



## Per Scholas Job Training Program

A “sectoral” (i.e., industry-specific) job training program for unemployed, disadvantaged workers. Well-conducted randomized controlled trial shows a \$4,700 (or 32%) increase in earnings in the second year after random assignment.

### **I. Description of the Intervention:**

Per Scholas is a nonprofit, “sectoral” employment program in the South Bronx (New York City) that provides information technology job training to unemployed, disadvantaged workers who have a high school diploma or GED and test at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade or higher in English and math. Through its role as a recycling center for old computers, Per Scholas has developed strong relationships with local employers who advise them on the program’s training curriculum and participate in job fairs and mock interviews. The training lasts 15 weeks (30-35 hours per week), and its goal is for participants to earn the industry-recognized A+ certification, demonstrating competency in repairing and maintaining personal electronic equipment (i.e., computers, printers, copiers, etc.) and troubleshooting computer networks. Training participants also learn job readiness skills, such as how to interview well and manage their time. After completing training, many participants receive internships with Per Scholas refurbishing old computers for use in low-income communities. Program applicants are carefully screened to identify those most likely to benefit from training and succeed in the information technology field. Once they have completed training, Per Scholas helps them find a job. The cost of the program was not reported in the study summarized below.

### **II. Evidence of Effectiveness:**

#### **A. Evaluation Method: A single-site randomized controlled trial of Per Scholas with follow-up two years after random assignment.**

The study randomly assigned 443 adults (average age 33 years), who had applied for Per Scholas’ training program and met its eligibility requirements, to either (i) a treatment group that participated in job training offered by Per Scholas, or (ii) a control group that did not receive Per Scholas services for two years, but could attend any other employment training programs in the community. 78% of the treatment group completed the training.

76% of sample members were male, 91% were African American or Latino, 74% were unemployed at the start of the study, all had a high school diploma or GED and 28% had some post-secondary education, 13% had been incarcerated, and 26% were foreign born. On average, they had earned \$10,833 during the prior year.

#### **B. Effects of Per Scholas at the 2-year, post-random assignment follow-up:**

These are the effects on the primary outcomes that the study measured at the 2-year follow-up, compared to the control group (including any such outcomes for which no adverse effects were found). All effects shown are statistically significant at the 0.05 level unless otherwise stated.

- 32% increase in average earnings during the *second year* of the follow-up (\$19,343 vs. \$14,680; significant at the 0.01 level). The program had no significant effects on total earnings over the full two years, but this appears to be because the Per Scholas group’s earnings were lower than the control group’s while they were in training, delaying the

program's impact. (The program produced a non-significant 15% increase in earnings over the full two-year period.)

- 20% increase in months employed during the second year of the follow-up -- 8.3 months versus 6.9 months. (The program produced a 13% increase in months employed over the full two-year period, which was significant at the 0.10 level but not the 0.05 level.)
- 30% increase in the likelihood of ever working a job paying at least \$11 per hour in the second year of the follow-up (60% versus 46%), and 22% increase in such likelihood over the full two year period – both statistically significant.

### **C. Discussion of Study Quality:**

- Per Scholas was evaluated as it typically operates, thus providing evidence of its effectiveness in real-world settings.
- The study had low to moderate attrition: Outcome data were obtained for 78% of the original sample, and follow-up rates were virtually the same for the Per Scholas and control groups.
- Per Scholas and control group members in the follow-up sample were highly similar in their observable pre-program characteristics (e.g., demographics and employment history).
- The study measured outcomes for all Per Scholas group members regardless of whether or how long they actually participated in a program (i.e., the study used an “intention-to-treat” analysis).
- Study Limitations:
  - Outcomes were measured through self-reports, obtained through researcher-administered surveys, and were not corroborated by official records (e.g., state unemployment insurance data on earnings and employment).
  - The follow-up period was only two years. Longer-term follow-up is needed to determine if the sizable effects at two years persist.
  - The study took place before the 2008 recession. Corroboration of the above findings in a second trial is necessary to determine whether the program is still effective in the current, weaker labor market.

**D. Thoughts on what more is needed to build strong evidence:** A second well-conducted randomized controlled trial, carried out in another setting, to show that the effects generalize to other settings where the program might normally be implemented.

### **III. References**

[Maguire, Sheila](#), Joshua Freely, Carol Clymer, Maureen Conway, and Deena Schwartz. “Tuning into Local Labor Markets: Findings from the Sectoral Employment Impact Study.” Public/Private Ventures: 2010. [Click here for the full study report.](#)