Title: **The Impact of Virtual College Advising on Disadvantaged Students' College Enrollment: Evidence from a Random Assignment Field Experiment**

**Authors:** Meredith Phillips, UCLA and Sarah Reber, UCLA and NBER

Abstract

Despite well-documented large and growing returns to attending college, youth from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to attend college at lower rates than their more-advantaged peers. This gap is not fully explained by differences in academic preparation, and college enrollment and completion appear to have become more dependent on family income in recent decades. This paper reports the results of a randomized field trial of two variants of V-SOURCE, a college-counseling intervention designed to address informational and social support barriers to college enrollment, as well as students’ tendency to forget or procrastinate deadlines. V-SOURCE served students from the spring of the junior year through the summer after high school graduation. The program was delivered “virtually” via the internet, phone, email, text message, and social networking platforms, making it relatively low-cost and scalable. Administrative and self-reported data reveal that students took advantage of V-SOURCE services and found them helpful, and the program had moderate effects on the college application process, including SAT taking and the application portfolio. However, we do not find evidence of effects of the program on college enrollment outcomes on average. Instead, we find suggestive evidence that the program had moderate effects on college enrollment outcomes for students with relatively low GPAs, especially for those in the more intensive version of the intervention, perhaps because those students had less access to other sources of help.

This work is supported by IES Award R305A110809.