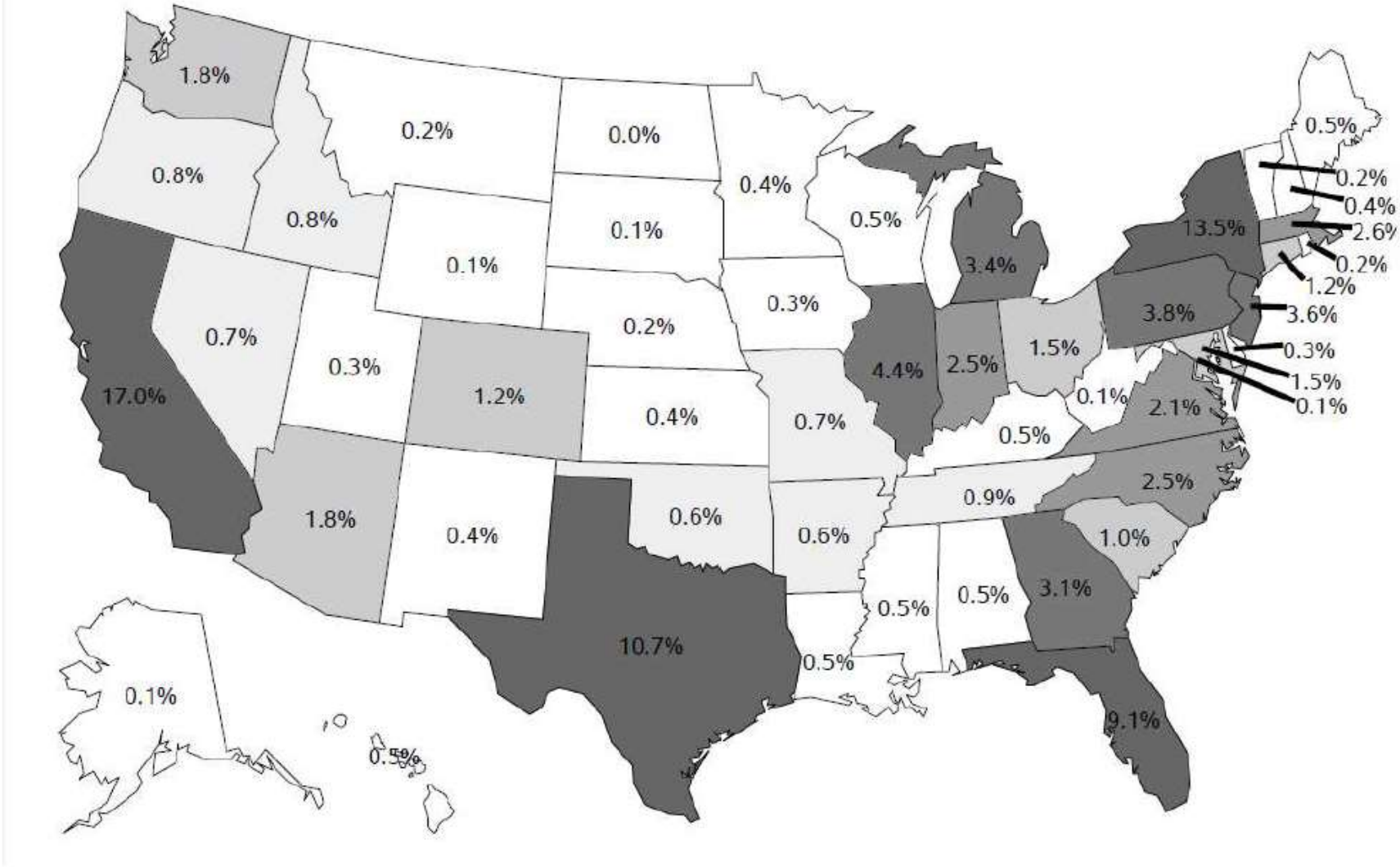

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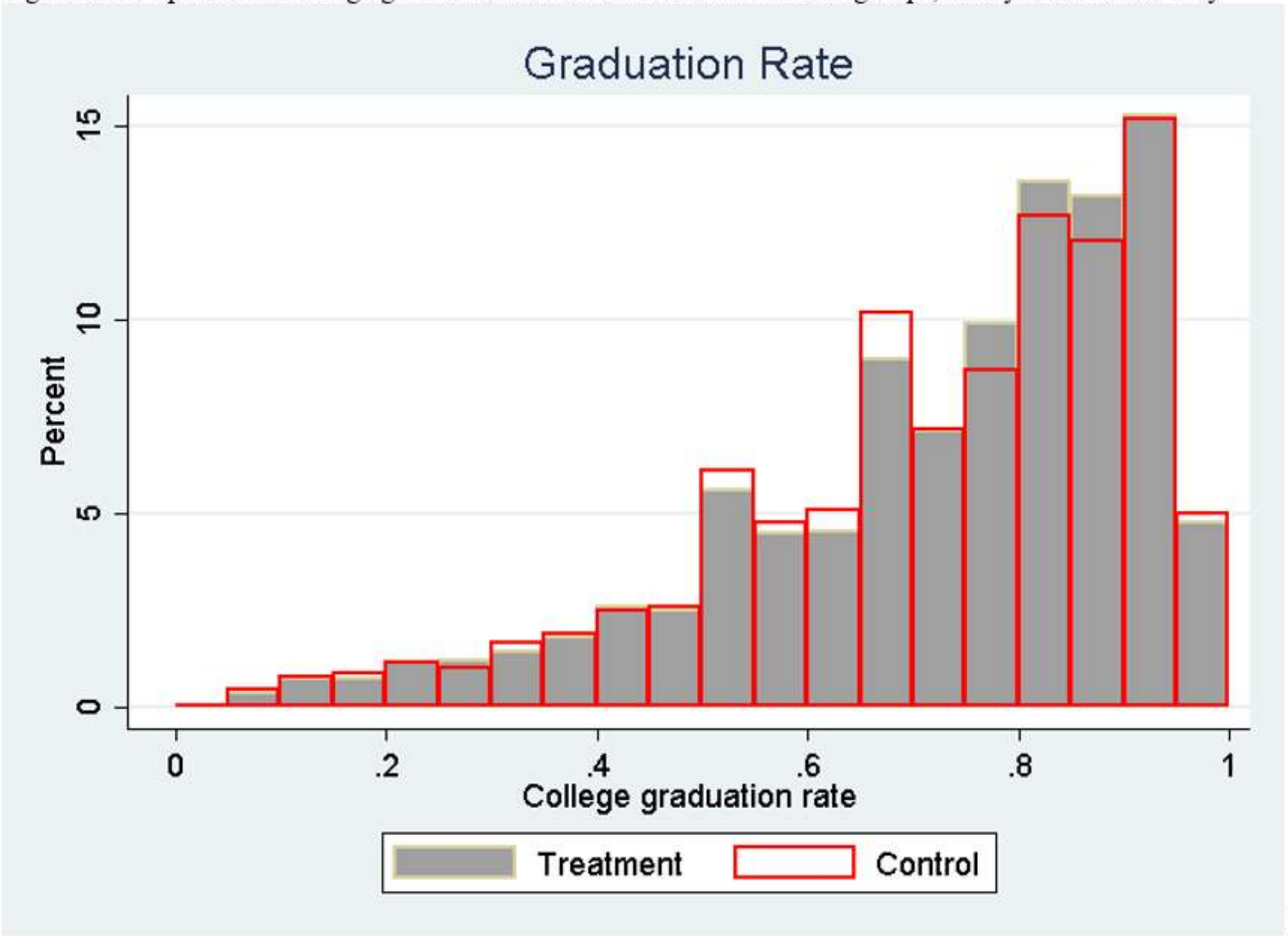
Table 2. Impacts of virtual advising

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
		SAT score sends		Attendance (NSC data)		College characteristics	
	1st-stage	Non-CollegePoint colleges	CollegePoint colleges	Any	CollegePoint college	Graduation rate	Net price: $30-48K
Reduced form		0.001	0.312**	0.003	0.026**	0.008*	-30.854
		(0.034)	(0.086)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(122.316)
IV	0.434**	0.002	0.720**	0.007	0.060**	0.017*	-66.739
	(0.008)	(0.077)	(0.197)	(0.014)	(0.021)	(0.008)	(272.439)
		6.0	4.3	87.3%	50.0%	72.1%	$12,391

Notes: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01. All estimates compare the randomized offer of virtual advising to control group students not offered virtual advising (N=16,256).

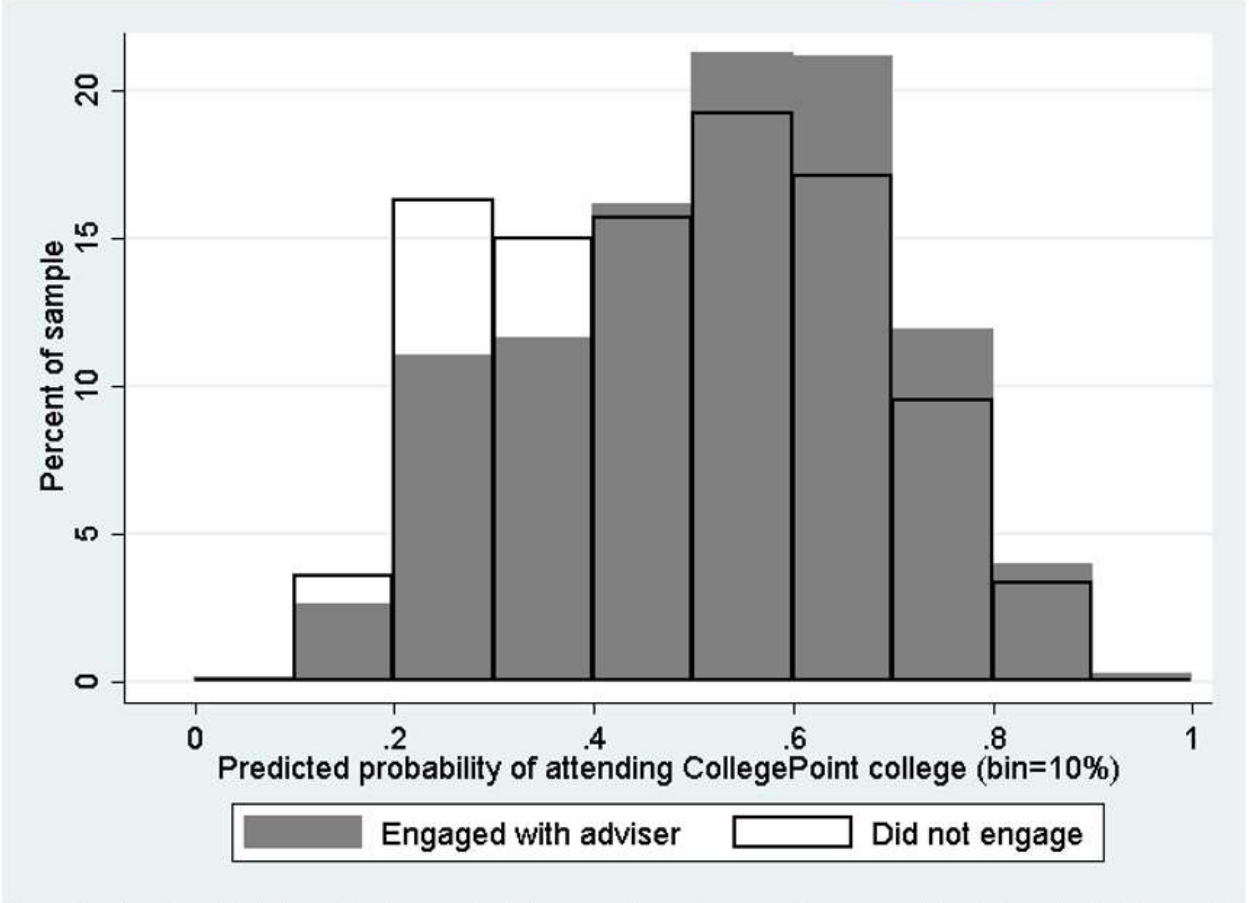
- No impacts on overall college attendance
- Shifts into CollegePoint colleges
- Hard to detect impacts on college characteristics

Figure 1. Comparison of college graduation rate for treatment and control groups, four-year enrollees only



Notes. Results from a histogram comparing the full distribution of treatment and control groups for all college attendees only. Bins are 5 percentage points.

Figure 2. Adviser engagement rates based on predicted likelihood of attending a CollegePoint college



Notes. Predicted probabilities derive from a logistic regression using control group students that controlled for: student ethnicity; gender; parental education; school urbanicity; whether they took the SAT zero, one, or two or more times; a cubic of initial SAT math and verbal scores, school-level free and reduced price lunch, and school size.

- Higher engagement rates among those predisposed to attend CollegePoint colleges

Table 3. Impacts of random assignment to same sex or ethnicity adviser, intent-to-treat estimates

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(6)
		SAT score sends		Attendance (NSC data)	
	Engagement	Non-CollegePoint colleges	CollegePoint colleges	Any	CollegePoint college
Adviser matching on ethnicity					
Same ethnicity adviser	-0.020	-0.078+	0.188	0.006	0.009
	(0.013)	(0.046)	(0.118)	(0.008)	(0.012)
White and same ethnicity adviser	-0.010	-0.099	-0.232	-0.008	-0.019
	(0.016)	(0.061)	(0.155)	(0.011)	(0.016)
Non-white and same ethnicity adviser	-0.033+	-0.050	0.775**	0.026*	0.047*
	(0.019)	(0.072)	(0.184)	(0.013)	(0.019)
Control group mean	46.3%	1.7	5.1	88.1%	56.0%

Notes: + p<0.10, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01. All estimates compare the randomized offer of virtual advising to a same sex or ethnicity adviser, restricted to only students in the treatment sample. Pooled regressions include student gender and ethnicity dummies.

- Non-white students randomly assigned to non-white advisers showed larger shifts
  - Small numbers and speculative

Conclusion

- Increased enrollment in high grad rate colleges
  - How strongly should organizations advocate?
- Efforts made to lower engagement barriers: opt-out; existing CB communication channels; data-sharing to reach students earlier
- Did not find “academically isolated” students were significantly impacted
- Virtual advising may be a scalable solution but more work is needed to develop messages that target and motivate students

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