

2017

Kansas City Scholars Program: Year One Report

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Citation

Timmeney, Bridget, T., Brad Hershbein, Kevin Hollenbeck, Michelle Miller-Adams, Nathan Sotherland. 2017. "Kansas City Scholars Program: Year One Report." Report prepared for Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

<https://research.upjohn.org/reports/229>

Kansas City Scholars Program: Year One Report

Highlights from year one program evaluation

The Upjohn Institute, with support from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, evaluated the initial launch year of the Kansas City Scholars program. Interviews and focus groups with stakeholders during two site visits and an analysis of administrative data supplied by the Kansas City Scholars program produced the following highlights.

Scholars were racially diverse and showed high academic achievement, along with meeting the program's income requirements.

Scholarship Design and Goals

Traditional

250 awards for currently enrolled 11th graders. Awardees receive up to \$10,000 per year, paid directly to the college, renewable for up to five years.

Adult Learner

200 awards for adults age 24 and older who have previously earned at least 12 college credits but did not receive a postsecondary degree or credential. Awardees receive up to \$5,000 per year, paid directly to the college, renewable for up to five years.

College Savings Match (CSM)

1,000 one-time awards annually for 9th graders, who receive \$25 in a 529 College Savings Plan. Of these, 50 will be selected to receive a 4-to-1 match, not to exceed \$5,000, with the potential for an additional \$2,000 for students who achieve college-ready milestones during high school.

Overall Highlights

The program largely met its target population goals

Scholars were racially diverse and showed high academic achievement, along with meeting the program's income requirements.

Most award recipients were female

Women made up around three quarters of the recipients of the traditional and adult learner scholarships.

For the traditional scholarship, racial disparities appear between application and award

Hispanic/Latino students were over-represented among traditional awardees relative to traditional applicants. White and African-American students were under-represented among awardees relative to applicants.

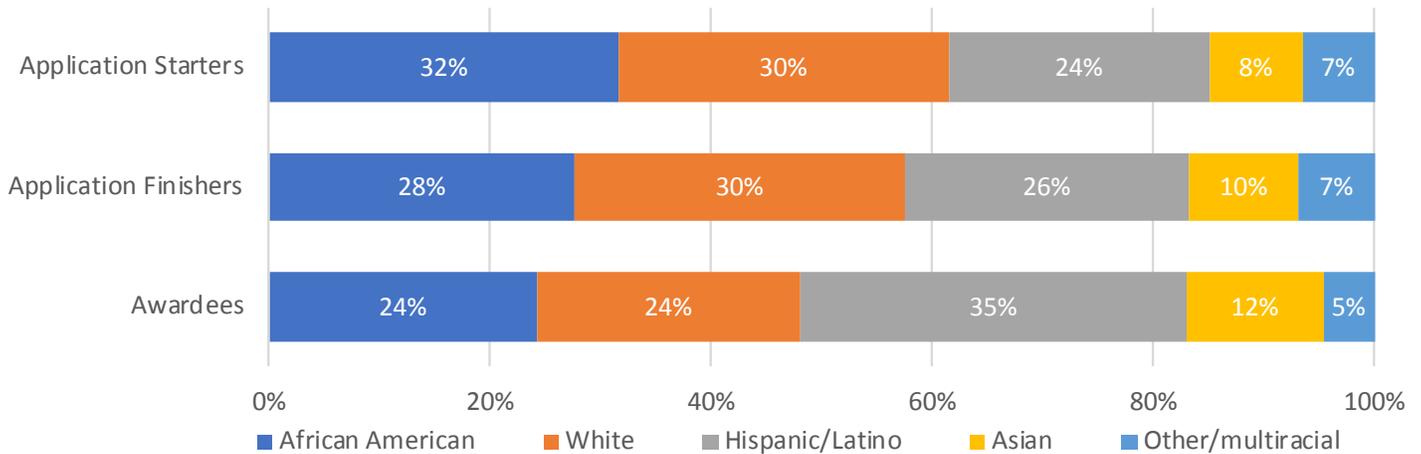
For the traditional scholarship, the scholarship affected applicants' college choices

Traditional applicants indicated that an award would bump their first college choice from a two-year to a four-year college.

The adult learner scholarship and college savings match were undersubscribed

The undersubscription of these two components led Kansas City Scholars to increase the number of traditional scholarship awards from 250 to 285 and the amount of the college savings match from \$25 to \$50.

Hispanic/Latino candidates were overrepresented in the awardee pool, while African Americans were underrepresented



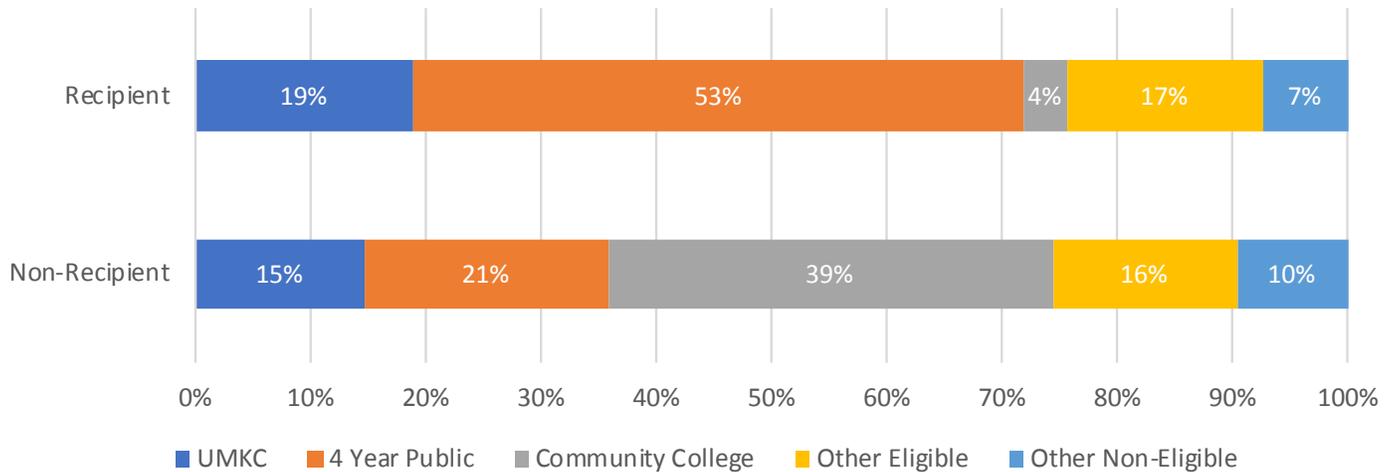
Traditional Scholarship Highlights

- Kansas City Scholars traditional scholarships were awarded to high-achieving students from low- and modest-income backgrounds, consistent with the program’s intent.
- The support of high schools and interest of applicants varied across the region; for example, KC Scholars received no applications from students in about one-third of the high schools in the region, but received over 50 percent of the total 11th grade enrollment in a few other high schools.
- When prompted by a hypothetical of how their college choices would change if awarded the scholarship, applicants shifted their preferred choices from 2-year to 4-year institutions.
- There were 1,473 traditional scholarship applications initiated and 1,050 completed; 285 scholarships were awarded.
- The traditional scholarship is designed to assist students from families with low or modest incomes and from families with parents that have not completed a bachelor’s degree. Over two-thirds (70.5 percent) of the applicants indicate that their parents do not have a bachelor’s degree. Among awardees, this number jumps to 82.8 percent. Almost two-thirds of the applicants (63.0 percent) report that they are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL). Among the scholarship awardees, 70.5 percent indicate that they are FRL-eligible.

Demographics Table

	<i>Applicants</i>	<i>Awardees</i>
Female	68.3%	72.3%
Person of color	70.2%	76.2%
African-American	31.6%	24.2%
Free / reduced-price lunch	63.0%	70.5%
Parents without 4-year degree	70.5%	82.8%
Expected Family Contribution (avg.)	\$2,619	\$1,136
GPA (avg.)	3.40	3.61

Receiving the scholarship shifted applicant preferences from 2-year to 4-year universities



Adult learners' college choices cover mainly local KC institutions.

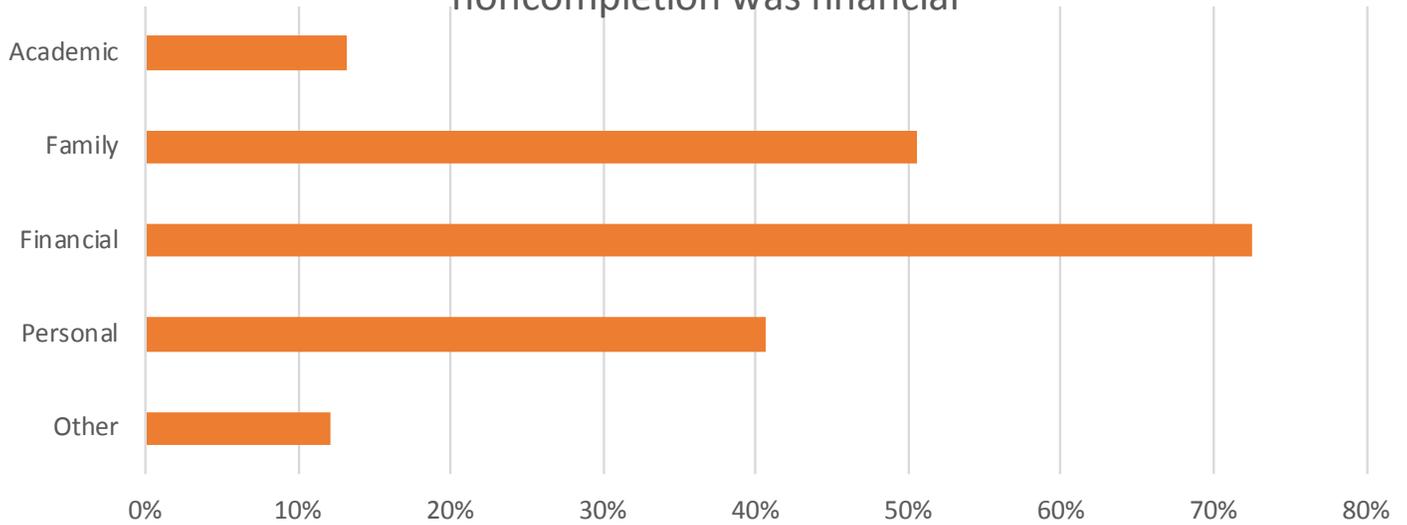
Adult Scholarship Highlights

- In its first year, KCS did not attract its targeted number of 200 adult learners for scholarships.
- KC Scholars awarded 91 scholarships to adult learners with low to modest income levels who have not finished a postsecondary program.
- Adult learners' college choices cover mainly local KC institutions.
- When prompted by a hypothetical of how their college choices would change with the scholarship, applicants for the adult learner program shift their choices from 2-year to 4-year colleges (mainly UMKC), but not to the same extent as traditional students.
- There were 152 adult scholarship applications initiated and 91 completed. All eligible adults who completed applications received scholarships.

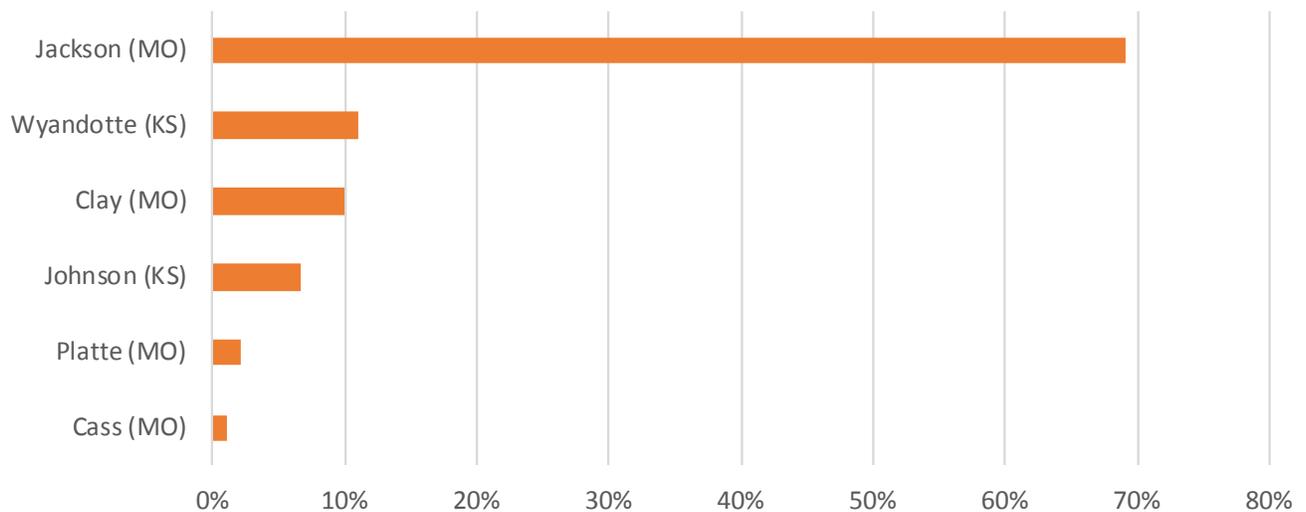
Demographics Table

	Awardees
Female	76.9%
Person of color	76.7%
Parents without a 4-year degree	80.2%
Expected Family Contribution (avg.)	\$1,940
Age (avg.)	36.3

The self-reported primary reason for previous degree noncompletion was financial



Adult awardees were primarily residents of Jackson County

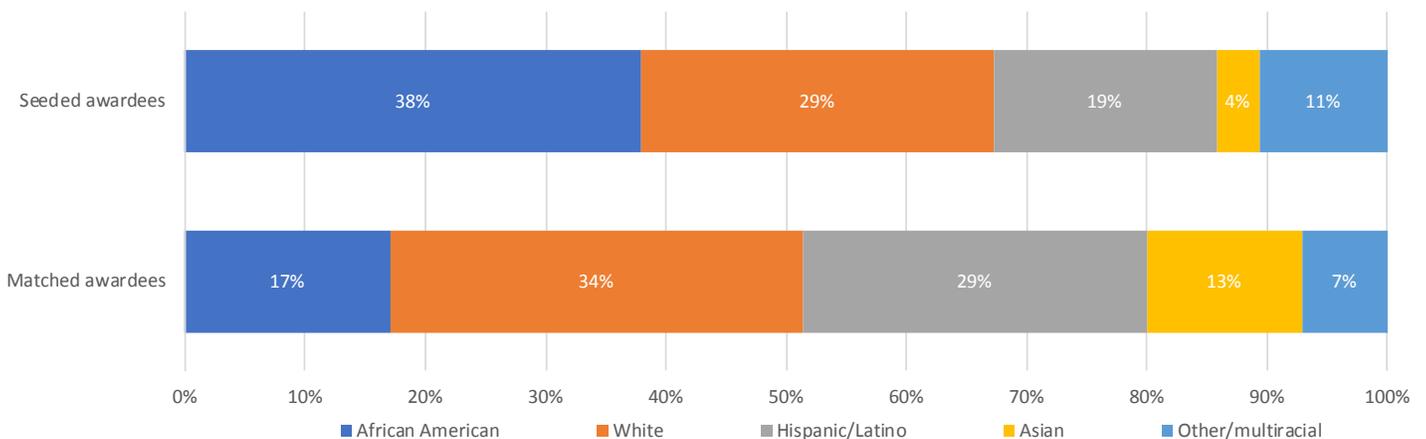


Applicants and awardees were heavily concentrated in certain geographies, with nearly two-thirds (68 percent) of awardees from Jackson County (MO). About 80 percent of the adult learner applicants and awardees indicated that they had gone to high school in the Kansas City area.

College Savings Match Highlights

- Expecting to award 1,000 accounts, there were only 428 applicants, and KCS awarded 118 seeded accounts, and 70 four-to-one matched accounts.
- Compared with applicants, awardees were more likely to be female, persons of color, low income, and from Jackson County. Awardees were also more likely to have parents without bachelor's degrees.
- Awardees were chosen separately within each county, leaving applicants in some counties more likely to receive matches than in others, even when applicants had similar characteristics.

The ethnic distribution of college savings match program awardees reveals a marked difference between the seeded and matched awardees



Nearly 70 percent of the awardees report being persons of color. The distribution is markedly different for the two types of awardees: 38 percent of the seeded awardees are African Americans, compared with only 17 percent of the matched awardees; 19 percent of seeded awardees are Hispanic/Latino, compared with 29 percent of the matched awardees.

Site Visit Highlights

- Students, teachers and staff appreciated the opportunity to learn about and focus on college choices through the scholarship application process relatively early in the junior year. They felt that in the past, conversations with college representatives and general information about colleges had mainly been reserved for students in their senior year.
- Awareness and engagement in the application process varied by school. Some students had their essays reviewed and edited by their English teachers and others reported less support from their school or community. In some cases, the essay was accepted as a class assignment. At one school, the entire junior and freshman classes were instructed to apply for the traditional student scholarship and college savings match, respectively.
- The adult learners interviewed felt that there could be much greater outreach about the new adult scholarship opportunity, especially outside of Jackson County.
- The community was highly engaged through the scholarship design and by using volunteer reviewers. In general, the reviewers were quite positive about their training and about the scholarship programs. They appreciated the training opportunities and discussion of how to avoid or minimize potential bias and hoped this topic would be expanded in future years.