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**A New Measure for College Admissions**

**A Relational Study of a New Predictor for Success:**

The Promise of the Bial Dale College Adaptability Index and  
the Success of The Posse Program

**Summary of Preliminary Findings**

Deborah Bial

*The number one reason why I stayed in school really has to do with my background. I come from a very humble background. I was an immigrant to this country and I came with not a dime in my pocket, and so I have a very long term goal of being successful and a determination that comes along with that. And so that's why I stayed in school, because I know that education is my key out. Education is my opportunity to really succeed and I know without it I really would not be valued in this country. And I would not be able to use myself to my fullest potential.*

--Shameek Bose, Junior, Rutgers University 2003

## Study Overview

On June 23, 2003, the Supreme Court ruled on two affirmative action cases challenging the University of Michigan's admissions policies. The justices supported affirmative action in college admissions but voted against a too mechanical, racial "point" system. These decisions ended a debate as to whether or not diversity as a goal in college admissions was of compelling state interest, and reinforced those admissions policies that took care to assess applicants from a more holistic approach.

Many selective universities look towards broadening the number of admissions measures they use to assess applications. However, they have had few alternative measures accepted by or used widely in college admissions, and no validated tool that could assess non-cognitive traits.

The purpose of this study was to design and test the predictive ability of a new college admissions assessment tool. The Bial Dale College Adaptability Index (BDI) could provide one more validated option for choosing students on the basis of a different dimension of talent not so strongly connected to race and socio-economic status. The tool was designed to identify students with specific leadership traits that theoretically could predict their increased ability to persist in college and become active members of their campus communities.

In 1999, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided a \$1.9 million grant to fund the study. The grant supported the codification of a set of non-cognitive traits, the development of a scoring tool, the scoring of over 800 New York City public high school students, and the tracking of those students. The grant also provided funds for incentive scholarships.

The BDI was based on a successful evaluation strategy (developed for The Posse Foundation – a national youth leadership development and college access program) that identifies significant numbers of traditionally underrepresented students, and evaluates leadership and potential for achievement.

The purpose of this study was to test how well the BDI could predict student success at moderately to highly selective universities. The study looked at outcome

measures of persistence, involvement, and leadership on campus – and compared its effectiveness to that of The Posse Foundation’s.

Two cohorts were scored over a period of two years (1999 and 2000). These students were tracked throughout their college experience until the end of the study in June 2006. A total of 837 students were scored.

Analysis of the data shows that the BDI has promise in predicting three student attributes: persistence, ability to access resources, and ability to contribute to a campus community (leadership). Most significantly, cross tabulation analysis showed that students with high BDI scores performed ‘better’ than students with low BDI scores. In every group and for most variables measured, high BDI scorers outperformed low scorers. This suggests that the BDI may act as another measure for college admissions officers in their aim to identify young people who are more likely to make a leadership contribution to a campus community and to persist in college. The BDI has little correlation with the SAT. Therefore, the BDI may be able to identify students who have the potential to succeed at selective institutions that the SAT might miss.

In addition, this study found that Posse Scholars experience extraordinary success which suggests that the combined program effects of the Posse Program are tremendously valuable. The findings in this study suggest the importance of further research and may help to provide greater options for college admissions officers as they work to admit students with diverse interests, diverse backgrounds, and diverse talents.

### Significance of the Study and Background

There is currently no widely used, validated college admissions tool that could expand an admissions officer's ability to assess a nontraditional candidate and possibly work as a compliment or alternative to standardized academic tests. This study concerns the design, application and initial evaluation of an alternative college admissions assessment instrument that might be able to help identify greater numbers of students from diverse backgrounds who could succeed in competitive college environments despite lower standardized test scores. The premise for the study is the Posse Program, a successful youth leadership development and college support program that uses a non-traditional assessment process to identify students from a diversity of backgrounds. This study describes the codification of the new instrument and provides a preliminary overview of its effectiveness.

This report shows initial findings after five years and looks closely at how the findings compare to the successes of the Posse Program. The research is a first step in exploring the predictive ability of the BDI. While the sample size is small and the correlation data limited, initial findings from the assessment of the new instrument suggest positive effects for several outcomes: persistence in college, tendency to access available resources, and contribution to a campus community (including involvement in leadership activities). The findings also separately support the strength of the Posse Program.

### Possible Policy Significance

Since the 2003 Supreme Court decision on affirmative action, there has been increased interest in the development of additional, validated, holistic admissions measures and tools that can help institutions of higher education to more thoroughly and comprehensively assess their applicants. Such tools could help these institutions to continue to identify and admit students from a diversity of backgrounds. This is true especially for the larger colleges and universities where an individually tailored and qualitative individual assessment for every applicant is more difficult.

This study did not set out to find a replacement for the SAT, nor does it suggest in any sense that such tests do not have value. However, another assessment tool, if proven to be effective in identifying student traits that indicate likelihood of success in college, will only increase the ability of admissions officers to make sound and more well-rounded judgments about their applicants – especially if combined with other proven measures and predictors for success. It may be impossible to devise a test that can identify young people who make up in diligence what they lack in test taking ability. But there are non-cognitive traits that, if codified and set to measures, might be able to find that young person with great potential who is missed by the traditional assessment tools. If the tool refined for this study proves to be effective, it can help more young people from every background compete for admission to selective institutions of higher education.

## Population and Methodology

The traits the BDI tool was designed to identify include: leadership/initiative; communication; quality of thinking; and negotiation/collaboration. Raters were trained to score students using the tool. The tool is not a paper and pencil test but a tool used in an observational setting. The setting is based on The Posse Foundation's unique assessment process for candidates and mirrors the activities used in their large group interview. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) helped design the tool itself which uses a scoring system from 0 to 5.

The students in our sample were all New York City high school seniors applying to college through The Posse Foundation in 1999 and 2000. These students were especially attractive as a sample group because they most closely represented a generalized population of urban, public high school students from diverse backgrounds with lower than average SAT scores for selective to highly selective institutions of higher education. These were students who, for the most part, would not show up on the radar screens of selective colleges and universities. We secured permission from The Posse Foundation to use their applicant pool for the study. Posse allowed BDI raters to observe and score their candidates.

Eight moderately to highly selective colleges and universities participated in the study. Each institution agreed to admit students using the BDI score as a significant admissions indicator. Each of these schools also provided annual micro data for their entire student bodies.

The BDI was tested over two years (1999 and 2000) on an original 837 students (488 in year one and 349 in year two). The charts in this paper represent a total of 568 students who responded to the survey (66 percent of the original cohort). The survey was designed by Mathematica Policy Research (MPR). MPR also tracked the students throughout their entire time in college.

The sample students were divided into four comparison groups: high scoring students who received a small incentive scholarship to participate in a partnering college or university (N=43); similar students who did not receive a scholarship to participate in a partnering college or university (N=106); low scoring students (N=348); and finally Posse Scholars (N=71).

## Overview of Findings

Of the relationships investigated in this study that proved related to BDI scores, we found that the BDI has promise in predicting three important student attributes in college: persistence, ability to access resources, and ability to contribute to a campus community (leadership).

Over a period of two years (1999 and 2000), we scored 837 students, 488 the first year and 349 the second year. Both cohorts of students participated in this study through June of 2005. The findings in this report represent data obtained from surveying each cohort and include four-year graduation rates. For some of our findings our sample size is not big enough to draw statistical significance from our data because the cell size of some of our relational groups is small. Correlation data are affected by several factors including selection, the small sample size, the restriction in range – or the limited range of our outcome variables; and outside influence on the sample. However, cross tabulation suggests despite the correlation data, that the BDI is worth continued study and may have predictive ability. It is important to note that the BDI has very little correlation with the SAT (.1184). Therefore, the BDI may be able to identify students who have the potential to succeed at selective institutions that the SAT might miss.

We had originally designed the tool in order to identify students with greater ability to overcome obstacles. We thought that students who could communicate more effectively, who could negotiate conflict, who could collaborate with others well – would be more likely to persevere in college. Since high school students are prepared for college at widely varying levels, we thought identifying students with these traits would be helpful to admissions officers who were looking for highly motivated students. This could assist a student, for example, who was applying to a selective college but went to a poorly performing high school. We know that for some freshmen, the academic learning curve during the first year in college is much steeper than for others. The students more likely to “persist” might be the students who demonstrate these traits.

The statistical analyses show that the BDI has promise in predicting three major student traits:

1. persistence,
2. ability to access resources,

### 3. ability to contribute to a campus community/leadership.

Persistence is defined as re-enrollment each year in college. A student who returns after freshman year for her sophomore year, for example, is considered having “persisted”. Ability to Access Resources refers to how a student made use of resources available on campus. We look specifically at how often a student visited her professors during office hours, how often a student used a mentor, how often a student made use of peer study groups, and how often a student asked her friends for help with class work. Ability to Contribute to a Campus Community/Leadership includes a range of activities that illustrates a student’s involvement on campus. Specifically, we looked at the number of leadership activities a student is involved in on campus and the number of activities a student participated in but did not have a leadership role. We also looked for academic leadership. Here we looked at class participation, which we defined as the average number of times a student raises her hand in class; and we looked at how often a student sat in the front of her class. We examined outcomes for different definitions of a “high” score for the BDI to see if the outcomes changed. Overall, we found that the higher the BDI score, the stronger the outcome.

Most significantly, we noticed that a “high” BDI score made a difference in outcome within most relational groups. High scoring Posse Scholars did better than low scoring Posse Scholars. High scoring students, with no BDI scholarship, did better than low scoring students with no BDI scholarship. When we identified the high score as  $\geq 110$ , we found the above to be true. However, when we identified the high score as 115 our findings were even stronger. When we identified the high score as 120, the outcome statistics increased in their importance, however our cell size became so much smaller that this conclusion is hard to substantiate.

In general, we found that Posse Scholars persisted at a higher rate than most of the students in our comparison groups. In most cases, this was true whether or not Posse Scholars had a high or low BDI score and suggests that the combined program effects of Posse (the selection, the cohort model, the scholarship, the training and five year on-going support services) are powerful in the success of the Scholars. Posse Scholars sat in front of their classrooms more than any other group, and Posse Scholars participated in or lead activities on campus more than any other group.

Following Posse Scholars, we found that students who scored the highest on the BDI were the students who had the greatest persistence among the groups in our sample. They were also the students, along with Posse Scholars, who accessed resources most often and who became most involved in contributing to their campus communities. The high scoring BDI students who were awarded an annual scholarship to attend one of our participating universities, did somewhat better than the high scoring BDI students who did not win an annual scholarship. For this reason, we think the scholarship had some program effect. We also understand that the quality of the participating universities and colleges probably had some program effect. These institutions retain their students at higher rates than less selective colleges and universities.

### **Statistical Significance and Validity of the Test:**

Correlations:

Regression analysis showed that for most of the relationships between the BDI and its outcomes, the data were statistically weak. The following table shows the correlation coefficients for each of the outcome variables.

	120+	115+	110+	Total Score
Peer Study Groups	.16	.25	.21	.21
Access Friends	.08	.13	.13	.16
Access Professor	.09	.14	.13	.22
Access Mentor	.01	.03	.03	-.01
Access Academic Resources	.03	.05	.05	-.09
Sat in Front of Class	.01	.07	.08	.10
Any Leadership Activity	.10	.11	.12	.15
Participation in Class	.11	.13	.11	.19
# Activities Lead or Participated In	.15	.18	.16	.09
Any Lead or Participation Avg.	.11	.11	.08	.13
# Leadership Activities	.11	.11	.08	.13

\*Note that the access mentor/resources coefficients for the relationship between total score and accessing resources were negative. (The negative value means that higher scores are associated with a lower likelihood of accessing resources.) Our interpretation here is that students who are struggling academically may be more likely to access resources than students who are not struggling.

The correlation data ranged from coefficients of -.09 to .25. The highest of these correlations were related to accessing peer study groups and involvement in leadership activities on campus. This is where the cross tabulation was most significant as well.

The following pages discuss the cross tabulation analyses. The correlation analysis only allowed us to test whether the relationships were linear. The cross tabulation analysis allowed us to examine several variables at a time. We focus on the score of  $\geq 110$  as representative of the general trends in outcome for each of these three scores.

## **Cross Tabulation Analyses**

### **Persistence and Graduation Rates:**

We found that high scoring students, in all relational groups, persisted and graduated at rates higher than traditional admissions measures might have predicted and higher than low BDI scoring students. We obtained graduation and persistence data from three sources: the survey, the micro data provided by participating colleges, and The Posse Foundation.

Survey data showed that high scoring Posse Scholars had the highest first to second year persistence rate at 92%, BDI scholarship winners persisted at 84%, low scoring Posse Scholars persisted at 82%. High scoring non-scholarship winners persisted from first to second year at 78% while low-scoring non-scholarship winners persisted at 74%. High scoring Posse Scholars had the highest four-year graduation rate at 84%, low scoring Posse Scholars closely followed at 81%. BDI scholarship winners graduated in four years at 74%, high scoring non-scholarship winners graduated at 69%, while low-scoring non-scholarship winners graduated at 49%.

#### Graduation Rates for Survey Respondents:

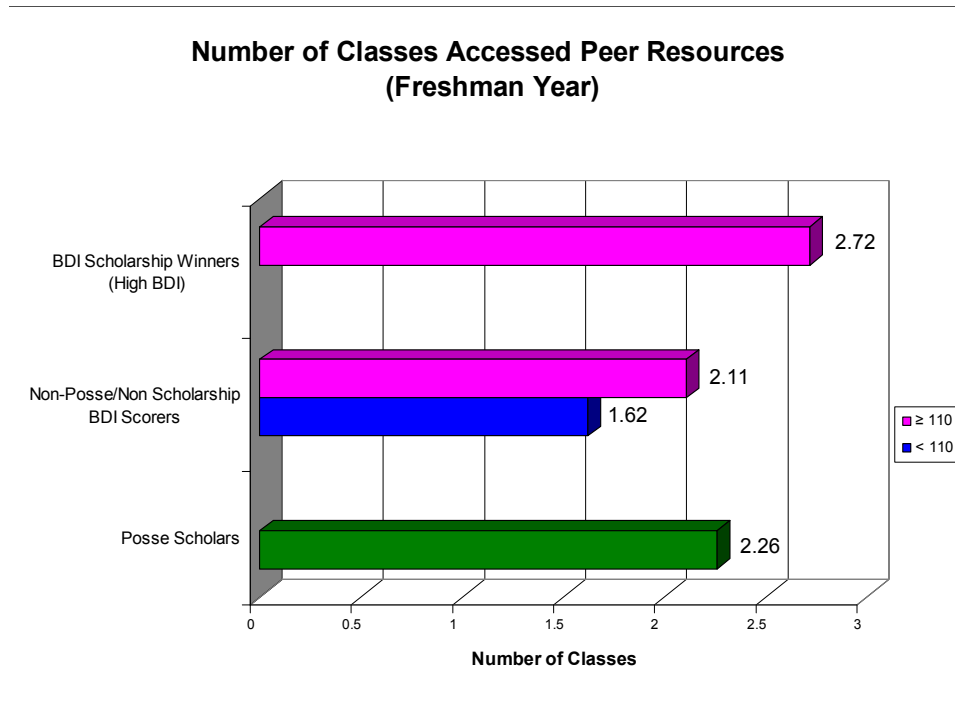
<u>BDI Scholarship Winners</u>	<u>74%</u>
<u>High Scoring Posse Scholars <math>\geq 110</math></u>	<u>84%</u>
<u>Low Scoring Posse Scholars <math>&lt; 110</math></u>	<u>81%</u>
<u>High Scoring Non-Posse, Non-BDI Students <math>\geq 110</math></u>	<u>69%</u>
<u>Low Scoring Non-Posse, Non-BDI Students <math>&lt; 110</math></u>	<u>49%</u>

### **Accessing Peer Study Groups for Academic Help**

Overall, high scoring students accessed peer study groups more than low scoring students. BDI scholarship winners ( $BDI \geq 110$ ) accessed peer study groups for an average of 2.72 of their classes. High scoring Posse Scholars accessed peer study groups for an average of 2.73 of their classes. High scoring BDI students with no BDI scholarship accessed peer study groups for an average of 2.11 of their classes. Low scoring Posse students accessed peer study groups for an average of 1.98 of their classes. Finally, low scoring BDI students accessed peer study groups for an average of only 1.62 of their

classes. (Posse Scholars combined accessed peer study groups for an average of 2.26 of their classes.)

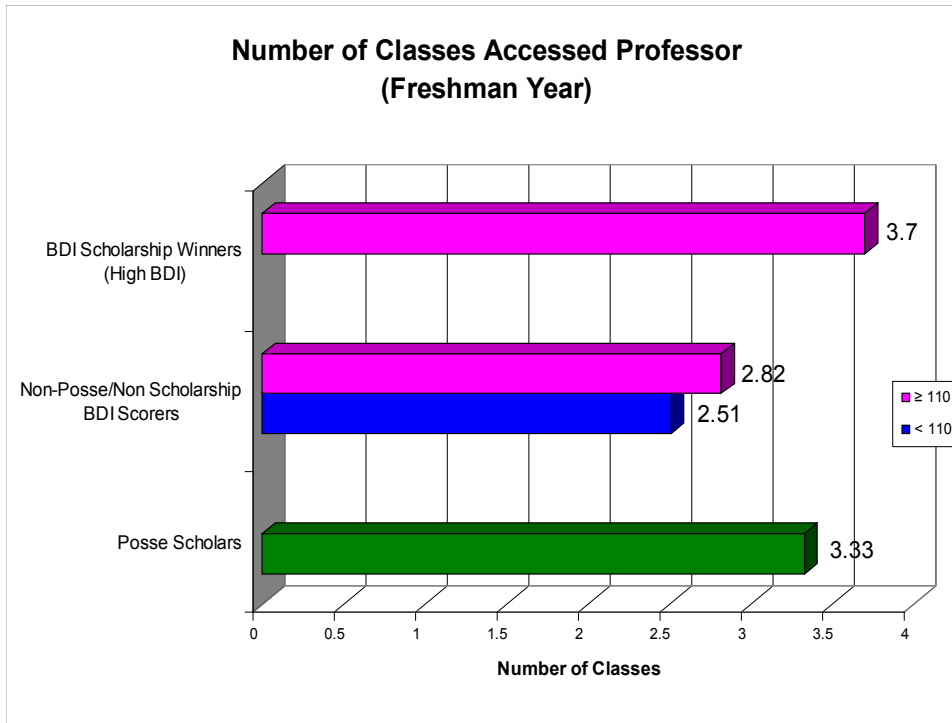
**The following chart shows the average number of classes students accessed peer resources (BDI  $\geq 110$ ).**



### Accessing the Professor during Office Hours for Academic Assistance

In general, high scoring students accessed their professors more than low scoring students. High scoring BDI scholarship winners accessed their professors, for an average of 3.7 of their classes. High scoring Posse Scholars accessed their professors for an average of 3.67 of their classes. Low scoring Posse Scholars accessed their professors for an average of 3.12 of their classes. (Posse Scholars combined: 3.33.) High scoring BDI students with no scholarship accessed their professors for an average of 2.82 of their classes. And finally, low scoring BDI students accessed their professors for an average of 2.51 of their classes.

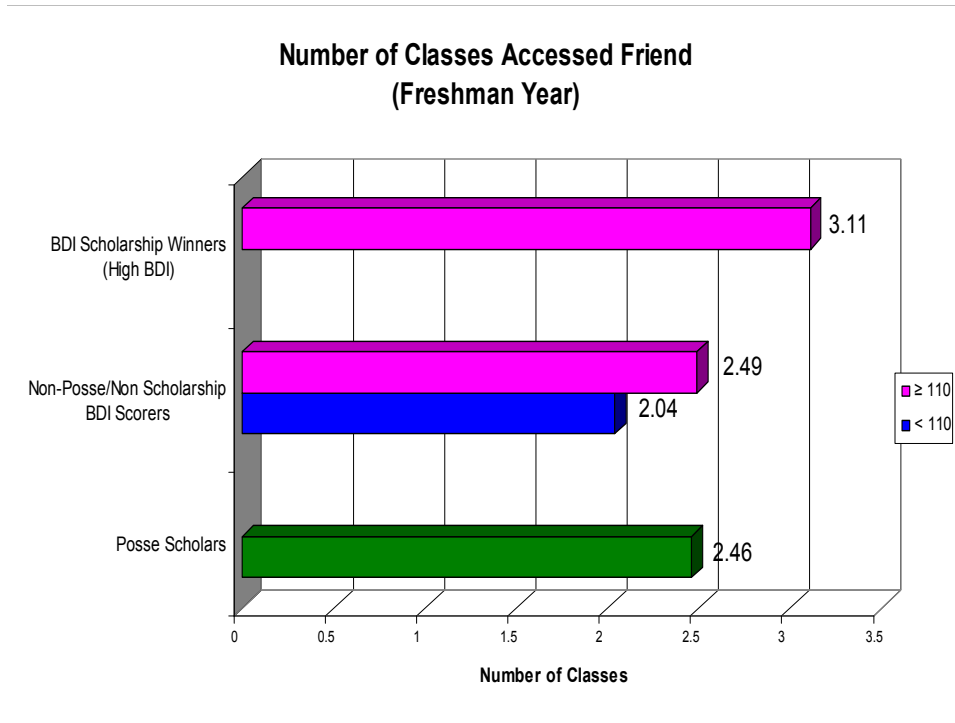
The following chart shows the average number of classes for which students accessed their professors during office hours.  $BDI \geq 110$ .



### Using Friends for Academic Help

Again we found that students with the highest scores on the BDI used this resource more than students with the lowest scores. High-scoring BDI scholarship winners accessed their friends for an average of 3.11 classes. High scoring Posse Scholars did so for an average of 2.83. High scoring non-scholarship winners accessed their friends for an average of 2.49 classes. Low scoring Posse scholars accessed their friends for an average of 2.23 classes while low scoring non-scholarship winners accessed their friends, on average, for 2.04 classes. (Posse Scholars combined: 2.46.)

The following chart shows the average number of classes for which students accessed their friends (BDI  $\geq 110$ ).



The outcomes on accessing resources showed that high scoring students were more likely to approach their professors, access peer study groups, and ask their friends for help – which are items that could be connected to persistence. In other words, high scoring students showed a greater inclination towards adaptability. The fact that they joined peer study groups, felt comfortable talking to their professors and using their friends for support, also indicates their ability to build anchors and utilize resources for themselves in college. These traits might make a significant difference in both a student’s likelihood of persisting as well as a student’s likelihood of becoming an integrated member of the campus community.

In general, we found that students with 110 and above accessed academic resources more frequently than students with scores below 110. We believe that a student, who is more likely to access resources, is more likely to persist. This student may use support resources, such as getting help from friends, to overcome academic or social obstacles and as a result be more likely to adjust to a new community or environment better than a student who does not or can not access these resources.

When we looked at students who scored above and below 115, the same findings were true but with greater emphasis. In general, students with 115 and above accessed resources more frequently than students with 114 or below.

In summary, of all the groups, high scoring students were most inclined to access academic resources. High scoring students accessed peer study groups, their professors, and their friends more than low scoring students. Posse Scholars seemed to perform especially well, whether or not they had high or low scores. There are numerous program effects that could not be controlled for with Posse Scholars such as the pre-collegiate training program they receive, the assignment of mentors, staff support, and major scholarship assistance. However, regardless of the program effects for Posse Scholars, we found that high scoring students consistently made more use of available resources than low scoring students. These outcomes show that the BDI may help to indicate students who are more likely to build academic support networks for themselves on campus and therefore be more likely to persist and succeed in college.

### **Ability to Contribute to a Campus Community/Leadership**

Ability to Contribute to a Campus Community includes a range of activities that illustrates a student's involvement on campus. Specifically, we looked at the total types of activities lead or participated in the fourth year in college. We looked at the number of leadership activities a student is involved in on campus. We also looked for academic leadership. Here we looked at class participation which we defined by the average number of times a student raises her hand in class; and we looked at how often a student sat in the front of her class.

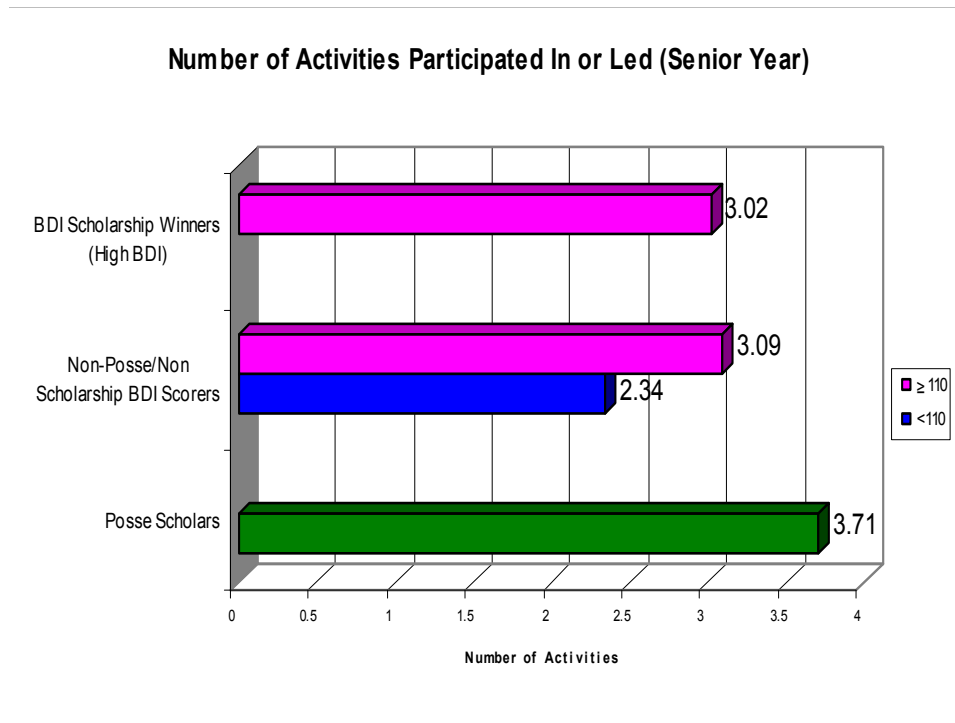
The most striking outcome was the number of activities in which students were involved their fourth year in college. Overall, high scoring BDI students participated in many more activities than low scoring students. Posse Scholars sat in the front of their classes more often than any other student, but, high scoring BDI scholarship winners and high scoring BDI students with no scholarship showed greater participation rates than low-scoring Posse Scholars in their classes.

### **Campus Community Involvement and Leadership**

We asked students to identify the activities in which they participated during their first and fourth years in college and also the activities in which they played a leadership role. We found that high scoring BDI students overall participate much more frequently than low scoring BDI students.

Overall, Posse Scholars, as a group, participated in or led more activities on average than any comparison group at an average of 3.71. BDI winners participated in or led an average number of 3.02 activities. High scoring non-BDI students averaged 3.09 activities, while low scoring non-BDI students averaged 2.34 activities.

The following chart shows the average number of activities in which students participated or led their senior year (BDI  $\geq 110$ ).

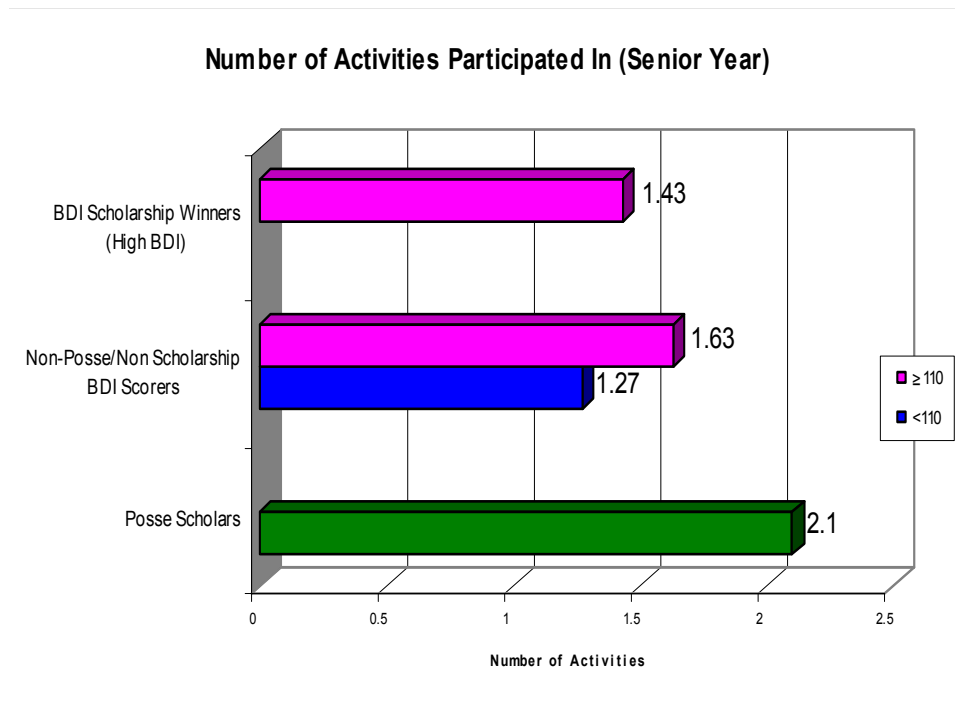


### Average Number of Activities Participated in but No Leadership Role

We looked at the average number of activities the students participated in but had no leadership role. In every group, we found that high scoring students participated in more activities than low scoring students. Posse Scholars participated in a greater number of activities on average than every other student group. With the high score identified as  $\geq 110$ , high scoring Posse Scholars participated in an average of 2.23 activities. Low scoring Posse Scholars participated in an average of 1.96 activities. High scoring BDI students with no scholarship participated in an average of 1.63 activities while high scoring BDI students with scholarships participated in an average of 1.43 activities. Low scoring BDI students participated in an average of 1.27 activities. Whether we identified the high BDI score at 120, 115 or 110, our group outcomes fell into the same pattern. Posse Scholars were the most engaged. High scoring BDI students with no scholarship were the next most engaged; then high scoring BDI scholarship winners and finally low scoring BDI students with no scholarship. We suspect the

comfort level of the students who were able to select their own college attributed to their becoming a bit more engaged in their campus communities. However, we see the BDI as having the potential to identify students who are more likely to become engaged on their campuses.

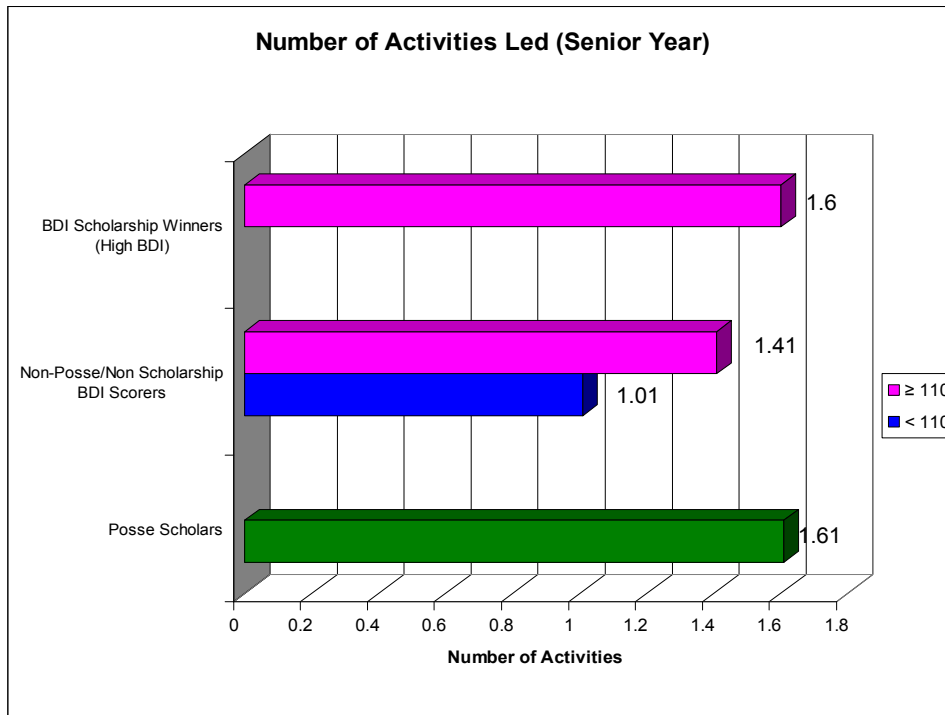
**The following chart shows the average number of activities in which students participated in their senior year (BDI  $\geq$  110).**



### Leadership Role in Campus Activities

Our survey queried students on the various activities in which they took on a leadership role. We asked the students surveyed about the different types of activities they might have led. Then we added up the number of different types of activities they led. In general, high scorers participated in more leadership activities than low scorers. When we defined the high score as 110, BDI winners and Posse Scholars reported leading the greatest number of activities at a rate of 1.6 per year. High scoring BDI students with no scholarships averaged 1.41 leadership activities. Low scoring BDI students averaged 1.01 leadership activities.

The following chart shows the average number of activities in which students were leaders their senior year (BDI  $\geq 110$ ).

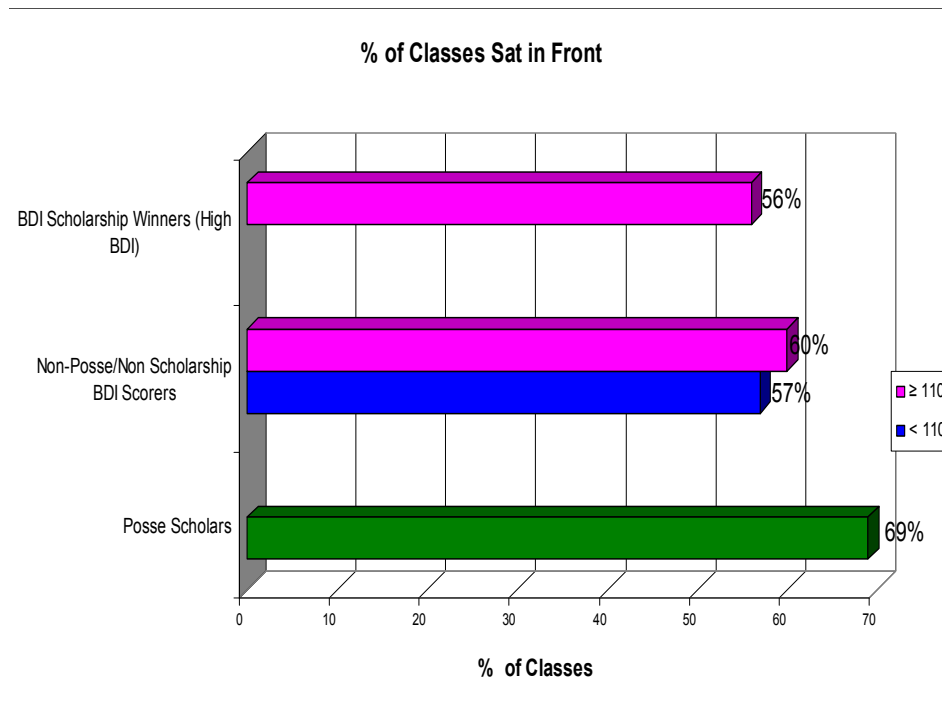


### Academic Leadership/Sat in Front of Class

We asked each student surveyed to list the courses she took during the year. For each course listed, we asked students to record where they sat in the room. We were curious about this criterion because we believed that students who sat in the front might be more “engaged” than those who might sit in the back of the room. We found that Posse Scholars sat in the front of their classrooms more often than the other student groups in this study. High scoring Posse Scholars sat in the front of their classrooms for 71% of their classes. Low scoring Posse Scholars sat in the front of their classrooms for 68% of their classes. We expected Posse Scholars to report the highest rate because Posse Scholars are instructed by the Posse Program to sit in the front of each of their classes. High scoring BDI students with no scholarship reported sitting in the front of their classes for 60% of their classes. High scoring BDI scholarship winners reported

sitting in the front of their classes for 56% of their courses – very similar to low scoring BDI students who reported sitting in the front of their classes at 57% of their courses.

**The following chart shows the average percent of classes for which students sat in the front (BDI  $\geq 110$ ).**

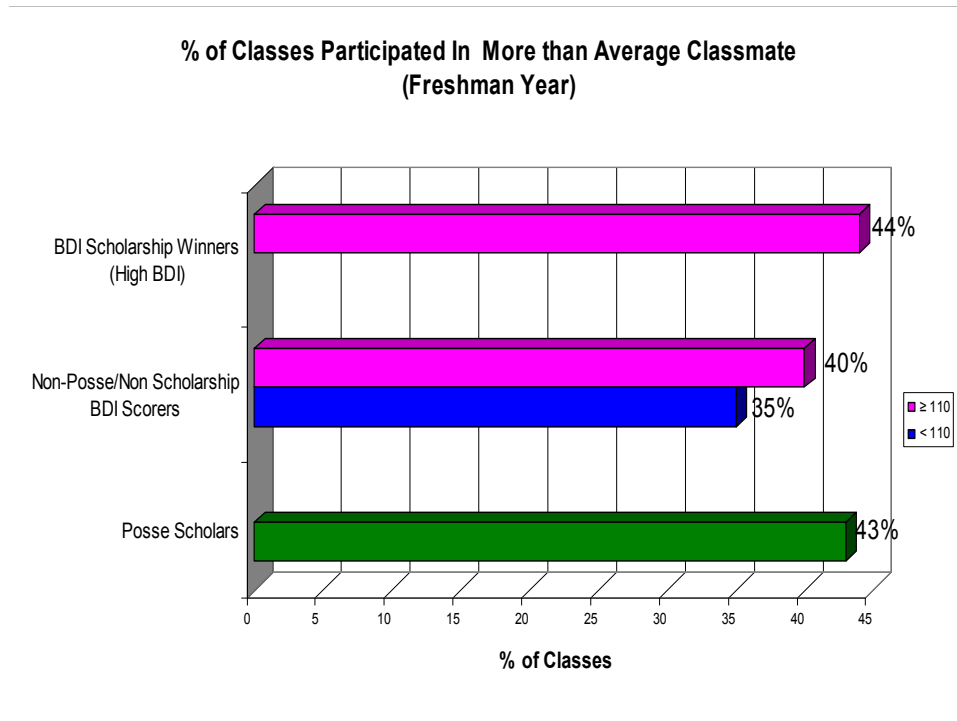


### Class Participation

Our survey asked students about their levels of class participation. We asked each student if she felt she participated “more”, “about the same”, or “less” than other students in each class. We found that BDI winners and high scoring Posse Scholars participated more than any other group. High scoring Posse Scholars reported participating more than others in 48% of their classes. BDI scholarship winners reported participating more than others in 44% of their classes. High scoring BDI students with no scholarship reported participating more than others in 40% of their classes (this is the same percentage as low

scoring Posse Scholars). Low scoring BDI students with no scholarship reported participating more than others in 35% of their classes.

**The following chart demonstrates levels of class participation. It shows the average number of classes students reported participating in *more than the other students in the class*.**



The most significant findings in relation to contribution to campus community and leadership were that high scoring students overall contributed more academically and socially to the campus community than low scoring students. They sat in the front of the class more than low scoring students. They participated in class more than low scoring students. They participated in more activities and led more activities than low scoring students.

The BDI scores identified students with potential to become involved and lead. The high scoring students, whether or not they had a BDI scholarship, participated in and led more activities on average than the low scoring students.

Posse Scholars participated in or led well over an average of three activities on campus no matter what they scored. Since the Posse scholarship is a leadership scholarship based on the merit model, Posse Scholars know that they have won awards

for their outstanding leadership potential. This outcome underscores the impact of the Posse Program on the students and the impact of the students on their campuses.

These findings suggest that students with high BDI scores are more engaged and more interactive than other students and therefore may be more interesting to admissions officers looking for students who can make a difference at their colleges and universities and who can be more engaged and active students in the classroom. In addition, students with these inclinations may be more likely to succeed and persist than students who are not as engaged, because they are more connected and committed to their campus communities.

## **Race and the Impact of the BDI on Admissions**

One of the questions behind this study is can the BDI help address some of the diversity needs for selective and moderately selective institutions of higher education? The following looks at notable outcomes by race.

Of the 837 students scored, 43% were black, 11% were white, 27% were Hispanic, and 11% were Asian. Of the students who responded to the survey, 38% were black, 11% were white, 27% were Hispanic, and 12% were Asian. The BDI did not equally represent race among its high scorers; however, race was more equitably represented for each group than it is in traditional measures. Defining the high score as 110, black students were represented at 36.5%, almost seven percentage points less than those represented in the total scored. White students were represented at 16%, five percentage points higher than their representation in the overall number of students scored. Hispanic students were represented at 23.5%, several percentage points lower than their 27% representation among total scored. Asian students were represented at 10.5%, a rate close to their numbers in the total scored.

While we were disappointed in the distribution, we think the final racial percentages represented among the highest BDI scores may not be representative of outcomes had we performed the assessment with a random sample. The white and Asian students who apply to The Posse Program are small in number and are atypical in that they are willing to consider themselves applicants for a diversity program often stereotyped as a “minority” program. It is possible that these particular students are, by definition, less shy of racial stereotypes, less intimidated by new environments and thus show up more as high scorers on the BDI.

Upon comparison of percentages of students from backgrounds of color represented by both the BDI and SAT, however, our outcomes do show that students from these backgrounds could be better represented in an incoming class if admissions officers used the BDI as a critical measure in their decision making process. We were curious to know whether or not high scoring BDI students persisted at greater or lesser rates than high scoring SAT students and whether or not students with high BDI scores were more diverse than students with high SAT scores. This outcome would be most

important when considering whether or not the BDI could help admissions officers admit students from a greater diversity of backgrounds than if they were using the SAT alone.

We created a group that included the top 11.5 percent of our sample defined by SAT scores (those with scores above 1200 on the SAT) and created another group defined by the top 11.5 percent of our sample group according to their BDI scores (of 120 or greater.) When we did this, we found a 91 percent persistence rate for the top SAT scoring students and a 93 percent persistence rate for the top BDI scoring students. These persistence rates are close – and were encouraging for several reasons. First, that there is little correlation between SAT and BDI scores. This finding suggested that students, who might not be identified by the SAT as admissible, could be identified by the BDI as admissible since we know they would have a certain likelihood of persisting. More significantly however, is what we noticed about the racial makeup of each of the groups.

Thirty-three percent of the sampled students with 120 and higher on the BDI are black. Twenty-three percent are Hispanic. Only sixteen percent of the SAT student sample with scores of 1200 or above in this sample are black and only sixteen percent are Hispanic. (Since not every student reported an SAT score, we only included students with reported SAT scores in order to have comparable samples.) **We assume there would be a considerable gain in the numbers of blacks and Hispanics admitted by selective college admissions officers if BDI scores were used instead of SAT scores.** The value of admitting students who have strong leadership potential and come from a real diversity of backgrounds may also be quite valuable to admissions officers.

<b>SAT Score ≥1200</b>	<b>2 black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>cumgpa if totsats≥1200</b>	<b>anylead2</b>	<b>totlead2</b>
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
persist2	64	0.91	.2937848	0	1
black	64	0.16	.3659625	0	1
hispanic	64	0.16	.3659625	0	1
cumgpa	60	3.25	.5349184	1.25	3.8
Lead					
Activiy # Activities	64	0.39	.4917474	0	1
lead	64	0.53	.8539126	0	3

**BDI Score ≥120**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
persist2	61	0.93	.2495898	0	1
black	61	0.33	.4733326	0	1
hispanic	61	0.23	.4240064	0	1
cumgpa	60	3.08	.5030584	1.75	3.8
Lead					
Activiy # Activities	61	0.43	.498632	0	1
lead	61	0.74	1.014916	0	4

(source: Dale, 2.2.03)

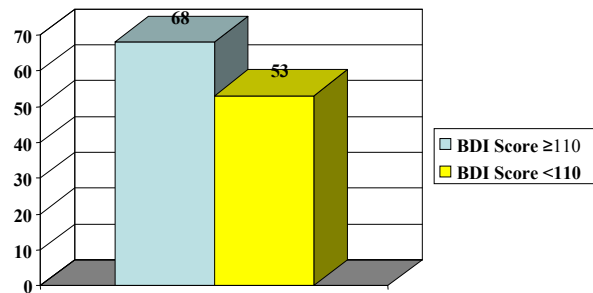
Our finding in this area suggests that using the BDI might not only enable college admissions officers to identify outstanding applicants who might not be identified by traditional admissions measures, but might help them to increase the numbers of students of color in their incoming classes. (Further research with a random sample may help to illustrate this.)

There are additional ways to think about how the BDI score could add value to traditional admissions processes. Persistence and leadership contribution are clearly important traits to consider in the admissions process. However, outcomes also show some relationship to grade point averages and success specifically for students of color. While for all races combined, the BDI only modestly improves ability to predict outcomes, it does predict stronger outcomes for African American students. For

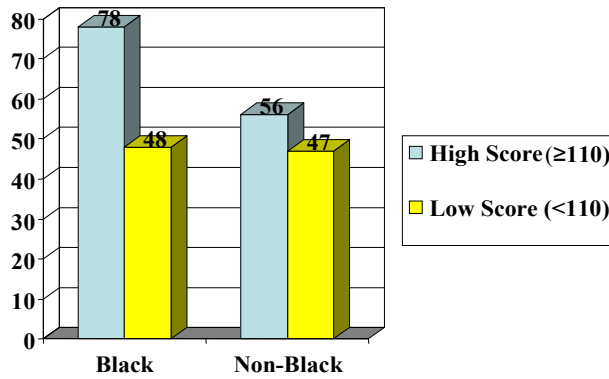
example, for all students in this sample SAT scores explain 9.6 percent of the variation in graduation rates. The BDI score and SAT score together explain 10.8 percent of the variation in graduation rates. For black students, SAT scores explain 8.2 percent of the variation in graduation rates. SAT scores and BDI scores explain 12.7 percent of the variation in graduation rates. Furthermore high scoring BDI students with lower SAT scores are graduating at similar rates to the general student population with higher SAT scores. See charts below.

## Relationship of BDI Score to 4-Year Graduation Rate After Controlling for SAT Scores

- Among at-large students with similar SAT scores, 68% graduation rate among high scorers vs. 53% graduation rate among low scorers

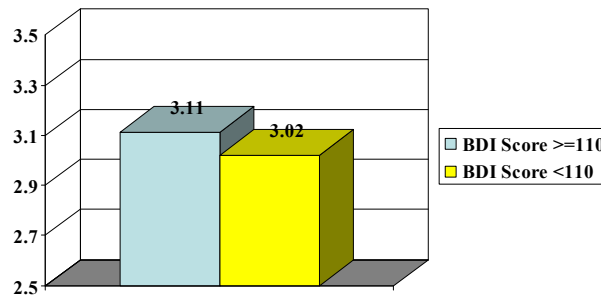


## Percentage Graduating in 4-Years, by Race and BDI Score (controlling for SAT Score)

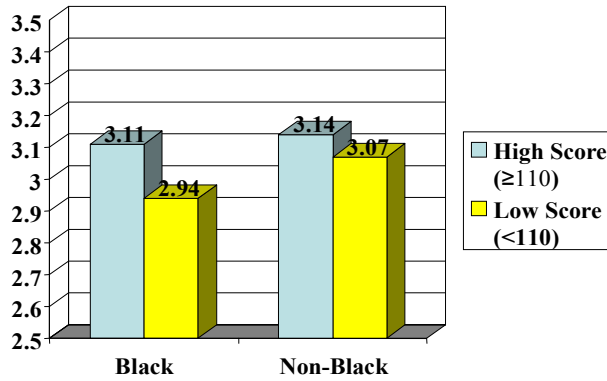


## Relationship of BDI Score to GPA after controlling for SAT scores

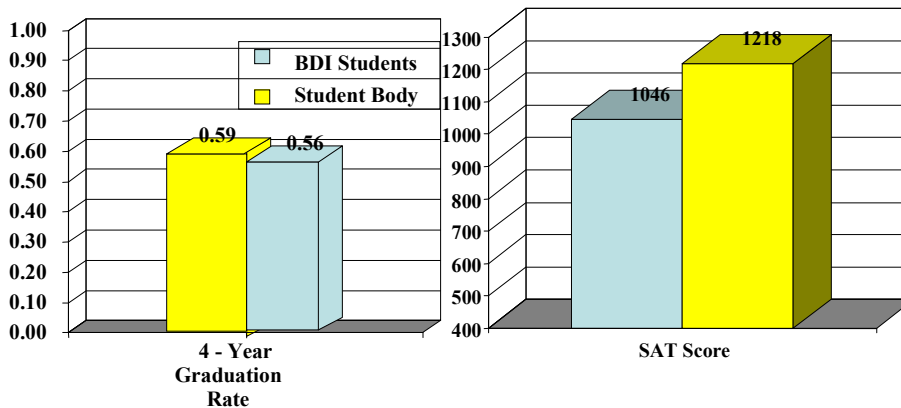
- Among at-large students with similar SAT scores, GPA is 3.11 for high scoring BDI students, vs. 3.02 for low scoring BDI students



## GPA, by Race and BDI Score (controlling for SAT Score)



BDI Students graduate at similar rates to the overall student body, in spite of much lower SAT scores



The Bial Dale College Adaptability Index may have predictive ability in indicating persistence, in indicating which students will connect themselves to more comprehensive academic support networks, and in identifying students who are more likely to engage in the campus community. The high scoring students persist at higher rates than the low scoring students. The high scoring students are involved in a greater number of campus activities and lead a greater number of activities on campus. The high scoring students get help when they need it; talk to their professors more, and sit more often in the front of their classrooms. They join clubs, start organizations, and run for office. They integrate themselves into the existing communities on campus more readily. Even when they encounter obstacles, either social or academic, they stick it out.

In addition, this study found that The Posse Program is a powerful mechanism for connecting outstanding young leaders from non-traditional backgrounds to outstanding institutions of higher education, and supporting them through to graduation. Posse helps expand the pool from which selective colleges can confidently admit students and trains its participants to become experts at making the best possible use of existing campus resources, at promoting dialogue and at getting engaged in the campus community. While Posse Scholars are selected for their leadership potential and ambition to succeed, the comprehensive nature of the program seems to ensure breathtaking success rates and stories.

The Bial Dale College Adaptability Index seems to have some promise in finding students who are motivated, who will persist, and who will work very hard to make the most of their college experience. This is valuable to those concerned about issues of retention since this type of student (whether coming from an advantaged background or not) may be more likely to battle obstacles, resolve conflict and persevere. It may eventually offer college admissions officers a more reliable way of assessing the non-cognitive traits that could be helpful predictors for success for non-traditional students. Certainly the BDI can reach broader pools of students less likely to be identified through traditional screens. The BDI may be one initiative in the long term that could assist institutions of higher education looking to expand the way they define merit and the way they admit their classes each year.

In addition, this study found that The Posse Program is a powerful mechanism for connecting outstanding young leaders from non-traditional backgrounds to outstanding institutions of higher education and supporting them through to graduation. Posse helps expand the pool from which selective colleges can confidently admit students and trains its participants to become experts at making the best possible use of existing campus resources, at promoting dialogue and at getting engaged in the campus community. While Posse Scholars are selected for their leadership potential and ambition to succeed, the comprehensive nature of the program seems to ensure breathtaking success rates and stories.

### **Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations for Further Study**

What is it that the more conventional college admissions measures miss that should be identified? How do we continue to devise tools that can help colleges and universities meet the students who can slip through the cracks? How can we find the young person who makes up in diligence what he lacks in test taking ability? Further research may help to address these difficult dilemmas. Even though there are some things that go beyond what any test can measure, we cannot give up trying to include those young people who fall outside traditional brackets.

If holistic approaches are too difficult for large institutions of higher education to handle, they must still be careful not to fall back on or to rely too heavily on standardized tests which do not represent the various populations within our society equitably. Colleges and universities must either spend more money on individualized attention for each applicant or use tools like the BDI and programs like Posse to help broaden the way they assess their student candidates each year.

The development of new and varied selection tools that admissions officers can use to more broadly and more holistically evaluate candidates is not a solution to the inequities that exist inherently in our society and for our students. But it is important to pay attention to selection because it is during selection that admissions officers have an opportunity to identify alongside the traditional students, the non-traditional students who strive for excellence, or who will value the opportunity to learn, or who will make the most of a college education. The most selective colleges and universities have an even

greater responsibility to pay attention to selection because it is from these institutions that many of the top doctors, lawyers, teachers and business leaders will emerge. The top colleges should want to find outstanding candidates from every background. These students will create a more representative student body and will create a more diverse and dynamic dialogue in the classrooms and the dormitories.

The use of multiple measures can only help admissions officers to come closer to a more holistic evaluation of each candidate and have more success at achieving their diversity goals. In addition, and maybe more importantly, new selection tools may help young people from a wide variety of backgrounds, and with different learning styles and preferences, show their abilities and their drive more fairly and more accurately. Young people need to know that the current standardized college admissions tests are not the only reflection of their ability. The BDI is one tool with the potential to help both young people and college admissions officers.

We already have learned much from this initial study that has helped us to refine the tool. We have more clearly defined the traits. We have created clearer benchmarks for each scoring position. We have developed a training video with examples of these benchmarks.

Future studies can help to further the research on alternative admissions strategies and indicators. Certainly data collected in later years for this particular study will help to corroborate or dispute the findings here. But additional studies on measures of non-cognitive traits, including leadership potential can only add to the body of literature on measures for success in college. This research is critical as institutions of higher education search for tools to help them broaden the way they consider and admit students from every background.

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