MSIs

Minority-serving institutions (MSIs) collectively serve a large proportion of underrepresented minority students and provide supportive, nurturing academic and social communities where students are encouraged and empowered to succeed, despite the challenges posed by their families’ lack of social, economic, academic, and cultural capitals and the larger socioeconomic structure that may systematically impair their chances of success.

MSIs, including Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), educate more than 2.3 million students. However, the contributions of these institutions are not well understood or appreciated. In addition, these institutions are often in dire need of financial and human resources that drive the widespread definition of “academic excellence” and “quality.” As a result, they often have to abide by rules that favor resource-rich institutions in the accountability movement and in the competition for further resources.

Lumina-Funded Student Success Projects

In recognition of the critical mission served by MSIs and their achievement in spite of limited resources, through its MSIs Models of Success program, Lumina Foundation has dedicated resources to support initiatives that foster both innovation and sustainability of effective programs that serve underrepresented students attending these institutions.

UTEP and its collaborating institutions (Texas A&M International University, Palmar View A&M University, and El Paso Community College) have been working together to build synergistic and campus-specific student success knowledge infrastructures. The main components include:

- Study of first-time-in-college students’ success at three MSIs
- Study of transfer-student success, focusing on transfers between two collaborating MSIs
- Study of student success within major fields of study

Abstract

Studies of transfer-student success have largely focused on the point of transition. But what happens to students after they transfer? To address the lack of understanding of post-transfer success of at minority-serving institutions, this study tracks multiple cohorts of students who transferred to a large minority-serving research university.

We examine both student and institutional factors that influence persistence, progress, mobility, and success. In addition to conventional models that focus on the “final” outcome of graduation, we also examine the timing of multiple outcomes.

Students who transferred from a minority-serving community college in the same metropolitan area were more successful than other transfer students.

Institution and Student Sample

The study uses student-level data retrieved from multiple records databases at UTEP. A significant share of its transfer students come from EPCC, a minority-serving community college located in the same metropolitan area in the southwest US-Mexico border region, where more than 80% of the population are Mexican-Americans. Both institutions have the official designation of HSI.

The entire sample consists of all students who transferred to UTEP for the first time between Fall 1999 and Spring 2004, including students who transferred from EPCC, other community colleges, and baccalaureate-granting institutions. Students are tracked from their entry term to the censor term of Spring 2010, so that all students have at least six-year longitudinal data.

Educational Attainment and Performance of Transfer Students in Minority-Serving Institutions: What Factors Matter at What Time?

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Funded by Lumina Foundation
The University of Texas at El Paso
Center for Institutional Evaluation, Research and Planning
AACU Student Success Conference, March 22-24, 2012

A Longitudinal Process of Persistence and Performance for Transfer Students

Longitudinal Views of Student Outcomes

Graduation: System vs. Institution Time

Departure: All Entrants vs. Juniors

Post-Transfer Graduate Rate

Analytical Models

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Refined Measure of Success

Successful exit: Computing risk: proportional hazard models.

Research Question 3: Sending Institution

- EPCC transfers are more likely to persist, whether the mediating effects of academic performance are controlled or not. The advantage decreases over time enrolled, and it is strongest among those who transferred at a later stage (i.e., with more transfer credits).
- EPCC transfers are much more likely to graduate in six years; however, among all transfer students who left UTEP, EPCC transfers are more likely to leave with GPA below 2.0.
- The EPCC effect on graduation is stronger for those who transferred at a later stage, and is not statistically significant among freshmen transfers.
- The patterns found for the combined sample is consistent across entry cohorts as defined by their calendar year (and semester) of entry at UTEP.

Implications

- For transfer students with different timing of transfer, as measured by their number of transfer credits, it is important to examine their outcomes based on both system and institution time. Transfers who made the institutional transition at later stages may appear to be more likely to persist and graduate from the receiving institution’s perspective; however, this also may be reflective of the system perspective.
- Academic performance in post-transfer stage (term GPA) is a strong mediating factor. Its inclusion and exclusion from a particular model should be conceptually consistent with the specific question that the model seeks to answer.
- Enrollment intensity has nonlinear impact on student success. As a measure of involvement it is a success factor; however, it may have a smaller effect on a risk factor that affects academic performance. Policies that intend to increase students’ semester hours need to consider both effects.
- Financial aid matters in general; its cost-effectiveness may be improved when the differential impact of different types and timing of financial aid offering is considered.
- An articulation relationship between the sending and receiving institutions is likely to be an important success factor for post-transfer outcomes, particularly for students who transfer at later stages.

Research Questions

- Loans
- Students with loans are more likely to persist in early semesters, and this effect is stronger among those who transferred at an earlier stage. It is a stronger predictor for persistence in the fall semesters than in the spring.
- Grants
- Students with grants are more likely to persist and the effect increases over time;
- Semester Credit Hours Attempted
- Students with higher enrollment intensity are more likely to persist. The effect increases over time, is stronger among those who transferred at a later stage, and is stronger among spring entry cohorts.
- Developmental Education
- Students taking developmental courses in later terms are at higher risk, and the risk impact is stronger among those who transferred at a later stage.