

**ROOT CAUSE RELEASES NEW RESEARCH ON COLLEGE ACCESS
AND SUCCESS FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS**
Report Identifies 7 Top-Performing Nonprofits in Massachusetts

September 10, 2010 — Root Cause, a Cambridge-based nonprofit research and consulting firm, announced today a new report on improving opportunities for at-risk students to attend college, and to succeed once they are enrolled.

The report, which is modeled after business-sector equity reports, synthesizes the most current national research on college access and success programs for at-risk students, and then names 7 high-performing organizations in the Greater Boston area: Breakthrough Cambridge, College Bound Dorchester, Hyde Square Task Force, Steppingstone Foundation, Steps to Success, Trinity Education for Excellence Program, and Urban Scholars Program.

“Our research shows that the best programs take a comprehensive approach to providing at-risk students with a sound educational foundation, an understanding of the opportunities presented by attending college, and assistance in obtaining resources to attend college,” said Social Impact Research Director Colette Stanzler. “After identifying approximately 50 organizations that work on improving college access for at-risk students in the Boston area, we found that these 7 are among the city’s highest performers.”

The national research conducted for the College Access and Success Social Issue Report shows Massachusetts to have a fairly strong track record when it comes to supporting college access and success for at-risk youth. Fifteen years after the passing of the landmark Massachusetts Education and Reform Act (MERA), the state is consistently ranked near the top of national and international education achievement charts. However, despite this success, significant achievement gaps remain across the state—specifically for low-income and minority students.

Helping Donors Make More Informed Decisions

The new College Access and Success report is the latest in a series of reports that Root Cause’s Social Impact Research initiative is producing in order to provide donors with more rigorous, actionable information to help guide philanthropic investment decisions.

“We’re hoping for a future where the strongest nonprofits are the ones who raise the most money,” said Jacob Harold, program officer in the philanthropy program of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which funded the development Social Impact Research, the independent research department of Root Cause. “Often now, it’s those with the longest history or the most recognizable brand names that raise the most money, not necessarily the ones creating the most impact per dollar.”

"Where possible," he said, "it's best to have systematic research that looks at which interventions work and which organizations use those effective interventions."

The new report finds that high-quality college access and success programs serving at-risk youth, including those from low-income families, present significant opportunity for impact:

- In 2007, 76% of students from high-income families obtained a Bachelor's degree by age of 24, compared with only 10% of students from low-income families.
- High-performing initiatives use a holistic approach in order to provide at-risk students with foundational knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal resources for academic success.
- The mean annual earnings of a bachelor's degree holder are \$27,400 higher than those of a high school graduate.

Root Cause's Social Impact Research plans to release additional reports on College Access and Success as well as School Readiness in New York later this fall. Social Impact Research has also started researching two new social issue areas: Workforce Development and Obesity Prevention.

To read the College Access and Success Social Issue Report, in addition to analyses of high performing organizations in the Greater Boston area, visit

<http://www.socialimpactresearch.org/research>

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Root Cause, www.rootcause.org, is a nonprofit research and consulting firm that provides skills and actionable information to leaders in the nonprofit, government, and business sectors who are working to bring effective solutions to longstanding social problems.