

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLLEGE MATCH PROGRAM ON NEAR-PEER ADVISERS

*Educators, researchers, and policymakers across the political spectrum agree that the nation must send more of its young people to college and find ways to help them graduate — especially young people from low-income families. To that end, in 2010 MDRC and a group of partners developed College Match, an innovative school-based college advising program that was pilot-tested in select Chicago and New York City public schools. The MDRC-operated program placed “near-peer” advisers — trained advisers who are recent college graduates — in low-income high schools where they provided college advising to a group of moderate- and high-achieving students, guiding them toward selective colleges where retention and graduation rates are high and they had better odds of success. Here a group of advisers reflect on the influence of the program on their career trajectories.*



*Ebelio Mondragon,  
Admissions  
Advisor, University  
of California at  
Berkeley*

The College Match Program has gotten me to think more deeply about college access and where students tend to apply. Currently I am employed by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of California at Berkeley. In this position, I have done a bit of outreach, customer service, and presentations. I have found that we tend to get many

applications from individuals with more affluent backgrounds and fewer from people in underserved communities. Whenever talking with prospective students, my colleagues and I work to ensure that prospective students are made to feel like we want them at Berkeley. We always encourage them to provide as much information as possible, since we practice a holistic review approach to the application process and look at many different factors when considering a student for admis-

sion. In the future, I envision myself working with first-generation college students to help them stay enrolled.

Before working with College Match I was unsure of the field I wanted to work in, but after College Match I decided I wanted to continue working in education. More specifically, I want to be a school counselor. I fell in love with working with high school seniors and helping these students transition from high school to college. I hope to have my Type 73 certification to be a school counselor in the next five years. I strongly believe that I have landed in a school that supports the success of students and staff, and I hope to continue to make an impact on the lives of the next generation of college graduates.



*Jessica Salazar, Post-  
Secondary Specialist,  
Chicago Public  
Schools*



*Michele L. (Taylor) Howard, College and Career Specialist, Chicago Public Schools*

College Match absolutely changed the trajectory of my career! I realized that college was a necessity for students, but I didn't consider how many "college-ready" students had no idea how to get there, whether they were first-generation college students or not. I had no idea prior to this program how much support was needed to help students and

families bridge the gap to college admission and select the best environment for them. The program also helped me understand how many school administrators and teachers need to be encouraged to build systems to support students and families as they navigate the college process. I currently serve as a College and Career Specialist in the Chicago Public Schools, supporting 60 high school and elementary schools. In this role I work closely with school administrators, counselors, and postsecondary institutions to create those support systems and to provide partnerships with other postsecondary organizations. For the next five years I see myself remaining at Chicago Public Schools to gain more insight on what is needed to support postsecondary planning and success in larger school districts. In 10 years I plan to have a master's degree in public policy that will allow me to have a more direct impact on the policies that affect school reform.



*Kelli Hammond Antonides, Lead Career and College Advisor, Central Carolina Community College*

The knowledge I gained as an adviser working with the College Match Program has provided a great foundation for me — and one that I have been able to build on extensively. Before working with College Match, I had spent a year as a college adviser with the College Advising Corps and had earned my master of arts in teaching. Following my time with the

program, I taught for a couple of years and have now found myself back in an advising role, but in a different capacity. Currently, I work with Central Carolina Works as part of a regional initiative that promotes dual enrollment in high school and college. My time in Chicago and those I worked with there affirmed the love I have for advising and helping students reach their postsecondary goals. Because of the opportunities and experiences given to me during my time with College Match, I now have plans to pursue my PhD in education within the next five years.



*For more insights on how to promote college match, read the latest report from the College Match project, In Search of a Match: A Guide for Helping Students Make Informed College Choices, available at no cost in printed form or on the MDRC website at <http://www.mdrc.org/project/college-match-program>.*



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