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HARVARD STUDY: TEACH FOR AMERICA HAS SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS' VALUES AND CAREER PATHS

Researchers Find Teach For America Experience Increases Participants' Conviction That The Achievement Gap Is Solvable and That Teacher Quality Matters, and Makes Participants More Racially Tolerant and More Likely to Pursue an Education Career

NEW YORK CITY, September 12, 2011—A new Harvard University research study finds that participation in Teach For America markedly affects corps members' education beliefs, racial tolerance, and career paths. The preliminary findings from this study by Harvard professor Roland G. Fryer, Jr. and doctoral student Will Dobbie indicate that the Teach For America experience strengthens participants' conviction in the academic potential of all children regardless of income level or race, and increases racial tolerance among participants across all racial groups. In addition, the experience increases the likelihood that participants will pursue a career in the education sector.

"In addition to providing students and communities with an additional source of committed teachers, Teach For America aims to provide our corps members with the foundational experience for effective long-term leadership and advocacy on behalf of low-income students," said Wendy Kopp, founder and chief executive officer of Teach For America. "We are heartened by the findings of this study, which provides compelling evidence that we are succeeding in this mission. Our teachers' firsthand experience in urban and rural schools strengthens their belief in the potential of every student to succeed academically, regardless of skin color or economic background, and deepens their personal and professional commitment to expanding educational opportunity in our nation."

Teach For America fosters the leadership of outstanding college graduates and professionals to address the root causes of educational inequity. Teach For America corps members commit to teach in underserved schools for two years, and in the 2011-12 school year more than 9,000 corps members will be teaching across 43 urban and rural regions. At the same time, nearly 24,000 alumni are working from inside and outside education to level the playing field for kids and families in low-income communities.

To identify the impact of the Teach For America experience on participants' attitudes and professional pursuits, Fryer and Dobbie surveyed Teach For America applicants from 2007 and compared the responses of those just below the admissions bar to the responses of those just

above it. Both groups had similar demographics of race, gender, and socioeconomic background. By comparing Teach For America participants to nonparticipants who were similar in most respects, including their interest in participating in Teach For America, the researchers were able to estimate the impact of the Teach For America experience on attitudes and behaviors.

The researchers concluded that the Teach For America experience has a significant impact on participants' beliefs about education and the potential of children growing up in low-income communities. Participants are 53 percentage points more likely to believe that children from low-income backgrounds can compete academically with children from more affluent backgrounds and 48 percentage points more likely to believe that the achievement gap is solvable. Participants are also 48 percentage points more likely to believe that teachers are the most important determinant of success and 84 percentage points more likely to disagree that there is little teachers can do to ensure that students succeed.

In addition, the study concluded that the corps experience reduces stereotyping based on race among Teach For America participants from all racial groups. Using a measure that estimates individuals' unconscious racial attitudes, the researchers found that participating in Teach For America increases unconscious racial tolerance by nearly 1 standard deviation. To put this measurement in context, the researchers also found that black Teach For America applicants are half a standard deviation more tolerant of blacks than are non-black applicants. Assuming that most people are tolerant of those in their same racial group, a nearly 1 standard deviation increase in tolerance is comparatively large.

The study also found that Teach For America corps members are more likely to be employed at P-12 schools and in the education sector after their two-year commitment than applicants who did not join Teach For America. Participating in Teach For America increased the probability of being employed in a P-12 school by 35 percentage points, and in education more broadly by 48 percentage points, demonstrating Teach For America's strength as a leadership pipeline for the education sector. Today, nearly two-thirds of Teach For America's alumni are working in education, with half of those serving as P-12 teachers and more than 550 leading schools and school systems. The study shows that many of these individuals would not be working in education had they not participated in Teach For America. The full study is available online at www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~dobbie/research/TFA_September2011.pdf.

About Teach For America

Teach For America is the national corps of outstanding recent college graduates who commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in expanding educational opportunity. Today more than 9,000 corps members are teaching in 43 regions across the country while nearly 24,000 Teach For America alumni continue working from inside

and outside the field of education for the fundamental changes necessary to ensure educational excellence and equity. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org.

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