**Week 6 Assignment**

Student’s Name

Instructor

Institution

Due Date

**Author’s Note**

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Purposeful College established its College Readiness program in 2011 to provide comprehensive support services for first-time freshmen as applicable, with guaranteed courses in math and English and a college readiness curriculum. This initiative aims to increase student persistence and completion rates, supporting students in achieving academic goals more efficiently. In particular, the program evaluation of this case emphasizes the operational definition of 'completion,' articulated as those who achieve transfer preparedness by the end of Fall 2016, attainment of an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, or completion of a certificate. This definition provides a good tool to assess the program’s performance, which covers 3.5 years, allowing the analysis of students’ progress and results.

**Cost-Benefit vs. Cost-Effectiveness Analysis**

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA) are useful tools to evaluate a program but differ greatly in application and focus. CBA aims to put all costs and benefits of a program in monetary terms so that stakeholders review the overall economic returns. While suitable for financial evaluations, this approach overlooks non-monetary benefits and their complexities, especially in education contexts (Hwang, 2016, p.20). CEA, however, links the costs of a program to specific outcomes and does not require all the benefits to be translated into financial terms, so comparisons of competing interventions are easier (Brent, 2023, p. 4637). Since the main objective of the College Readiness program is to increase student completion rates, the CEA analysis strategy is the more appropriate one for this evaluation. This facilitates a more discriminating assessment of how well resources are employed to reach educational outcomes. By gauging when a program is financially feasible and providing the intended effect on student success, CEA provides Purposeful College with an extremely useful information tool to inform decision-making (Simister, 2000, p. 2).In the long run, this analysis gives the college key knowledge to assist the organization in strategic investments for projects to enhance learner achievement.

**Evaluation Question**

The specific evaluation question guiding the assessment of the College Readiness program is: "*Is College Readiness (CR) more cost-effective in improving student completion rates over a non-CR approach?"* This is important because it attempts to quantify the relationship between resources devoted to the College Readiness program and the effectiveness with which these resources will lead to the intended education outcomes of student completion (Hulme, 2006, p. 18). The evaluation aims to do this by evaluating whether or not the program leads to a substantial increase over a defined period in completion rates, such as attaining transfer preparedness, completing an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, or receiving a certificate. This relationship will allow not only the overall impact of this program to be assessed but also insights for decision-makers as to how resources should be allocated and in what ways components of the program that have been successful should be expanded (Chanley et al., 2001, p. 400). The purpose of the targeted evaluation will enable Purposeful College to determine further strategies for student success.

**Findings of the Cost-Effectiveness Study**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Non-Readiness (Comparison)  | Readiness  |
| Cohort Size  |  850 |  850 |
| Cost per student for 3.5 years  |  $15,574 |  $1,675.63 |
| Completion Rate  |  20% |  32% |
| Cost per completion  |  $77,870 |  $5,240.09 |

The results from the cost-effectiveness study strongly support the case for the College Readiness program concerning its outperformance relative to the non- Readiness group. The cost of the Readiness program, even with both cohorts set at 850 students, is a surprisingly low $1,675.63 per student versus $15,574 for the non- Readiness cohort. This stark difference's implication drastically indicates the program’s resource-efficient use (Hulme, 2006, p. 4). Additionally, college readiness students complete at 32 percent versus non-readiness students at a 20 percent completion rate. This means the program works well in making students successful with their educational goals (Chanley et al., 2001, p. 400). At a cost of only $5,240.09 per completion, college-readiness students complete at a rate two and a half times higher than their non-readiness peers while costing three times as much. These figures show that the College Readiness program enhances educational achievement at a fraction of the cost of traditional education(Brent, 2023, p. 9). For that reason, the program is essential to Purposeful College’s mission of improving student success and financial resources, and it is thus a good continued and expanded program.

**Limitations of the Study**

The College Readiness program evaluation faces two critical limitations: the absence of a control group and confounding variables. The lack of random assignment to College Readiness or non-readiness groups suggests potential uncorrelated factors, such as student motivation or external support systems, could impact outcomes (Hwang, 2016, p. 78). This introduces uncertainty as to where changes in completion rates occur, independent of the program itself (Brent, 2023, p. 4638). The findings may not be reliable if the effects of public and institutional variables, including management of teaching faculty, resources, and curriculum, which may differentially affect both cohorts, are not accounted for (Chanley et al., 2001, p. 405). If future analysis shows these confounding factors highly correlated with completion rates, the results would be questioned (Simister, 2000, p. 2). If these limitations result in highly skewed results and if subsequent evaluations differ consistently from the study's current findings, these limitations are serious enough to question the study's conclusion that the effectiveness of the College Readiness program is not as pronounced as appears in the study.

**Overview of Outcome and Impact Evaluations**

The outcome and impact evaluations of the College Readiness initiative at Purposeful College are essential to the overall measure of the efficiency of the College Readiness program. Specifically, outcome evaluations measure the immediate change after the program implementation, as is the case of student completion rates, skill acquisition, and satisfaction (Myers & Barnes, 2005, p. 14). These evaluations tell whether or not the program is succeeding in meeting its short-term goals and showing progress toward growing student success. Programs can focus on measurables, adapting their offerings as participant needs change to achieve a given outcome (Hulme, 2006, p. 20). Additionally, through sound outcome evaluations, officials will learn from the operational aspects of the program and use the information gained to build data-driven decisions (Brent, 2023, p. 4). Finally, when done effectively, outcome evaluations provide a foundation for strategic planning within the institution and useful information for resource allocation.

In contrast to impact evaluation, impact evaluation covers a broader base by considering the long-term effects and overall importance of the outcomes of a program to the target population and community (InterAction, 2000, p. 15). Such evaluation focuses on the sustained changes evinced through the program, including improved educational attainment, greater employability, and enhanced quality of life for students (Simister, 2000, p.5). The College Readiness program's broader societal implications will then be made clear by the College Readiness program through a rigorous impact evaluation and help stakeholders understand the value of the College Readiness program in reducing educational inequities (Hwang, 2016, p. 80). Both these evaluation types are essential to provide evidence of program effectiveness to stakeholders, promote accountability, and enable policy and funding decisions. These evaluations help understand how the program is performing and inform continuous improvements to educational strategies and outcomes so that Purposeful College can best fulfill its mission of achievement for students.

**Practical Methodological Issues**

Purposeful College's College Readiness program outcome evaluation faces practical methodological issues that could impact its validity and reliability. The selection of appropriate comparison groups is a critical challenge because the evaluation must use a well-matched non-college Readiness cohort to attribute changes in completion rates to the program itself (Blocklin et al., 2019). Unless there is proper matching, confounding variables may inappropriately define results. Furthermore, data collection instruments will be very important, such as using surveys and interviews that are not culturally relevant or accurately validated, which lead to compromised reliability of data collection measurements and the credibility of the findings (Hulme, 2006, p.18). Reliability may be threatened by high rates of attrition among participants, in particular as dropout rates might differ between treatment and control groups, a cause of potential bias (Deke et al., 2015). In addition, the data quality must be carefully monitored and controlled to maintain the data's accuracy, completeness, and consistency during collection. These considerations require careful planning, community engagement, and ongoing tracking to obtain credible, actionable results that appropriately represent the program’s effects on student outcomes (Peters, 2022). Solving these methodological challenges will be essential for building a strong evaluation to inform future program development.

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