

## Finding Capable Evaluators to Conduct High-Quality Randomized Controlled Trials in Postsecondary Education: A Resource

Well-conducted randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are widely regarded as the most credible method of evaluating whether a social program is effective. However, too often attempted RCTs fail to produce valid findings because of key flaws in study design or implementation that could have been foreseen and avoided.

In an effort to increase the quality of RCTs aimed at building evidence about how to help U.S. students enroll and succeed in college, the Evidence-Based Policy team at the Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) has developed this short document as a resource for sponsors of RCTs in postsecondary education (*e.g.*, government agencies, educational institutions) as well as researchers in this area who may be new to conducting RCTs. It consists of a list of researchers (attached) who have previously conducted a high-quality RCT in postsecondary education. They have agreed to have their names and contact information included here, so that individuals or organizations seeking to conduct an RCT may contact them to ask for advice on the study or to explore potential collaboration, with the goal of avoiding the common study pitfalls noted above.

The researchers on the attached list have conducted a postsecondary RCT that meets one or both of the following criteria:

- (i) The Institute of Education Sciences' [What Works Clearinghouse](#) (WWC) has reviewed the study and identified it as meeting WWC study design standards "without reservations."<sup>1</sup>
- (ii) The LJAF Evidence-Based Policy team has identified the study as a well-conducted RCT based on a careful review using the Coalition for Evidence-based Policy's [checklist](#) for reviewing an RCT.

Each listed researcher is the lead author of the RCT study report, unless the study report explicitly identifies another named author as the RCT's principal investigator.

This list is not intended to be an exhaustive compilation of researchers who have conducted high-quality postsecondary RCTs. For example, there are a sizable number of postsecondary RCTs that neither the WWC nor our team has yet reviewed, so the lead researchers on those studies are not included here.

We hope this resource is useful and welcome any comments or suggestions. Please contact Kim Cassel, [kcassel@arnoldfoundation.org](mailto:kcassel@arnoldfoundation.org), 202-680-8210.

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<sup>1</sup> As discussed in the WWC [handbook](#), "Studies receiving this rating provide the highest degree of confidence that an observed effect was caused by the intervention. Only well-implemented randomized controlled trials that do not have problems with attrition may receive this highest rating."

## List of Researchers

<b>Name (Biography)</b>	<b>Professional Affiliation</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
Joshua Angrist <sup>b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	angrist@mit.edu
Elisabeth Barnett <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Teachers College, Columbia University	eb2231@tc.columbia.edu
Eric Bettinger <sup>b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Graduate School of Education, Stanford University	ebettinger@stanford.edu
Scott Carrell <sup>a,b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	University of California – Davis	secarrell@ucdavis.edu
Benjamin Castleman <sup>a,b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Curry School of Education, University of Virginia	castleman@virginia.edu
Reuben Ford <sup>b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)	rford@srdc.org
Michael Garet <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	American Institutes for Research (AIR)	mgaret@air.org
Alexander Mayer <sup>b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	MDRC	alexander.mayer@mdrc.org
Biren “Ratnesh” Nagda <sup>b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	School of Social Work, University of Washington	ratnesh@u.washington.edu
Philip Oreopoulos <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	University of Toronto	philip.oreopoulos@utoronto.ca
Reshma Patel <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Impact Network	reshma@impactnetwork.org
Susan Scrivener <sup>a,b</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	MDRC	sue.scrivener@mdrc.org
Colleen Sommo <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	MDRC	colleen.sommo@mdrc.org
Nicole M. Stephens <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University	n-stephens@kellogg.northwestern.edu
Michael J. Weiss <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	MDRC	michael.weiss@mdrc.org
Evan Weissman <sup>a</sup> ( <a href="#">bio</a> )	MDRC	evan.weissman@mdrc.org

<sup>a</sup> Conducted an RCT that the WWC has identified as meeting study design standards without reservations

<sup>b</sup> Conducted an RCT that the LJAF Evidence-Based Policy team has identified as a well-conducted study based on careful review