



**“Placing Everything on the Table”:
A View of the White-Williams Scholars’ Peer Academic Development
Standardized Curriculum**

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July 2005

***Research for Action (RFA)** is a non-profit organization engaged in education research and reform. Founded in 1992, RFA works with educators, students, parents, and community members to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. RFA work falls along a continuum of highly participatory research and evaluation to more traditional policy studies.*

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The students leave a PAD session and they walk in here together laughing and joking. They come here to further explore something they heard at the PAD session and to check things out on the computer. The PAD sessions give them an opportunity to bond. It's like you see someone at the bus stop over and over. Then you realize that they are going to the same destination. So after that you look for the person and you talk regularly. Well, the PAD sessions act as a vehicle for scholars to meet and talk with others going to the same destination. (Gratz Success Center Liaison Mentor)

I. Introduction

The above remark describing students in White-Williams Scholars' Peer Academic Development (PAD) program captures one observer's thoughts on the program's significance. Over the course of the work described in this memo, Research for Action learned that White-Williams Scholars has a long and distinguished history of service to youth. As early as 1917, the White-Williams Foundation succeeded in touching the lives of area students by providing counseling service to both elementary and secondary youth. During the Depression Years, the White-Williams Foundation took up the cause of high school age youths' struggle to both earn a diploma and contribute to the family's income by providing financial support that allowed qualifying students to remain in school. More recently, the foundation, now named White-Williams Scholars (WWS) has focused on providing monthly financial support, college access information, college visits, and cultural experiences to high achieving low-income high school students (titled Scholars) who meet the established academic (grades) and income guidelines.

In this memo we report the findings from an evaluability study of the implementation of the Peer Academic Development (PAD) *standardized* curriculum. A recently completed Strategic Planning Process mandated that WWS staff develop a *standardized* curriculum for all PAD schools. Additional goals outlined in the mandate were to: 1) reach more potential Scholars; 2) to foster peer support among existing Scholars; and 3) to create a culture wherein Scholars understand that high achievement is rewarded. The PAD *standardized* curriculum serves as an intervention to support Scholars' (in the more troubled neighborhood high schools) ability to:

- understand that college is a real possibility for them;
- provide information about *college preparedness* based on important insights about the world of college and Scholars' individual needs;
- improve Scholars' academic readiness for college; and
- to enhance their ability to advocate for their needs; for example, to request advanced placement courses to strengthen their college application profile.

As one staff member stated:

“We wanted to move beyond simply providing the stipend support so that they would stay in school and go to college; but [help ensure] that they’re actually prepared once they go.”

Our charge, as the evaluators, was to determine whether the PAD *standardized* curriculum was sufficiently well conceptualized and consistently implemented to undertake a formal evaluation aimed at determining program outcomes for Scholars.

The Peer Academic Development (PAD) Program

In 1997, White-Williams Scholars first piloted the Peer Academic Development Program. The PAD program was designed to both bolster the participating schools’ capacity to support qualifying high-achieving youth and to provide direct services (in addition to stipends) for Scholars in the highest poverty high schools. Often, these schools were struggling to balance limited resources with growing student needs. In explaining the rationale for this intervention, one staff member commented:

“PAD was created because we realized that there was a serious disconnect between the resources that some of the neighborhood schools were receiving compared to other schools, and the schools receiving less had the highest concentration of low-income students.”

A review and analysis of the PAD curriculum delivered over the last few years guided the WWS staff in creating a *standardized* PAD curriculum. The *standardization* of the existing PAD curriculum represents a programmatic shift to ensure that Scholars received similar curriculum content (support, information, skill-building, opportunities) irregardless of the problematic school contexts they were caught in. The PAD *standardized* curriculum lists standards by grade levels 9 through 12 and includes activities and strategies for academic skill-building. In addition, it lists the time frames required for both the test-taking and financial application processes Scholars need to attend college. Listing the curriculum components by grade level provided a road map for WWS program coordinators to follow.

To increase accountability from all participants in the PAD program, the WWS staff required the Scholars and the school administrators to sign a contract for the 2004-2005 school year. The contract lists the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for participation in the PAD program. Thus, the two WWS program coordinators began the 2004-2005 school year by explicitly stating expectations and responsibilities to WWS school personnel and the Scholars. It was expected that WWS program coordinators (with the on-going support, knowledge, and involvement of the entire WWS staff) would present the curriculum in an accomplished manner while also taking into account the various challenges of each individual school context.

Purpose of the Evaluability Study

In the fall of 2004, Research for Action (RFA) began an evaluability study of this early implementation of the Peer Academic Development *standardized* curriculum. The purpose was to provide WWS program staff, administrators, and Board members (as well as other key stakeholders) with a deeper understanding of the environmental contexts and individual

characteristics of a sample group of Scholars and a framework of indicators for measuring curriculum implementation of the *standardized* PAD program activities. In addition, RFA used the analysis of qualitative data presented in this memo to build an Indicators Framework and to inform the design of a multi-year, mixed method evaluation of the White-Williams Scholars Peer Academic Development *standardized* curriculum.

The evaluability research followed specific lines of inquiry: 1) creating a typology of the sample group of Scholars; 2) characterizing school contexts of three neighborhood high schools receiving the PAD program; 3) understanding what factors contributed to the successful delivery of the PAD *standardized* curriculum, and; 4) determining evaluation questions to guide an in-depth, rigorous evaluation.

II. Methods

In consultation with RFA, WWS staff selected three high schools based on their histories with WWS and the PAD curriculum: Edison, Gratz, and Strawberry Mansion. Edison was characterized as a high-functioning PAD school. Gratz was characterized as moderate functioning, having gone through some fluctuations from high functioning to moderate, and Strawberry Mansion was characterized as a low-functioning PAD school. We observed, interviewed, and surveyed approximately 140 Scholars across the three school sites.

Sampling of Scholars

Focus group sampling: WWS program coordinators and school counselors selected a range of Scholars based on grade level, gender, engagement with PAD / visibility in school. N=22.

Survey sampling: All Scholars who attended the PAD sessions during the times we observed were surveyed. N=114.

Over a period of eight months, we engaged in the following research activities:

- Interviewed members of the WWS staff;
- Reviewed WWS documents and artifacts;
- Interviewed administrators and counselors at each of the three high schools;
- Facilitated feedback session with the Program Committee of the Board of WWS;
- Conducted focus groups with WWS at each of the three high schools;
- Surveyed WWS at each of the three high schools;
- Reviewed key data from the School District of Philadelphia, as well as data provided from WWS staff;
- Performed a member check with the WWS staff regarding an outline of this memo;
- Observed a total of 12 PAD sessions and events at each of the three high schools.

Logic Model

We found that the resources or inputs (activities, strategies, information and support) of the PAD *standardized* curriculum varied as enacted at each of the three neighborhood high schools. This variation was based upon key differences within the individual school contexts (school-based personnel, space, and timing/delivery of the PAD *standardized* curriculum) and also reflected the particular strengths of the two WWS program coordinators.

Although strengths and challenges in implementing all of the Standards of the PAD *standardized* curriculum varied by school; we found that across *all* of the schools:

Peer Academic Development provides support, information, and opportunity for participating Scholars to think more critically about their futures which in turn serves as a “safe harbor” for their navigating and negotiating next steps for a successful future. (See Figure 1)

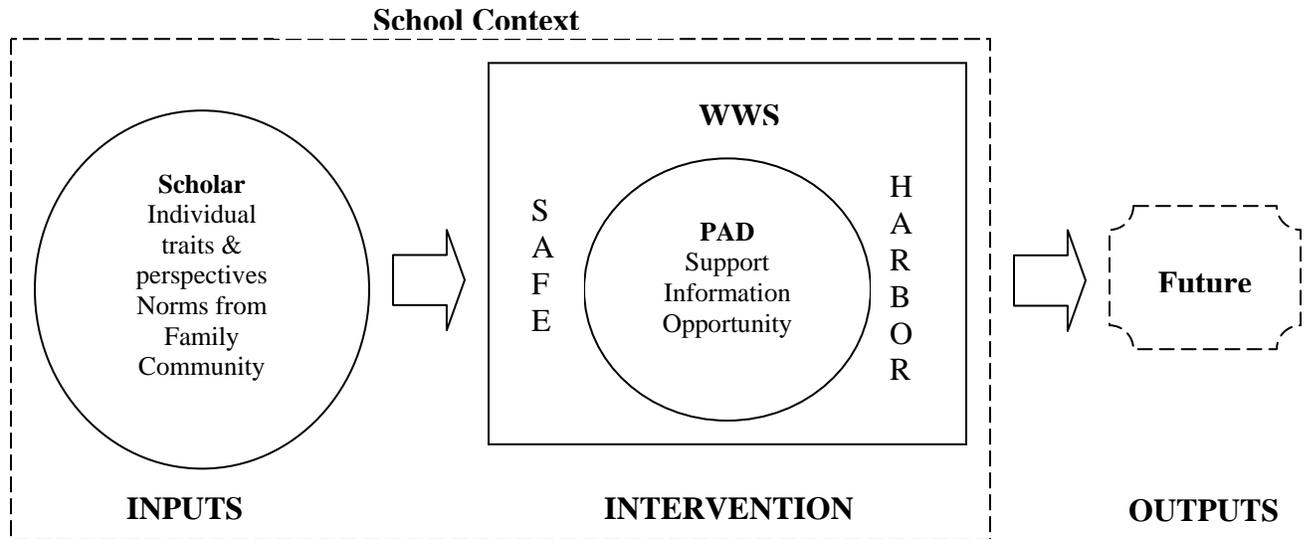


Figure 1. Descriptive Diagram of the Logic Model

Each individual White-Williams Scholar possesses personal traits, perspectives, dispositions, and sets of lived experiences that are informed and influenced by the norms of their families, peers, communities, and school contexts. PAD *standardized* curriculum sessions delivered by the WWS program provide a space where Scholars can critically examine, explore, and challenge themselves and the norms governing academic and other areas of their lives. In addition, the PAD *standardized* curriculum fosters what some Scholars described as a “safe space” where they received the support to expand their horizons, to try on new ideas, and to dream about a life after college that differs dramatically from what they see in their neighborhoods, schools, and the media. As a result of their participation in the WWS *standardized* PAD curriculum, the Scholars report that they feel better equipped to navigate, negotiate, and make decisions concerning their futures.

We found that the PAD *standardized* curriculum has a core set of concepts and activities that can be evaluated. We recommend an in-depth longitudinal study to verify if the intervention (PAD *standardized* curriculum) leads directly to intended intermediate and long-range outcomes of college attendance, college completion, and positive labor market outcomes, as well as positive and affirming life habits of self-advocacy and continuous learning.

Plantz, Greenway and Hendricks (1997, p.15) inform us that: “*Outcomes are usually benefits or changes in participants’ knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, behavior, condition or status.*”

For WWS to understand the young people in the PAD program, it must understand the complexities of urban youth attempting to balance school, social, and family needs while making critical decisions about who they really are and what are their potential next steps in an environment that offers them too little support.

In the next section we present a typology of a sample group of Scholars from three high schools receiving the PAD *standardized* curriculum. In the following section we describe the PAD sessions. We then present indicators for measuring PAD *standardized* curriculum’s programmatic performance. We conclude with a three year, in-depth research design for an evaluation of the PAD *standardized* curriculum’s impact on Scholars.

III. Results

The White-Williams Scholars

During the 2004-2005 school year WWS provided stipends and PAD programming to over 800 students in twelve neighborhood high schools. We met with, observed, interviewed, and surveyed approximately 140 Scholars from Edison, Gratz, and Strawberry Mansion High Schools. Across the three schools we found that Scholars were conceptualizing the significance of college to their future life chances. At the same time, many voiced a strong belief that their own motivation, focus, and hard work, in addition to resources and significant support, would be critical to overcome the many obstacles they faced in working towards a successful future. Quite candidly, Scholars spoke of the struggles to keep their focus and to maintain good grades as an on-going challenge. In creating the typology of Scholars presented later in this section, we spoke one-on-one and in focus groups with Scholars, interviewed school administrators, counselors, WWS staff, and program coordinators, surveyed Scholars and observed them in PAD sessions.

The majority of the Scholars we met were unequivocal in affirming the importance of the information and support provided by WWS program coordinators. Over half shared how difficult it can be to find the right information for college going on a timely basis and the majority credit the WWS program coordinators with both listening, providing timely information, and encouragement. One 12th grader interviewed summed up the dilemma often found at troubled neighborhood high schools:

“There’s a lot of people that know stuff that some of the counselors might not know. That’s how you get your information. You got to swim around and look who’s open and who’s willing to tell you and to listen and help you out.”

Scholars on “Being Scholars”

We were surprised that the majority of the scholars we spoke with did not name their designation as White-Williams Scholars as problematic. They conceded that some “teasing takes place,” and

both their teachers and other students sometimes hold “unrealistic expectations” of them because they are considered “smart;” however, we found them both humble and philosophical about the “honor” of being named a Scholar. One 12th grader stated,

“I don’t think that there’s any down points to being a smart student. A lot of people look up to you and ask you to help them with things, it’s like school spirit. You’re the ones that will lead your school into a new beginning of success or something.”

When pushed to name a downside to her designation as a Scholar, an 11th grader shared:

“I think there’s no downside to it. People look up to you and ask you questions and you help them. You change people. You change a lot of people, they want to be like you, they want to get whatever you have. Because a lot of teachers know you and they know that you’re smart and you get a lot of recognition and stuff.”

Posing an alternative viewpoint an 11th grader theorized,

“It’s hard trying to know and recognize your capabilities. It’s hard doing that because you have people looking at you. But as far as the teachers, they’re not saying things like that to me, but you can see it [their expectations] in the actions.”

Quite unanimously, Scholars across differences of race, gender, and school settings internalized their designation as a White-Williams Scholar as an “honor.”

Administrators and counselors on “White-Williams Scholars”

Consistently, administrators and counselors in the three schools named the Scholars as the best and the brightest. One counselor shared,

“White-Williams Scholars are at the very top ... the other students look up to the WWS students. These are the students who “get money” ... And why do they get money? Because their grades are good, but the kids have not separated themselves or isolated themselves, but they do have the cohort of the WWS students, and they oftentimes will try to encourage others.”

However, a few administrators pondered if Scholars were significantly visible to the school population and could WWS do more to encourage Scholars to be school leaders, role models, and mentors to non-Scholars. In other words, while individual Scholars talked about their roles as leaders, administrators suggested they might play a more strategic role school-wide.

As anticipated, we found many similarities in the environmental contexts of Scholars in the three high schools. However, our analysis of Scholars’ report of their peer group, school, family, and neighborhood circumstances provided a few distinguishing characteristics presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distinguishing Characteristics of Scholars Across the Three High Schools		
Edison Scholars	Gratz Scholars	Strawberry Mansion Scholars
Scholars viewed multi-culturalism as a positive influence that built their more global perspectives and knowledge.	Scholars were deeply connected to one another through association with one SLC/Counselor.	Scholars articulated how difficult it is to get information in this school and thus the strong determination/resiliency needed to “make it.”
Issues of language barriers along with pride in their cultural heritage	Older Scholars (12 th) dominated as the “role models” for others	Younger Scholars (10 th) dominated as a connected group.
Several of the Latino Scholars named the PAD sessions/school as the only site to talk about college going.	Several used their PAD time together to tutor, encourage and provide feedback to one another. They reported more friendships, relationships with non-Scholars.	Several expressed: <i>sadness about the conditions in their neighborhood</i> and planned to return after college and “change things for the better.”

Typology of Scholars

Using all of the data sets we collected about Scholars, we describe the “types” and give an approximate percentage for each of these types. Many of the Scholars fit more than a single type; in those cases we selected a dominate “voice” to characterize them.

Ambassador: consistently speak highly of the PAD program and reach out to/recruit their classmates whom they consider potential Scholar candidates. They carry an “internal image” of a model Scholar and they attempt to live up to the image. These Scholars are frequently named by counselors and administrators as exemplary young people. (12%)

Nurturer/Translator: consistently do “active listening” of other Scholars before, during, and after PAD sessions. They exhibit on-going empathy and caring for others, and where appropriate they assist the WWS program coordinators in delivering the *standardized* curriculum. Spanish-speaking Scholars assuming this role frequently serve as translators. Younger (10th grade) and older (12th Grade) female Scholars dominated this type. (28%)

Realist: name the advantages of being a Scholar in realistic language. Emblematic of their responses to questions of what they liked about PAD sessions; one 11th grader in this type responded, “*I like that we get money, they feed us, and we get to leave our boring classes.*” A few realists recommend that the PAD *standardized* curriculum include information about entry into Trade Union Apprenticeship and additional non-traditional post-college trajectories. Males dominated in this type. (7 %)

Separatist: express a general knowledge structure that is, “*view of themselves, other people, and the world more broadly*” (Bradshaw, 2004, p.4) that includes a deliberate decision to avoid “kids

who aren't going anywhere in life." Separatists consistently spoke of their personal strategy of avoiding problematic peers. More Edison Scholars were placed in this type. (15%)

Soloist: claim that they experience school and the PAD sessions as a "solo player." While representing only a small percentage of the types of Scholars in this sample, these few were quite adamant in self-identifying as loners who have learned not to count on others. One Scholar we placed in this category did not identify herself as a loner, however; her strong religious presence and desire to pursue a future as a religious leader influenced her limited interactions with other Scholars during our observation. (3%)

Spiritualist: express gratitude for the "blessings" from their participation as Scholars. They offered overwhelmingly positive comments about the program, their peer Scholars, and the WWS program coordinators. Consistently, they described the spiritual significance of adults "caring about what happens to us," and "taking time out of their everyday life to make sure that we succeed in life." (25%)

Strategist: openly name the strategies they use to make their designation as a White-Williams Scholar "work" for them. They named very specific benefits from PAD sessions. For example, they felt the WWS program coordinators gave them a "heads up and head start," as well as insider tips on college. Scholars in this type were most likely to strategize when to attend PAD sessions and when to attend to other obligations occurring at the same time as the PAD sessions. (10%)

Scholars face a universe of challenges

Irregardless of their status as Scholars, most of the young people we met face a range of challenges that include:

- racism,
- language barriers,
- economic status,
- the "value" of their local high school education versus the "value" of an education in another public high school in Philadelphia or across the country,
- lack of preparedness for college-level work, and
- familial responsibilities.

Sadly, some Scholars felt that neither their families nor their neighborhoods offered support or encouragement to either talk about or explore college attendance.

The PAD Sessions

What I like the most is that it helps us decide our future. They talk a lot about colleges and universities, and how hard it is, so when we get there we already know what to expect.

-Edison Scholar

This Scholar, like the majority of Scholars across the three high schools, cited participation in the PAD sessions as being a significant factor in their college aspirations and plans. As a program situated in under-funded, urban, public schools, the WWS program and the PAD sessions are important resources for participating Scholars. The PAD sessions are offered bi-weekly at all three

high schools, for one academic period or during Scholars' lunch period. At Edison and Strawberry Mansion, Scholars meet by grade level, with the ninth and tenth grade Scholars meeting together. At Gratz, all of the Scholars meet together, across grade levels.

In this section of the memo, we take a closer look at how the school context affects delivery of the PAD curriculum, how White-Williams Coordinators work within the school context to address Scholars' needs, and how Scholars feel about the PAD sessions.

School Context

As noted earlier, Edison, Gratz, and Strawberry Mansion High Schools were selected for closer examination in this evaluability study based on their histories with the PAD curriculum. Table 2 presents demographic information on each of the high schools.

Table 2. Demographics of White-Williams Scholars at Respective High Schools, during the 2004-2005 Academic Year			
	Edison	Gratz	Strawberry Mansion
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Predominantly Latino	Predominantly African – American	Predominantly African – American
<i>White – Williams Scholars*</i>	266	65	105
<i>Student enrollment</i>	2763	1871	915
<i>Percentage of White – Williams Scholars</i>	10%	3%	11%

*These figures represent students who are in the White – Williams Scholars system, including those who are in good standing, on probation, and on the waiting list.

The school context is a significant factor in the success of the PAD sessions. WWS staff, especially the two program coordinators, endeavor to build strong relationships with school administrators and counselors in order to secure the basic structure necessary for the support of WWS and the effective delivery of the PAD *standardized* curriculum. The WWS staff's - particularly the coordinator's - ability to form productive and flexible working relationships with the school's administrative staff impacts directly the effectiveness of the PAD sessions.

To ensure that each high school provided the basic level of support to sustain the PAD sessions, WWS staff requested that each school's principal agree to a contract. The principals at each high school signed and returned the contracts. Given differences in the school contexts (shaped by an array of factors including school culture, leadership styles, personality dynamics, and the importance placed on the WWS program and PAD sessions), the administrative staffs worked to comply with the requirements of the contract. Table 3 provides a comparison of the PAD sessions across the three sites.

Table 3. Comparisons of the PAD Sessions at Respective High Schools			
	Edison	Gratz	Strawberry Mansion
<i>Space for PAD sessions</i>	Consistent	Consistent	Inconsistent
<i>Structure of PAD sessions</i>	By grade*	Combined grades	By grade/ Combined grades**

*Sessions for ninth and tenth grade Scholars are combined.

**Over the course of the evaluability study, the PAD sessions explored different formats.

The effectiveness of the PAD sessions is related to the stability of the location for the PAD sessions, as well as the availability of other resources (e.g., computer lab). Frequent changes in the location of the PAD sessions affected the Scholars' punctuality and attendance, as well as the tone and duration of the PAD sessions. Edison and Gratz High Schools were able to assign the PAD sessions a consistent space within the school. Edison Scholars met in the library, and the Gratz Scholars met in a large, sunny conference room. At both sites, school officials included the PAD sessions in the morning announcements, reminding Scholars of the session. The location of the PAD sessions at Strawberry Mansion shifted frequently. The WWS Program Coordinator regularly negotiated where the session would take place upon arrival to the school. Announcements were made to inform Scholars of the session's location. In addition to space for the PAD sessions, the coordinator also needed space to meet individually with Scholars. At Edison, the coordinator met with Scholars in the counselor's office or the library. At Gratz, the coordinator met with students in the Student Success Center. The Strawberry Mansion coordinator often stayed throughout the remainder of the day and met with Scholars in the room where the PAD session took place.

Factors within the school context determined when Scholars were available to meet for the PAD sessions. At Edison, students were able to meet by grade level. Ninth and tenth graders were excused from their classes, and juniors and seniors participated in the PAD sessions during their respective lunch periods. The structure of the PAD sessions shifted at Strawberry Mansion. Initially, the Scholars met across grades, but changes were made and PAD sessions were scheduled to meet during each grade's lunch period. At Gratz, Scholars met across grade level. Gratz Scholars were excused from their classes to attend the sessions. The coordinator utilized small group activities to address the grade-specific needs of all students.

Program Coordinators and the Delivery of the PAD Curriculum

The program coordinator's understanding of the school context and the Scholars' needs influences their ability to deliver the PAD *standardized* curriculum. Each school has a distinct school context that program coordinators must decipher and navigate in order to support the Scholars.

Maria Cruz, Latino, the veteran coordinator, is exceptionally positioned at Edison High School. As a former White-Williams Scholar, graduate of Edison, and recent college graduate, Maria's connections to and interactions with current Edison Scholars are at once personal and professional. She also maintained a strong rapport with members of the administration and a cadre of teachers. Maria has a complex understanding of the Scholars' academic and social

challenges, as well as their strengths. Her facility in a classroom setting speaks to her educational background (teacher certification). With PAD sessions as large as 40 students, Maria is able to engage Scholars in meaningful ways and address their individual and group needs. Easily speaking with Scholars in English and Spanish, she is adept at meeting Scholars where they are and assisting them with their skill development and procession to college.

Dennis Green, African American and new to the program this year, is the program coordinator at Gratz and Strawberry Mansion High Schools. He learned to assess and address the challenges of his high schools. He demonstrated patience in dealing with difficult school-based personnel personalities. Given the size and grade-level range of his PAD session at Gratz and the irregularity of the PAD sessions at Strawberry Mansion, Dennis adopted the strategy of meeting individually/in small groups with Scholars to address their needs and concerns. He regularly reminds and encourages Gratz Scholars to meet with him in the Student Success Centers. Strawberry Mansion students know that they can return to the site of the PAD session to find Dennis for individual consultation. Here, he works one-on-one with Scholars – carefully walking them through the college application process, answering their questions and concerns, offering encouragement and motivation. He also helps students develop their writing skills, critical thinking skills, and study habits.

For most Scholars, the program coordinator is the key to introducing them to the possibility of college. One Scholar shares: *“Now that I am in the program, I do want to go to college. Knowing that this program is going to help me get scholarships and stuff like that I do want to go because now I have a way in.”* Another Scholar expresses:

“In the beginning, the meetings are a way for Maria to take time out and actually listen to us because I can say that she’s helped me in making a decision based on college. In the beginning, I was very, very uncertain about whether or not I wanted to go to college or just work. But she made me see things in a whole different perspective because of the fact that I went through experiences based on visiting the college and I also worked with students in college. A lot of things Maria made more clear: the form of essays, helping us get things done on time, and scheduling. Not that it was all about papers and getting things out, but she took us step by step.”

In addition to expanding their horizons, Scholars appreciate how the coordinators help them each step of the way. One Scholar explains that Dennis, *“gives us help. We can go to his office anytime; he is always there.”*

Within PAD sessions, coordinators guide students in activities that foster peer support, build skills, and increase their knowledge base. In sessions at Gratz and Strawberry Mansion, Scholars interviewed one another about their college and career goals. In another activity, the coordinator facilitated Scholars’ development of their college essay by taking them through a series of smaller writing tasks. Scholars developed their writing skills, critical thinking skills, and practiced peer review. At Edison, Scholars completed and discussed handouts that helped them to profile their dream school (9th and 10th grade) and develop a postsecondary plan (11th grade). Both assignments required students to understand the advantages and disadvantages of living on campus, school’s location, school’s racial and ethnic composition, and other factors important to

making decisions about where to attend. Across the sites, coordinators adapted the PAD curriculum to address Scholars’ needs and prepare them for college.

Scholars on PAD Sessions

Scholars were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences in the PAD sessions. The majority attribute their knowledge of college to their participation in the PAD sessions. Many scholars express sentiments similar to this Scholar at Edison: “*If it wasn’t for [the coordinator] talking to me about college, I don’t think I would be going to college right now.*” Table 4 illustrates Scholars responses to a survey about their post-secondary plans.

	Edison (n=83)				Gratz (n=20)				Strawberry Mansion (n=10)				Total
	9th	10th	11th	12th	9th	10th	11th	12th	9th	10th	11 th	12th	
4-yr college	4	21	21	13		3	9	8		7		1	87
2-yr college	2	2	8	2						1			15
Vocational training			2	1									3
Military	1	2											3
Workforce	1	1	1	1						1			5
Total	8	26	32	17		3	9	8		9		1	113

The majority of Scholars (77%) across the three schools reported their plans to enroll in a four-year college upon graduation from high school. Every Scholar at Gratz High School expressed an intention to attend college. Another segment of Scholars (13%) declared that they would enroll in community college.

Scholars acknowledge the importance of peer interactions around college. Like many Scholars, a student at Gratz explained: “*What I like best about the PAD program is that all White-Williams Scholars get the opportunity to come together and share our similar goals in life.*” Within the context of the PAD sessions, Scholars supported one another’s academic achievements and college aspirations.

In conclusion, the PAD sessions foster a space where students can critically examine, explore, and challenge themselves and the norms that govern other areas of their lives. Within the *standardized* PAD curriculum, Scholars acquire information about college, learn of various opportunities, and receive support from the WWS program coordinator and from one another. Participation in the PAD sessions equips the Scholars to navigate and negotiate life after high school, particularly college. In the next section of the memo, we introduce indicators to help measure the performance of the program.

IV. Measuring the Impact of the PAD Standardized Curriculum: An Indicators Framework

Reviewing past work on indicators frameworks (Gold, Simon & Brown, 2003) we found that most studies use approaches that draw on a review of the literature and empirical research. One focus during this evaluability study was to understand important characteristics of the scholars and the universe of challenges they faced both in and outside of school. A second focus was to explore what Scholars report most engaged, supported, and influenced their pathway towards college attendance and completion.

As described previously, Scholars' race, gender, family, neighborhood contexts, and their individual meaning-making processes all impacted each Scholar's engagement with the PAD *standardized* curriculum. Notably, many Scholars identified the fragility of "good grades" and their on-going struggle to maintain their academic eligibility amidst the challenges of their self-perceived general cognitive ability, scores on standardized tests as well as family and peer pressures.

Looking across the data, we were able to identify areas we think point to or indicate potential ways to measure the PAD program's performance. We developed five Performance Indicator Areas to measure the PAD *standardized* curriculum:

1. **Scholar Engagement** is the Scholar's investment in, and effort directed toward learning, understanding or mastering the knowledge, skills or information that the PAD *standardized* curriculum imparts. In addition, it may include the social roles and relationships between Scholars and with the WWS; program coordinator.
2. **Program Visibility and Capital** is the solid name recognition and history of WWS in Philadelphia high schools. This recognition and historical financial support for students provides high-level capital and distinction which can translate into clout to monitor compliance (space, time, and competent staff) with the contractual stipulations and increase WWS staff's ability to advocate for Scholars.
3. **Benchmarks for College-Going** are the standard steps that college-bound students need to know and be able to do and include, but are not limited to, academic, test-taking, and financial matters.
4. **Coordinator Competencies** are the coordinator's commitment to a Scholar's learning, knowledge of PAD *standardized* curriculum and the ability to present the components in a seamless fashion. It also includes interpersonal skills, an ability to navigate the school environments, and the ability to create a safe, nurturing environment to help each Scholar to grow.
5. **Improved Opportunities for Scholars** include measurable systems of support, information, and action that demonstrate that Scholars have benefited from participation in the PAD *standardized* curriculum. These include but are not limited to: enhanced self-advocacy, increased college attendance, and increased participation in summer programs.

“Indicators can be used as the basis for setting expectations for accomplishments, pinpointing not only the potential long-term outcomes of programmatic efforts, but also the often invisible or less appreciated impacts that set the stage for and reinforce those long-term impacts” (Simon, Brown, Christman, and Hartmann, 2005 , p. 27). This framework can be used in a variety of practical ways; for example: 1) to assist in planning and self assessment of the PAD *standardized* curriculum; 2) to assist in refining and monitoring the program’s outputs; and, 3) to guide future research and evaluation.

Below, the performance areas are listed along with indicators

Performance Areas:

Indicators:

WWS PAD *Standardized*
Curriculum

1) Scholar Engagement

- High attendance at sessions, special events and additional skill-building sessions
- High completion of PAD assignments
- High level of intellectual interactions with other Scholars and WWS program coordinator
- High participation in full range of PAD incentives and utilizing information that links them to additional supports as needed

2) Program Visibility and
Capital

- WWS encourage leadership roles of Scholars in schools
- WWS administrators check-in regularly with school administrators/ send end-of- year progress reports
- WWS administrator monitors contract terms
- WWS program coordinators participate in on-going school-based Leadership/Professional Development
- WWS advocates for Scholars’ appropriate course assignments
- WWS volunteers bring value-added opportunities for mentoring, and skill building

3) Benchmarks for College-
Going:

- High School course selection, e.g., AP classes
- Proficient at essay writing
- College Entrance Test-Taking/Prep
- Numerous extra-curricular activities
- Solid financial knowledge for college-going
- Complete appropriate grade level prerequisites for college

- 4) Coordinator Competencies
 - Attendance/tardiness
 - Deep knowledge of standardized curriculum
 - Accomplished, seamless delivery of curriculum
 - Ability to motivate group and attend to individual Scholars' needs
 - Commitment to all "Types" of Scholars
 - Teaching strategies
- 5) Improved Opportunities for Scholars
 - Enhanced literacy
 - Enhanced self-advocacy
 - Scholars use their designation in college-application process
 - Rate of college acceptance/attendance
 - High percentage of Scholars receiving grants, scholarships and financial aid
 - Active participation in summer programs

We recognize that the schools receiving the PAD *standardized* curriculum were selected based on problematic levels of low achievement. Thus, the assumption is that WWS program coordinators expect *to experience* and unfortunately to witness *Scholars experiencing* various levels of dysfunctional and disturbing school-based issues. However, we offer the Indicators Framework above to endorse an organizational fabric that provides the supports and resources to, in spite of the problematic school situations, continue to implement, refine, monitor, and reflect on the performance of the PAD *standardized* curriculum.

V. Conclusion and Rationale for Research/Evaluation Design

In this memo RFA made the claim that: *Peer Academic Development provides support, information and opportunity for participating Scholars to think more critically about their futures which in turn serves a "safe harbor" for their navigating and negotiating next steps for a successful future.*

We found that all of the WWS staff function together to create an on-going system of support to the program coordinators. To that end, the implementation of PAD *standardized* curriculum has used substantial organizational capital to create and support the curriculum's standards across all of the PAD schools. The following questions continue to bubble up:

How do we know that the PAD standardized curriculum helps high-achieving low-income students go to and complete college?

Does the PAD standardized curriculum address/lessen the negative effects of the significant variation among the high schools receiving PAD?

What are the differences in college attendance between similar students receiving stipends only and those receiving stipends and the PAD standardized curriculum?

As stated earlier, our charge was to determine whether the PAD *standardized* curriculum was sufficiently well conceptualized and consistently implemented to undertake a formal evaluation aimed at determining program outcomes for Scholars.

Although we were able to confirm the delivery of core components of the PAD *standardized* curriculum; we believe that the five Performance Measure Indicators: (Scholar engagement, program visibility in the school, attention to the benchmarks for college-going, coordinator competencies, and a sense of improved opportunities for Scholars), need a data collection and monitoring process in order to conduct a rigorous evaluation study.

We found that the PAD *standardized* curriculum has a core set of concepts and activities that can be evaluated. To that end, we recommend that White-Williams Scholars move forward with securing funding to undertake a formal evaluation aimed at determining PAD *standardized* curriculum's program outcomes for Scholars across all of the PAD sites.

White-Williams Scholars is at an important juncture in its 200 year history. Some difficult, complex-even knotty-assessments about the intended outcomes of the PAD program must be addressed. The program staff have internalized that Scholars consider their designation as a "Scholar" an honor; however, it is our understanding that some staff and Board members continue to struggle with issues this evaluability study did not address such as understanding the best way to support and encourage Scholars who slip in and out of eligibility or only achieve academic eligibility once in several years.

We recognize there are important next steps to move the organization's learning and understanding to the point that it can make an informed decision as to how to answer the many complex questions listed above and others we know will emerge.

We recommend that White-Williams Scholars; staff, Board, and key stakeholders:

- Articulate a clear and shared description of the PAD *standardized* curriculums' intended outcomes (Theory of Action);
- Review it's current understanding of the short-term and intermediate outcomes the PAD *standardized* curriculum has produced ;
- Use the Indicators Framework in this memo as a baseline to discuss and refine the PAD *standardized* curriculum and to obtain support for its continued refinement and expansion.

VI. Proposed Empirical Evaluation Research Design

Before WWS is subject to a rigorous evaluation, steps should be taken to build the evaluability capacity of the organization. We propose, therefore, a three year evaluation design that evolves over time, beginning with a capacity building stage in Year 1. In what follows, we describe each stage of this proposed design.

Year 1: Capacity Building for Mixed Methods Evaluation

Quantitative Data Collection

In Year 1, WWS should expand its database beyond data elements that pertain to detailed accounting of stipends, to include data elements that pertain to hypothesized predictors of Scholar's success in college and the US labor market. The expanded database will empower WWS staff to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. Is PAD a predictor of Scholars' college and labor market success? ¹
2. Is PAD combined with a stipend a more powerful predictor of Scholars' college and labor market success than stipend only?
3. Is PAD typology type (i.e., Ambassador, Realists, etc.) a predictor of Scholars' college and labor market success?
4. What empirical criteria can WWS use to focus resources on students most likely to have success in college and the labor market?

To answer these questions, the expanded database should include data elements on the Scholars'

- o background characteristics,
- o engagement in PAD,
- o typology type (i.e., ambassador, realistic, etc.),
- o knowledge acquired through PAD,
- o college preparatory activities while in high school,
- o college outcomes (short, medium, and long-term),
- o labor market outcomes (short, medium, and long-term).

The specific data elements for each of the above categories would of course be negotiated during meetings to discuss the actual implementation of the database expansion. However, we suggest the following variables for each category as a starting point for discussion:

- Scholars' background characteristics: This would include characteristics that can either be exported from the School District of Philadelphia's administrative database such as end of eighth grade standardized test scores or collected through a survey such as interest in attending college. The final decision on which characteristics are included in the

¹ College success is defined as apply, matriculate, and graduate from college. Labor market success is defined as obtaining employment, preferably in an occupation and industry related to the college major.

database would be guided by a literature review, discussions with WWS staff, and common sense regarding how much work is involved in populating the centralized database with agreed upon background characteristic data elements.

- Scholars' neighborhood characteristics
- Scholars' school characteristics
- Scholars' engagement in PAD: Using the indicators discussed earlier, scholars' engagement in PAD would be measured by;
 - Attendance at sessions, special events, and additional skill building sessions,
 - Completion of PAD assignments,
 - Level of interaction intellectual interactions with scholars and the WWS program coordinator as reported by the WWS program coordinator,
 - Participation in full range of PAD incentives,
 - Accessing information links to garner additional supports as needed.
- Scholars' typological type: Using the WWS typology described earlier, WWS staff will classify each scholar as one of the following types:
 - Ambassador
 - Nurturer/Translator
 - Realist
 - Separatist
 - Soloist
 - Spiritualist
 - Strategist
- Scholars' knowledge acquired through PAD: Ultimately, the value of a curriculum is measured by how much students learn what is taught from it. Therefore, we propose that the WWS develop an indicator of how much students have learned from PAD curriculum each year. For each scholar, this indicator score would be entered into the administrative database.
- College preparation effort: Again, using the indicators discussed earlier, Scholars' propensity for attending college would be measured by the following;
 - Number and type of AP courses completed
 - Writing proficiency'
 - College entrance test-taking courses completed.
- Short-term outcomes:
 - Applied to college (4-year, 2-year, or community college) or vocational school,
 - Colleges (or vocational schools) applied to,
 - Accepted to college or vocational school,
 - College (or vocational school) accepted to.
- Intermediate outcomes;
 - Still enrolled in college (or vocational school),
 - College internship participation.
- Long-term outcomes;
 - Graduated from college (or vocational school),
 - Employed in job related to college major,
 - Employed in job unrelated to college major,
 - Civic participation.
 - Community leadership

For the expanded database, WWS should collect data for all Scholars that participated in PAD since its inception (i.e., since 1997). When feasible, the data should be collected using administrative records available electronically through the School District of Philadelphia. However, WWS will need to vary the data collection strategy depending on whether the Scholar cohort is just starting PAD (e.g., will start PAD in fall 2006), is currently in PAD (e.g., started PAD in fall 2004 as high school freshmen), or is a WWS alum who is, potentially, settling into the labor market (e.g., started PAD in fall 1997). Collecting data on the latter two groups of Scholars will require retrospective data collection. For this reason, we briefly discuss data collection strategies for Scholars currently enrolled in PAD or Scholars who are alums.

- Scholars currently enrolled in PAD: Depending on how long a Scholar has been enrolled in PAD, there could be up to three years of data that will need to be collected retrospectively. Some data elements such as Scholar's background, neighborhood, and school characteristics can be collected retrospectively through administrative records available through the School District of Philadelphia. Data elements related specifically to the PAD program such as PAD engagement, knowledge acquired through PAD, typology type, and college prep effort cannot, unless WWS staff was already collecting this information. The point here is that for Scholars currently enrolled in PAD, there will be some data elements that cannot be captured.
- Scholars who are Alums: The advantage of including alums in the database is that WWS staff can survey them about short term outcomes such as college acceptance, intermediate outcomes such as college enrollment, and long term outcomes such as labor market participation. Like Scholars currently participating in WWS, their background, neighborhood, and school characteristics can be captured through administrative records, however, for Scholars who entered PAD prior to 2000, there may be greater challenges in obtaining these records. Data elements related to participation in PAD would be missing because alums were not asked questions to populate these data elements while there were in the program. However, the advantage of including alums in the database is that WWS staff can survey them about short, intermediate, and long term outcomes. While doing so, WWS staff can also ask Scholars general questions about the affect the program had on these outcomes.

Qualitative Data Collection

In addition to the quantitative data elements included in the database, we recommend a qualitative database that houses qualitative data collected through observations, focus groups, and interviews with Scholars, WWS program coordinators, and staff. For example, the qualitative data elements would include the results of interviews, with a random sample of Scholars, both WWS program coordinators, and a purposive sample of WWS program coordinators.² If resources are available, the qualitative research could also include a deep ethnography to establish the school and neighborhood context in which Scholars operate, and to investigate how Scholars cognitively process, negotiate, and navigate PAD. The quantitative and qualitative database would be linked by an assigned identifier for each WWS cohort. Members

² To create the qualitative data elements (or codes) the results of the focus groups, observations, and interviews would need to be coded and then entered into the qualitative database.

of this cohort would have the same unique identifier in quantitative and qualitative database so that the information from both databases could be linked.

Summary of Recommendations for Year 1

To summarize our recommendation for this section, the WWS should expand its existing database to capture Scholars background characteristics, the school and neighborhood context that they function in, and their level of engagement in PAD. The database should be expanded such that WWS staff can build a longitudinal record on the life course of each Scholar, and in doing so, measure outcomes that extend well beyond the high school careers of Scholars. The database can be used to create profiles of WWS alums with respect to the college and labor market success. A qualitative database is also recommended to house the qualitative data that would provide context for the data housed in the quantitative database. More important, the databases can be used to answer questions, posed at the beginning of this section, about the empirical linkages between Scholars' participation in PAD and college and labor market success. Specifically, we propose that an analyst use regression analysis to identify predictors of Scholars' college and labor market outcomes.

Years 2 and 3: Exploring and Refining Predictors of Success

In Year 2, WWS can use the expanded database to test the hypothesized empirical relationship and, hence, answer the research questions posed earlier. This can be done using logistic regression analysis which is a powerful tool for examining the empirical relationship, if one exists, between an independent variable, like Scholars attendance at PAD sessions versus Scholars who do not, and a dependent variable like Scholars who applied to college versus Scholars who did not. Using logistic regression, this relationship, between the independent and dependent variable, can be examined while controlling for (or holding constant) other observable characteristics such as Scholars' background, school, neighborhood, and other PAD engagement characteristics.

We anticipate that Scholars' college and labor market outcomes will be dichotomous (rather than continuous), with the exception of annual earnings. For example, the short-term college outcome of "Scholar applied to college" is dichotomous because either the Scholar applied to college or not. The same can be said for the short-term outcome of "college acceptance," the intermediate outcome of "college enrollment," and the longer term outcomes of "college graduation," and "obtained a job in a college related to major." Given the dichotomous nature of the anticipated outcomes, we recommend the use of a special type of regression analysis called Logistic regression. Logistic regression models in their most general form are specified as follows:

$$(1.1) \quad \text{Log} \left[\frac{\pi_i}{1 - \pi_i} \right] = B_0 + B_1 x_{i1} + \dots + B_k x_{ik}$$

The left-hand side of equation 1.1 represents the log-odds of the dependent variable, π_i . An example of a dependent variable that would be housed in the WWS expanded database is whether or not a Scholar applied to college (π_i). The right-hand side of equation (1.1) shows the

independent variables which include the main independent variable of interest, x_{i1} . An example of a main dependent variable that would be housed in the WWS expanded database is Scholars attendance at PAD sessions, x_{i1} . Another example of a main independent variable of interest is the Scholars typological type (e.g., ambassador, realist, etc.). An example of other independent variables housed in the WWS expanded database that could be included in the equation as statistical controls is a measure of Scholars' prior achievement such as scores on an end-of-eighth-grade standardized achievement test.

The logistic regression model specified in (1.1) can be used to answer the evaluation question posed earlier:

- Is PAD a predictor of Scholars' college and labor market success?: This question can be answered using the WWS expanded database and logistic regression model specified in (1.1) by including a Scholars' college success variable (such as Scholar is accepted to college or not) as a dependent variable (on the left-hand side of equation 1.1), a PAD engagement variable, x_{i1} , and other variables that should be used to control for observable differences among scholars such as prior achievement. In this instance, the beta coefficient (B_1) that precedes the main independent variable of interest, PAD engagement (x_{i1}), is interpreted as the odds of a Scholar being accepted to college given a certain level of PAD engagement, controlling for other observable characteristics.
- Is PAD combined with a stipend a more powerful predictor of Scholars' college and labor market success than stipend only?: The approach to answering this question using the logistic regression specified in (1.1) is the same as just described except the main independent variable, x_{i1} , changes from a variable that measure the level of Scholars' PAD engagement (high, medium, or low) to an independent variable, x_{i1} , that measures whether Scholars' participated in stipend only, or PAD with a stipend. In this instance, the beta coefficient (B_1) that precedes the main independent variable of interest, Scholars that participated in stipend only versus Scholars who participated in PAD and received a stipend (x_{i1}), is interpreted as the odds of a Scholar being accepted to college having been provided with stipend only compared to having participated in PAD and provided with a stipend, controlling for other observable characteristics.
- Is PAD typology type (i.e., ambassador, realists, etc.) a predictor of Scholars' college and labor market success?: The approach to answering this question mirrors the approach used to answer the two preceding questions except that the independent variable is PAD topology type rather than "type of PAD participation" such as "PAD and a stipend".

Finally, the logistic regression model specified in equation (1.1) can provide WWS with empirical insights into where WWS should focus its resources. Specifically, the independent variables on the left-hand side of the equation shows the odds of a particular outcome [$\log(\pi_i/1-\pi_i)$] for a main independent variable on right-hand side of the equation, x_{i1} , controlling for other factors, $x_{i1} \dots x_{ik}$. Thus, by examining the size of the Beta coefficients (B_{ik}) that precede the independent variables (and their statistical significance), resource allocation decisions could be made. During year 3 of the evaluation, the logistic regression model, and measurement of variables that are included in it, should be refined and the model fine tuned.

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Acknowledgements

Michel Munoz Miller, a doctoral candidate at University of Pennsylvania was a key member of the Research for Action White-Williams Scholars team. She conducted fieldwork at Edison High School and made important contributions to the research design and data analysis. Herbert Turner, Ph.D. President of Analytica Policy Research, Evaluation and Measurement worked with the RFA team to design the proposed empirical study.

We would like to thank the entire staff at White-Williams Scholars for their help in providing data, artifacts and participating fully in all phases of the research.

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