

SCHOLARSHIPS AND STUDENT EFFORT: EVIDENCE FROM COLOMBIA'S SER PILO PAGA PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Launched in 2014, Colombia's Ser Pilo Paga program aimed to increase college enrollment for low income students by providing 10,000 means-tested scholarships annually to the highest performers on the country's high school exit exam. We theorize that the introduction of the scholarship incentivized these students to better prepare for this exam. Exploiting the SES thresholds for eligibility using a regression discontinuity design, we find that students who qualify for the scholarship score about 0.09 test score standard deviations higher than those who do not. We also find that the program increased the representation of the poorest students in the top 9% of test takers. Survey evidence suggests that students spent more time and money preparing for the test.

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