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TG™

Enrollment Management Journal:

Student Access, Finance, and Success in Higher Education

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Student Access, Finance, and Success in Higher Education

Editorial Policy:

The *Enrollment Management Journal: Student Access, Finance, and Success in Higher Education* is a refereed, quarterly journal devoted to the issues of successful management of student enrollments, access, student financial aid, and its impact on students achieving their educational goals. The journal has been designed to help researchers and practitioners better understand the principles, concepts, and contexts for implementing sound practices that help institutions of higher education recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate more students. The journal is unbiased, does not espouse any viewpoint or program, and is intended for the entire academic community regardless of affiliation. The views expressed by contributors to the journal are their own and not necessarily those of the journal itself, its editors, editorial board, or sponsoring entities. The Editorial Board is blind to the institutional loan program preference of contributors, if any, and the Board's decisions do not represent an endorsement of any particular program or policy. The content of the journal is comprised of articles, commentaries, book reviews, program highlights, and other short pieces that are germane to enrollment management and that provide unique insight into timely issues in the field. Contributors may use a range of theoretical and methodological approaches as they cover subject matters such as admissions standards, standardized entrance exams, tuition and financial aid policy, retention initiatives, new student enrollment programs, innovative uses of student data software, articulation agreements, residency policies, need-based and merit-based aid, and other issues as they pertain to effective enrollment management.

Submissions:

Contributors to the *Enrollment Management Journal* should send their manuscripts electronically to Dr. Barbara LaCost and Dr. Brent Cejda at EMJ@unl.edu. Manuscripts should be no more than 30 pages in length, and each article should be summarized in an abstract of not more than 150 words. Manuscripts should follow the style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association 5th Edition*. Contributions should be submitted in Microsoft Word format. Manuscripts are accepted for consideration with the understanding that they are original material and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere. In addition, manuscripts should include a cover page that provides the following: the full manuscript title, names of authors, titles, addresses and institutional affiliations, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers. No author identification should be included in the body of the manuscript. Referees evaluate submitted manuscripts anonymously. Our goal is to complete the blind review process within 90 days of receipt of manuscripts. Authors may be asked to make revisions prior to the final manuscript acceptance. The editors reserve the right to make grammatical corrections and changes in manuscripts to improve clarity.

Questions about submissions should be directed to:

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From the Editors

In this first issue of Volume 3, the Enrollment Management Journal moves to a quarterly publication schedule. Change occurs with any initiative, and with EMJ the primary changes we have experienced involved people. Jacob Johnson had been with us since we began working on the journal and left in late summer for a full-time position in student affairs at the University of Southern Utah. We thank Jake for his work and welcome Sharon Hoffman as the new managing editor. Elizabeth Stanley assumed supervision of the publication at TG and became a member of the editorial board as we were completing the inaugural issue. Charles Bradford from TG also joins our editorial staff, serving as the copy editor. Finally, there have been a number of changes within the editorial board of the journal. We thank Ron Brown, Jeff Dennis, Dana Mingo, and Tyler Pruett for their service on the editorial board during the past two years. New members of the editorial board and their affiliations are: Michelle Cooper of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, Michael Heintze of Texas State University, and Laura Rendón of Iowa State University.

What has not changed is our focus on publishing a journal that is valuable to both researchers and practitioners. We continue to strive to produce issues that present a variety of investigations about enrollment management with a specific focus on student access, finance, and success.

As with previous issues, three areas continue to be included: Scholarship and Research, From the Field, and Legislative Update.

Scholarship and Research

In this section, we highlight empirical and conceptual submissions that have completed a blind, refereed appraisal.

Rachelle Winkle-Wagner and Jesse Nelson use national data to examine one of the more common measures of success, the employment and earnings levels of college graduates, focusing on differences between males and females as well as racial and ethnic groups.

Steven LaNasa and Sydney Rogers incorporate a qualitative methodology to investigate the impact of a private tuition scholarship program on low-income students' access to a four-year postsecondary experience, as well as how the scholarship influenced persistence and success.

Cynthia Flores evaluates the effectiveness of two outreach programs in South Texas, GEAR-UP and Upward Bound, in preparing minority, low-income, and first-generation students for college.

Marla Butke and David Frego explore how the audition, a unique admissions requirement for fine arts disciplines, influenced the college decision process of music majors from two universities in a Midwestern state.

From the Field

The From the Field section focuses on activities and programs that reflect and inform practice in enrollment management.

Mirella Burton, Victor Garza, Jr., and Richard Regua describe the Enlace program in the San Jose/Evergreen Community College District in California. Enlace focuses on and has contributed to the goal of increasing the success and persistence rates of Latino/a students.

The retention of first-year students grows increasingly important in difficult budgetary times. Rita Kean reflects on the efforts to improve first-year retention at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, focusing on three initiatives that students have reported as influential in their first-year experience.

Legislative Update

The continuing debate about the cost of higher education has intensified as a troubling economy and tighter credit markets raise questions about the ability of state legislatures to maintain current levels of funding for higher education.

The Legislative Update in this issue summarizes the latest budget survey conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures, in regards to the potential impact on higher education funding. With continued concerns about a possible long-term recession, increasing tuition to offset decreased state funding does not appear to be a viable solution. This snapshot of state budget concerns and the outlook for specific sectors that impact state revenue provides an early opportunity to estimate the extent of potential funding problems for the upcoming fiscal years.

We look forward to realizing our initial goal of developing a quarterly journal that focuses on scholarship and practice related to enrollment management.

Scholarship and Research

Is Higher Education the Great Equalizer? Examining Early Occupational Attainment by Race, Class, and Gender

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Abstract

This study examines early occupational outcomes to evaluate the degree to which higher education acts as an equalizer in status attainment. Using the NELS dataset, this paper examines the effects of education, aspirations, background socioeconomic status, race, class, and gender on early occupational attainment. The results indicate that after controlling for background characteristics, early occupational opportunity still differs by race and gender, suggesting the importance of considering these categories in enrollment management decisions. A college degree especially benefits males and Black females, yet college educated women and Black males still face early occupational status inequities. As expected, aspirations were also found to impact early occupational attainment.

"Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men,-the balance-wheel of the social machinery."
— *Horace Mann, Advocate of Public Education*

Introduction

Higher education is often considered the great equalizer in the United States. Early status attainment literature (Blau & Duncan, 1967) indicated that higher education mattered with regard to intergenerational status attainment and social mobility. That is, higher education could help mitigate the potential disadvantages of one's background, potentially linking enrollment management decisions to social equity issues more generally—those who are able to gain access to and persist through college will achieve greater social mobility.

Subsequent studies underscored the importance of higher education in particular as the great equalizer of social inequality and social mobility (Kerckhof, 1995; Knottnerus, 1987; Sewell & Hauser, 1972; Sewell & Haller, 1969). The assumption, therefore, is that if people are provided the opportunity to obtain higher education, the negative effects of race, class, and gender status can be lessened, if not mitigated altogether.

Is higher education the great equalizer, as popular assumptions indicate? Or does inequity along racial, gender, and class lines define early occupational attainment, even after controlling for aspirations and educational attainment? Does a four-year college degree give inequitable advantages to some, or does it mitigate occupational inequality? These research questions guided this study.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Status Attainment and Social Mobility

Why is higher education important? The status attainment literature, initiated in sociology, began in an attempt to understand the relationship between educational and occupational attainment. In the early days of status attainment research, Blau and Duncan (1967) sought to understand intergenerational mobility between fathers and sons. Status attainment research established education as a central aspect of status reproduction; the educational attainment of fathers was a good predictor of the educational attainment of sons (Blau & Duncan, 1967).

Taking a life cycle approach (Warren, Sheridan, & Hauser, 2002), later status attainment literature attempted to understand the role of education in determining occupational status and social mobility through incremental status hierarchies (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001). Other studies in the area of status attainment expanded this line of research to include females, relationships with significant others, and social-psychological variables like aspirations and mental ability (Blau & Kah, 1996; Kerckhoff, 1995; Knottnerus, 1987; Sewell & Hauser, 1972; Warren, Sheridan, & Hauser, 2002).

While some suggest that the status attainment model asserts an image of society that is fluid and stable (Knottnerus, 1987), status attainment models have historically been under fire for being functionalist (Horan, 1978), indicating that social inequality serves a particular function in society. However, the examination of statuses and the way in which one's location in the social strata influence life chances may in fact provide insight into existing inequality in education and society more generally. This examination of statuses does not have to be functionalist. Rather, one's interpretation of findings related to social strata could be an indictment of the social structure itself. In addition, this view of statuses may provide insights into ways that initial inequalities of social background can be mitigated through education.

If the status attainment literature indicates that higher education influences occupational attainment, is higher education *more* influential for some students? That is, could higher education be a *greater* equalizer for some students, providing a rationale for explicitly recruiting particular groups of students in an effort to mitigate social inequality? For example, could higher education be more important to those groups, such as women and people of color, who have been historically disadvantaged?

The Need for Credentials

In sociological theory, Randall Collins (1971) asserted a credentialing theory to explain the perpetuation of social stratification. Collins argued that as those who have been historically disadvantaged gain access to scarce resources (i.e., education), the credentials needed for particular occupations will increase. Ultimately, credentialing is linked to status threat in Collins' theory: those with high status fear the loss of status, and this facilitates a process where the prerequisites for status attainment change.

Thus, while one may have needed a high school diploma for a particular profession at one time, with the credentialing increase, one now needs a college degree or even an advanced degree to do the same jobs (Carey, 2004). Studies over the past few decades have demonstrated this credentialing effect (Cao, Stromsdorfer, & Weeks, 1996; Grubb, 1993; Labaree, 1999). In this way, stratification continues despite the appearance of a meritocratic process. The credentialing increase is maintained because most will not question what outwardly appears to be fair. This study attempts to ascertain if social stratification is perpetuated in the credentialing process. That is, do educational credentials mean the same thing to all people, or do some benefit more from educational credentials than others?

Aspirations and Occupational Attainment

Studies regarding aspirations indicate different aspirations based on race (Bigler, Averhart, & Liben, 2003; Goyette & Xie, 1999) and gender (Shu & Marini, 1998). For example, some research indicates that African American students in higher education have higher aspirations than White students (Astin, 1990; Weiler, 1993). Goyette and Xie (1999), using the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) data, found that Asian Americans have higher educational expectations than Whites do. Hanson (1994), using the High School and Beyond dataset, found that socioeconomic status had a significant impact on the development of aspirations—the students with higher socioeconomic status had higher aspirations.

Some discrepancies in occupational aspirations can be attributed to perceptions about appropriate social roles. In an interview study of primary school students' occupational aspirations, the findings indicated that students' interests were impacted by racial segregation in jobs. In other words, racial-minority students aspired to lower status jobs due to the influence of racial stereotyping on occupational aspirations (Bigler, Averhart, & Liben, 2003).

Some studies indicate women have lower aspirations than men do or that they lower their aspirations to make them “gender appropriate” (Kenkel & Gage, 1983). Ridgeway (1997), in an exploration of occupational gender inequality, asserted that taken-for-granted interactional processes within the workplace influence aspirations. These interactions result in men and women judging the opportunities available to them differently.

The Outcomes of Higher Education: Differential Rewards for Women and Minorities

Occupational opportunity after higher education is often stratified by race and gender. Laura Perna (2003) found disparities in earnings between women and men and between racial groups in her study using the High School and Beyond dataset. Yet earnings across the board did increase with even some postsecondary education, underscoring the importance of education in socioeconomic mobility (Perna, 2003). In *Faded Dreams* (1995), Martin Carnoy used over fifty years of data on education, income, and jobs in finding that Blacks still faced unequal economic rewards for education. Using the NELS dataset, Laura Perna (2005) found the economic payoffs of education such as higher average incomes, greater likelihood of having health insurance, and lower likelihood of receiving public assistance to be generally greater for women. In addition, she found that Blacks received greater "payoff" from postsecondary education than Whites in terms of health insurance coverage, job satisfaction, and perceived employment benefits.

Women have also experienced differential rewards for education, and they continue to be paid less for the same jobs than their male counterparts (England, 1992; Perna, 2003). Sociologists like Paula England (1992) have studied the "comparable worth" of women, indicating that women on average have been treated as if they were worth less in the occupational structure. Thus, as Collins' (1971) credentialing theory suggests, women often need more education to obtain similar positions to men.

Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore potential inequities in early occupational attainment. Two specific questions gave focus to the study: First, does inequity along racial, gender, and class lines exist within early occupational attainment, even after controlling for educational attainment? Secondly, does a four-year college degree give inequitable advantages to some, or does it mitigate occupational inequality?

Data and Variables

Data for this study came from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), available through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). NELS surveys followed students from the high school class of 1992 for twelve years, from 1988 to 2000. At the time of the final follow-up survey, most participants were 26 years old and had completed their planned postsecondary education. This was an ideal time to identify early occupational attainment and to explore potential inequities.

During the final NELS survey, participants were asked to report their current occupation. NCES coded the responses into nineteen occupational categories, which we then stratified into three levels: high status, middle status, and low status. Participants identifying as "Homemakers," "Owners," "Not Working," or "Don't Know," were deleted from the study due to very small or nonexistent sample sizes.

We stratified early occupational attainment into three levels. Our rationale for this stratification was as follows: First, the trilevel class status emulates social norms, assuming that there is a low, middle, and upper class. While there are arguably sublevels between these classes/statuses, there is still a predominant perception that three classes exist in the U.S. and many research studies are modeled after a triclass structure (see Bell, 2003; Brantlinger, 2003). Secondly, other status attainment models have used this trilevel model (for examples, see Blau & Kah, 1996; Kerckhoff, 1995; Knottnerus, 1987; Sewell & Hauser, 1972).

In accordance with a three-class structure, we categorized early occupational attainment as follows:

1. Low Status: craftsman, operative, laborer, clerical, service, farmer
2. Middle Status: manager, school teacher, protective service, military, sales/purchasing, and other
3. High Status: professional PhD., professional non-PhD., M.D., J.D., and technical/computer

Status was determined relative to the annual income available in the profession and the level of schooling required to gain entry into the profession. In addition, the social networks and potential for cultural capital[1] within particular jobs was considered. The three levels for early occupational status (low, middle, and high) represent this study's outcome variable.

Independent variables for race, gender, background income, occupational aspirations, and educational attainment were included in the model. We chose these variables because of their significance in existing status attainment (see Kerckhoff, 1995; Knottnerus, 1987; Sewell & Haller, 1969) and social mobility literature (see Buchmann & Hannum, 2001):

1. Race: Students self-identified their race and ethnicity. We created dichotomous variables for those identifying as “Black,” “Hispanic,” or “Asian.” Caucasian students represented the comparison group, and Native American and Alaskan Native respondents were deleted due to small sample size.
2. Gender: A gender-dichotomous variable was created with a value of “1” when the respondent identified as a female, otherwise the value of “0” was assigned.
3. Background Income: A continuous variable identifying income in thousands of dollars was created based on parental reporting from the NELS parent survey.
4. Occupational Aspirations: Respondents identified their specific occupational aspirations in the baseline and first three follow-up surveys. We coded aspirations like the outcome variable, stratifying the aspirations into “high,” “mid,” and “low” status categories. We used occupational aspirations only from the second and third follow-up surveys (when the respondents were approximately 18 and 20 years old) because we deemed these the most reliable. We hypothesize that at 18 and 20 years of age, occupational hopes and plans are more salient in an individual's life and shaped more directly by perceived constraints and opportunities.

[1] *Cultural capital is defined here as a set of preferences, tastes, or values that work as a form of “capital” in social settings such as education or the workplace. Bourdieu (1987) first developed this concept.*

5. Educational Attainment: A continuous variable was created to designate how much education an individual had attained by the last follow-up survey (most respondents were 26 years old). NCES coded respondents' education level as "No Postsecondary Education," "Some College," "2–yr. Degree," etc. We recoded these categories to reflect approximate years of schooling. The following years of schooling were assigned to the NCES categories:

NCES Categories	**Years of Schooling**
No PSE	12
Some College	13
License/Certificate	13
2-yr. Degree	14
4-yr. Degree	16
Master's Degree	18
Doctoral Degree	20

Cases with missing values in the race, gender, background income, education, and/or outcome variables were excluded from the analysis. The exclusions reduced the sample from 12,144 to 9,866 cases. The aspiration variables also contained a number of missing values. Because aspiration variables were only used in one multinomial logit model, cases with missing aspirations values were included in the general study and excluded only for the aforementioned model. When deleting cases with missing aspirations values, the sample decreased from 9,866 to 7,788. Tables 1 (including the full sample) and 2 (including only college graduates) report the descriptive statistics for this study.

TABLE 1 | Statistics for Early Occupational Attainment at Age 26

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Outcome	1.961	0.849	1 = low status; 2 = mid status; 3 = high status
Asian	6.8%	0.252	1 = Asian, otherwise 0
Hispanic	12.4%	0.330	1 = Hispanic, otherwise 0
Black	9.1%	0.288	1 = Black, otherwise 0
Female	52.5%	0.499	1 = Female, otherwise 0
Income	$41,014	35.886	Income in thousands of dollars
Mid-status aspirations, 18	35.4%	0.478	1 = Mid-status aspirations at age 18
High-status aspirations, 18	53.2%	0.499	1 = High-status aspirations at age 18
Mid-status aspirations, 20	33.6%	0.472	1 = Mid-status aspirations at age 20
Mid-status aspirations, 20	48.2%	0.500	1 = High-status aspirations at age 20
Education	14.035	1.784	Years of education

Source: NELS 88:2000. N = 9866.

Models and Methods

Because our dependent variable, early occupational status, consisted of three values (high-, middle-, and low-status occupations), this study specified a multinomial logistic regression model. Multinomial logistic regression is appropriate when the dependent variable takes on more than two outcomes and the outcomes have no natural ordering (Kennedy, 1998; Long, 1997).

As indicated previously, our analysis focused on two key research questions that were evaluated using two distinct models. In the first model, we explored whether race and gender inequities related to early occupational status existed, even after controlling for traditional status attainment predictors. The first multinomial logistic regression model regressed early occupational status on race, gender, income, aspirations, and educational attainment.

$$Y \text{ (Occ. Outcomes)} = ß_0 + ß_1 \text{ (Black)} + ß_2 \text{ (Hispanic)} + ß_3 \text{ (Asian)} + ß_4 \text{ (Female)} + ß_5 \text{ (Income)} + ß_6 \text{ (MidAsp18)} + ß_7 \text{ (HighAsp18)} + ß_8 \text{ (MidAsp20)} + ß_9 \text{ (HighAsp20)} + ß_{10} \text{ (Educ)} + E$$

In our second model, we explored the question of whether a four-year postsecondary degree mitigated early occupational inequities. The second multinomial regression model regressed early occupational status on race and gender variables and their interactive effects. For this second model, the sample was limited to only those who had earned a four-year degree by the time of the final follow-up survey.

$$Y \text{ (Occ. Outcomes)} = ß_0 + ß_1 \text{ (Black)} + ß_2 \text{ (Hispanic)} + ß_3 \text{ (Asian)} + ß_4 \text{ (Female)} + ß_5 \text{ (Income)} + ß_6 \text{ (Black X Female)} + ß_7 \text{ (Hispanic X Female)} + ß_8 \text{ (Asian X Female)} + E$$

Descriptive statistics for the second model are included in Table 2.

TABLE 2 | Descriptive Statistics for Early Occupational Attainment of College Graduates

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Outcome	2.425	0.681	1 = low status; 2 = mid status; 3 = high status
Black	6.3%	0.243	1 = Black, otherwise 0
Hispanic	6.4%	0.245	1 = Hispanic, otherwise 0
Asian	11.1%	0.314	1 = Asian, otherwise 0
Female	55.2%	0.497	1 = Female, otherwise 0
Income	$58,800	45.05	Income in thousands of dollars
Black female	3.9%	0.194	1 = Black female, otherwise 0
Hispanic female	3.8%	0.191	1 = Hispanic female, otherwise 0
Asian female	6.1%	0.239	1 = Asian female, otherwise 0

Source: NELS 88:2000. N = 3490.

Limitations

We cannot emphasize strongly enough that the results of this study regard *early* occupational attainment. The respondents were approximately 26 years old at the time of the survey. Occupational status could change significantly as these respondents work into their thirties, forties, and fifties.

Another limitation of this study is that the models did not account for intergenerational wealth. For example, two people may have the same occupational status, but one may have more inherited or privately owned wealth. Taking an intergenerational wealth perspective, for instance, Oliver and Shapiro (1997) compared the private wealth accumulation of African American and White people in the United States, finding that private wealth accumulation directly affected future-generational status. Further research needs to account for the impact of inherited and intergenerational wealth in considerations of occupational and socioeconomic status.

While additional research on mid- and late-career status is merited, this study illuminates important aspects of early occupational attainment. Of particular interest is the effect of a college degree on early occupational attainment.

Findings

Education and Greater Opportunity

If education, aspirations, and family income, as important predictors of status attainment, really mitigate social inequity, we would expect those predictors to explain the variance in occupational attainment between race–gender groups. At the outset, we introduced a multinomial logit model that regressed early occupational status on controls for race, gender, family income, aspirations, and educational attainment (see Table 3).

Expectedly, the family income, aspirations, and education variables were all statistically significant predictors of early occupational status; however, variance remained between some of the race–gender groups. Females and Asians (of both genders) were more likely to attain a high-status rather than a low-status position, at least early in their careers. On the other hand, African

Americans were more likely than White individuals were to hold low-status positions, compared to middle-status occupations (significant at the .10 level).

TABLE 3 | The Impact of Background Characteristics, Four-year Degrees, and Aspirations on Occupational Outcomes

	High v. Low Status		Mid v. Low Status	
	B (St. Dev.)		*B* (St. Dev.)	
Black	-0.143 (0.108)		-0.205 0.112	+
Hispanic	0.130 (0.094)		0.018 0.096	
Asian	0.473 (0.129)	***	0.068 0.139	
Female	0.204 (0.061)	***	0.012 0.062	
Income	0.004 (0.001)	***	0.004 0.001	***
MS Asp 18	0.122 (0.109)		0.360 0.107	***
HS Asp 18	0.528 (0.106)	***	0.327 0.108	**
MS Asp 20	0.442 (0.098)	***	1.049 0.096	***
HS Asp 20	0.822 (0.094)	***	0.590 0.098	***
Education	0.595 (0.022)	***	0.480	***
Constant	-9.422 (0.300)	***	-7.892 0.303	***

Source: NELS 88:2000. N = 7,788
*** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, + p < .10

The perpetuation of variance in early occupational opportunity, notwithstanding the inclusion of important occupational controls, suggested the presence of other social forces that privileged some while disadvantaging others. Importantly, higher levels of education were associated with a greater likelihood of high- and middle-status occupations. Such a finding begins to justify the claim that education mitigates inequity while equalizing opportunity. To further explore the impact of postsecondary education on early occupational status, we ran another multinomial logit model, but limited the sample to only those with a four-year college degree.

Higher Education as an Equalizer

College graduates represent an important population for analyzing status attainment. In aggregate, these are the most prepared to take middle- and high-status positions, and the latent social contract assumes they will receive occupational privilege as a premium for their collegiate efforts. One might expect minimal variance within this population regarding occupational opportunity. The results from the second model, however, suggested that even among college graduates, early occupational attainment was scarred with inequality (Table 4).

Female graduates were less likely than males to hold a high-status, compared to a middle-status, position. Since model 1 indicated a female advantage in early occupational status, this finding of disadvantage was interesting. Indeed, this study suggests the female privilege associated with early occupational status exists for those with little or no postsecondary education. Among the college educated, males continue to be privileged.

Like the previous model, Asian Americans were again advantaged in the likelihood of attaining a high-status occupation, while Black graduates were less likely to hold a high-status position (significant at the .10 level).

The noteworthy exception to these findings was the accomplishment of African American women. Black female graduates did not appear to experience the same disadvantage as their White female peers, nor did they experience the disadvantage associated with being African American. That higher education plays a significant role in the life chances and early occupational attainment of Black females is a phenomenon requiring future discussion and research.

TABLE 4 | Early Occupational Attainment of Four-year Graduates—
High- v. Mid-Status Attainment

	B (St. Dev.)	e^b or e^b stdX
Black	-0.459+ (.241)	0.632
Hispanic	-0.028 (.233)	0.973
Asian	0.666*** (.194)	1.946
Female	-0.295*** (.085)	0.744
Income	0.000 (.000)	1.005
Black x Female	0.845** (.315)	2.329
Hispanic x Female	-0.070 (.303)	0.933
Asian x Female	-0.192 (.252)	0.825
Constant	0.509*** (.082)	
LR Chi sq	58.91***	

Source: NELS 88:2000. N = 3,490
Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$;
e^b and e^bstdX refer to the factor change in the odds for a unit or standard deviation increase

Discussion and Implications

Two findings of this study merit further discussion:

1. While women in general appeared to enjoy advantages in early occupational opportunity, college-educated women were disadvantaged compared to similarly educated male peers.
2. College-educated Black women appear advantaged in terms of early occupational opportunity compared to Black men and other women.

In terms of early occupational opportunity, a college education seems to provide mixed returns. One key finding from this study is that different rewards for education are distributed based on race and gender (Table 4). This type of educational inequity may be rooted in issues of college access, college choice, retention, and/or choice of college major—all issues that are often related to enrollment management issues and decision making by administrators working in the area of enrollment management. Alternatively, the inequality in early occupational attainment might be linked to historical gender and racial inequalities in society (Jackman, 1994; Omi & Winant, 1994).

Clearly, our findings raise additional questions: To what degree do minority college graduates "choose" their early occupations and what motivates their choices? To what degree are obstacles to high-status jobs perceived? What impact does college major choice have on early occupational status? Does college advising or career counseling exacerbate or mitigate the inequity? These questions could provide a charge for future studies.

While women in general appear to be somewhat advantaged in terms of early occupational opportunity, college educated women actually appear disadvantaged when compared to their similarly educated male peers. This apparent contradiction could indicate that in fact there is much more work to be done regarding gender parity in the workplace, especially in high-status occupations. This finding also corroborates the "credentialing" effect outlined by Collins (1971). That is, women may need more education to maintain or enjoy upward mobility in their status than men. Perhaps females with a college degree are less likely to obtain high-status occupations because of choice of major, home demands, or the existence of a glass ceiling for women (Maume, 1999; Reskin & Padavic, 1994).

In addition, in the first multinomial logit model, aspirations were significant and positive indicators of occupational attainment for females. This could be an important indicator that the way women are treated during earlier levels of education matters. Indeed, if a female student is discouraged, tracked, or encounters a chilly educational climate related to gender, this could impact her aspirations. According to these findings, this could then in turn influence her occupational attainment.

College educated Black females were the one group of females that did not appear to face disadvantages in early occupational opportunity. In other words, according to these findings, education did mitigate the potential disadvantage of race for Black women. One potential reason for this finding could be the attachment to the labor market for black females. Because there are significant numbers of Black female heads-of-household, black females are potentially more invested in the labor market than females from other racial groups. Further research regarding attachment to the labor market for females needs to be conducted to continue to better understand occupational differences between females based on race (Tienda & Glass, 1985).

Another possible explanation for this Black female opportunity is that affirmative action policies may help to mitigate racial inequalities. Perhaps more than other traditionally disadvantaged groups, Black women have aligned their educational and occupational choices with the opportunities available through affirmative action policies. Further research is also needed to explore this possibility.

Conclusion

These findings indicate the importance of facilitating access and success for students of color and women. The finding that women and Blacks in particular will achieve lower status occupational opportunity for an equal level of education suggests that higher education is that much more important for these groups to achieve parity in the workplace and in society generally. As administrators make enrollment management decisions, these findings suggest that women and Blacks still face inequities that need to be remedied. This poses a particular challenge for those in enrollment management given the recent trend toward banning affirmative action (Royce, 2008) and other policies aimed at achieving parity (Sackett, Schmitt, Ellingson, & Kabin, 2001).[2]

Is higher education the great equalizer? Clearly, a college education generally leads to greater employment opportunities and a greater quality of life; yet differential rewards for the same educational attainment still exist. The fact that college education for Black males translates into lower status occupational

[2] *For further information on recent affirmative action debates, see: Gasman & Vultaggio, 2008.*

opportunities than for their White colleagues suggests deep-seeded social inequity at some level of our society.

Is higher education the great equalizer? Clearly, a college education generally leads to greater employment opportunities and a greater quality of life; yet differential rewards for the same educational attainment still exist.

Because of the obstacles they encounter in pursuit of a college degree, one could argue that many African American men who complete a four-year degree are extraordinary in a number of latent characteristics. The fact that they have persisted into the pool of college graduates, against difficult odds, suggests a variety of undetermined traits. For example, they may be highly motivated, hard-working, and/or exceptionally talented individuals. That these extraordinary students are still less likely than their White and Asian colleagues to obtain high-status jobs is especially troubling. It is imperative we continue to probe how social-structural issues impact differential outcomes from education or educational premiums.

While this research indicates that education does in fact aid in the fight for equality, not everyone reaps equal rewards from postsecondary attainment. The effects of a college degree still provide more privilege to some. Most troubling is the indication that these unequal rewards are linked to racialized and gendered categories. While education may work as an equalizer in some ways, we must identify why occupational inequities persist even after college.

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Financial Aid and Engagement: An Examination of How a Private Scholarship Program Facilitates Access, Retention, and Success for Low-Income Students

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a qualitative inquiry into how a private-tuition scholarship program impacted low-income students' access to a four-year postsecondary experience, and how that aid influenced those students to persist and reach their educational goals. Participants included five undergraduate students who were the recipients of tuition scholarships funded by the private philanthropic foundation arm of a national corporation. Results indicated that (a) the scholarship made a four-year education feasible, although it provided only partial educational-expense support, (b) students attributed significance to and found motivation in the award, and (c) the students' need for loans and continued need for work to supplement both their education and their personal support system had both negative and positive implications for their engagement and persistence in college.

That the price of higher education in America is on a steady upward climb there is little debate. The Spellings Commission Report (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) noted concern with the "seemingly inexorable increase in college costs, which have outpaced inflation for the past two decades and have made affordability an ever-growing worry for students, families, and policymakers" (p. 2). From 1995 to 2005, the average tuition and fees at a public four-year institution rose by 51% and at community colleges by 30% (College Board, 2005). For academic year 2007–2008, public four-year tuition rose 6.6% (College Board, 2007). The trade-offs produced by the shift from grant aid to loan aid are well documented (Paulson, 2001), but while postsecondary education's tuition and total costs have increased, an equally concerning trend has developed among low-income student enrollment patterns.

As the price of higher education continues to outpace inflation (College Board, 2007), the impact on students, especially those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, becomes more intense. Evidence of this is found in the fact that the lower socioeconomic student population appears to be on the rise in the general population, but their representation among those enrolled in college has declined. King (2006) contends that the number of students who would have qualified for Pell Grants, if all applied, nearly doubled between 1999–2000 and 2003–04. Unfortunately, however, the proportion of students from lower income categories enrolled in postsecondary education dropped in absolute and relative terms between 1999 and 2006 (Mortenson, 2008). The most recent analysis of Pell Grant data shows that the proportion of low-income students at elite colleges and the top public universities has steadily declined since 2004 (Fischer, 2008).

Background and Literature Review

The slipping enrollment shift is connected to a trend that has manifested in the last decade. The proportion of aid made available by the states has shifted to a greater emphasis on, and thus availability of, merit-based aid versus need-based aid. From 1993–94 to 2005–06, the share of state aid considered merit-based grew by 500% as compared to need-based aid, which grew by only 60%, after adjusting for inflation (National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs, 2004, 2006). Similarly, Heller and Martin (2004) found that throughout the 1990s postsecondary institutions also increased the proportion of scholarships that were awarded based on merit. Although some have argued that rancor over the growth of merit-based aid is unfounded or, at best, misinterpreted because the analysis are rooted in a belief that the aid components are locked in a “zero-sum game” (Longanecker, 2002), evidence suggests otherwise. Review of the NASSGAP data shows, unfortunately, that between 1995 and 2006 the cost-adjusted aid allocation for state need-based aid decreased by 13.5%, while merit-based aid increased by 13.48% of total state aid budgets—a seemingly clear indication that one has grown at the expense of the other. Additionally, recent data indicate that in the years subsequent to these funding shifts, students have increasingly moved from more costly institutions to less costly community colleges (Mortenson, 2005)—perhaps because of this documented shift.

Accompanying the public shift from need-based to merit-based aid is a growing and significant component to the financial aid landscape—private grants. Since the early 1990s, philanthropic support has increased from philanthropic foundations and organizations overall (Foundation Center, 2008), and, for higher education, that support has taken the form of scholarships (McGroaty, 2000). Increased giving is often driven by private entities and individuals concerned with growing disparity, an emphasis on democratic ideals, and what the enrollment make-up of postsecondary education implies for the future of the American workforce. In addressing the growing needs of low-income students, the private philanthropic community is adding to the availability of financial support intended specifically for this population. Programs such as those sponsored by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have targeted considerable resources to low-income students (Fischer, 2007; Hoover, 2001). Correspondingly, higher education institutions are seeking private sources to offset the growing need by many to tap into operational budgets for student support (Supiano, 2008). These trends resemble other noteworthy shifts away from the public sector to private sector providers and markets, including social services, job loss services, and the overall higher education environment since 1980 (Newfield, 2008).

Recognizing these trends is critical to a full understanding of their impact on low-income students. Estimates suggest that "nearly one-half of all college-qualified low- and moderate-income high school graduates do not enroll in a four-year program of college study because of financial barriers" (College Board, 2007, ix). For those low-income students who do enroll, their undergraduate experiences are often quite different than those of their better off peers (Berger, Milem, & Paulson, 1998; Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001; Walpole, 2003). For example, low-income students tend to work more while enrolled in college; this single fact has significant implications for low-income students' abilities to participate fully in cocurricular activities or realize the level of "engagement" encouraged in the higher education setting (Kuh, Goneya, & Palmer, 2001).

In part, the vast array of programs and total available funding from both the state and federal governments was designed to address challenges such as low-income student enrollment and adequate support of those who do enroll. The growing availability of private funding may help stem the enrollment shifts described previously, may encourage low-income students to persist and to achieve their educational goals, and may even serve as a stopgap measure to combat the documented emphasis on merit-based aid. Research addressing the experiences and perceptions of recipients of this growing private support is critical to increasing understanding of effective measures to ensure low-income student access and success in higher education.

Rationale and Purpose

As tuition costs continue to increase, students are likely to incur a greater share of the burden of financing their educations. This will be especially prevalent among lower socioeconomic status students. The ability to pay for one's education is a factor in the college choice process (Cabrera, Stampen, & Hansen, 1990) and is a core aspect of persistence research (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992; Stampen & Cabrera, 1986, 1988). Although research has indicated that loan burden is negatively correlated with college persistence, the role played by privately funded need-based aid that requires a mentoring component and its relationship with students' persistence has yet to be fully examined.

What is less understood among the various policy options is the actual impact and experience of low-income students who receive grant and scholarship aid but not full aid packages that cover all expenses (Gladieux & Swail, 1998). In this situation, the low-income student sees postsecondary education as accessible, but is not completely freed from his or her socioeconomic background. The purpose of this study was to examine and document the experiences of such students participating in a privately financed tuition scholarship program, and to explore the ways in which that tuition aid motivated, supported, and influenced students to persist and achieve their educational goals. The goal was to understand the role that the program played in how students transitioned to and experienced a four-year college environment.

Two overarching questions guided our study:

1. How did the opportunity to participate and receive the scholarship influence students' higher education path and experience?
2. How did the scholarship program support the students and address students' financial needs?

Methods

Design

Because research on privately funded scholarship programs is somewhat limited (McGroaty, 2000), we designed a qualitative study that permitted analysis to isolate unanticipated phenomena and influences (Maxwell, 1996). The study was conceived and organized to be interpretative and to facilitate our understanding of students' perceived impact of the tuition scholarship program.

Participants

Five students who began at a community college and transitioned to a four-year institution, ranging in age from 21–55, participated in the study. Four were female—two African American, one Hispanic, and one Caucasian. One was a Caucasian male. The purposive sample was kept small to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the financial positions of the participants. The researchers concentrated on building rapport and trust over a six to eight month period.

All students were a part of a tuition scholarship program that was funded jointly by the students' four-year university and the philanthropic arm of a national corporation based in close proximity to the university. The scholarship was established specifically to address financially challenged students; the founder had a strong belief in the power of education. The scholarship is awarded to students at two surrounding community colleges and then continues at the four-year university following transfer. As a stipulation of the award, the participants agreed to academic coaching and mentoring throughout their undergraduate studies. The actual student names have been omitted. The characteristics and identifying information of both the institutions involved and the scholarship program itself have also been masked or omitted.

Procedures

The researchers used a phenomenological case study format to understand the "lived experiences" (Creswell, 1998) of the participants and how each found meaning in and related to the ways in which the tuition program facilitated their engagement and success during college. The five students participated in a series of semistructured interviews. The formulated questions in the interview served as conversation starters so that the students would discuss their backgrounds, reactions to different types of financial aid, the educational experiences and aspirations they had or developed while in college, and the role that the financial support played with those dimensions.

Each of the interviews was recorded and then transcribed for later data analysis. Transcribed data were corrected by one researcher and then reviewed by the other. Corrected transcriptions were also shared with participants to verify and clarify points made. Each researcher independently reviewed the data and identified preliminary themes and issues for each case (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes stemming from these independent analysis were then compared and assessed so that common metathemes emerged to form the basis of our findings.

Findings

Findings for this study are grouped into three major domains that emerged from the thematic analysis. First, students consistently stated that the scholarship program simply made their attendance *feasible*, in spite of the fact that it did not cover the full educational expense. Second, the analysis consistently revealed that students attributed significance and found *motivation* in the award itself. Finally, our analysis established that students' continued need for work in order to *supplement* both their education and their personal support systems for themselves and family had both negative and, surprisingly, positive implications for their engagement and persistence in college.

Contribution of Aid: Feasibility

The participants repeatedly emphasized that the scholarship program made possible their pursuit of a college degree—without it they simply would not have considered continuing education in the four-year sector as feasible. As described almost universally, other grant and loan programs were simply not sufficient to cover the actual costs. One student expressed this clearly.

> I wouldn't have been able to get an education without [the scholarship]. I definitely wouldn't have. Now with Pell and vocational rehabilitation helping me I would have been able to get my associates degree. I definitely would have stopped there without the [scholarship]. I never would have been able to finish school. I wouldn't even have considered it.

Not only did students recognize that their enrollment was made possible by the program, they each confessed a deep belief that were it not for the scholarship at this time in their lives they did not see themselves attempting college again. In essence, many saw this as a “last chance." As described in pragmatic terms by a male student, “This is the one opportunity that you have to finish. Take advantage of what you have because you might not run across it ever again.”

In weighing their options, postsecondary study brought with it any number of challenges and issues and the students expressed serious anxiety about how they could pursue a degree without this support. They perceived that they would simply have been unable to “break out” of their established patterns and, for some, their family support responsibilities without this opportunity.

Role of Aid: Motivator

A second emerging theme focused on how the scholarship program enabled students along the way. The students clearly expressed appreciation for the financial support because, without it, most felt that higher education would not have been possible. Yet the program itself provided incentives beyond money—simply having received the endorsement and support from the foundation served as an intense motivator to the students. Interestingly, the students also found meaning in associating the support with key individuals from the foundation. From the onset of their postsecondary experiences through degree completion at the four-year institution, the funder's presence, real and perceived, exerted tangible meaning for these students. As expressed by one:

> With the [scholarship], it isn't just the fact of using the financial aid. There is also the emotional aspect of somebody believing in you. That kind of gives you an impetus to continue on and to not disappoint [the funder]. He was checking up on you all the time and if you were just applying for student loans, and you didn't have that emotional aspect of it, then I think I would have probably looked at it differently and would have said it isn't worth putting myself into this much debt and at my age to do that.

These students stated that no one ever had believed in them before. Their parents had not attended college, and many came from schools where teachers and counselors were not supportive of college and even discouraged students. One student described the sheer impact of having a perfect stranger make such a commitment to her: “That is a huge thing for somebody whose guidance counselor said, 'Yeah, you should go ahead and quit.' To have somebody say, 'No, you need to go get an education' and 'I believe in you' is a big deal!”

Another student expressed how the investment by others propelled her to do what she needed to do to make good on that investment.

> I feel I am investing in my future, and since everyone is trying to help out and invest in my future, it is my duty to return the favor and actually succeed in doing what I am supposed to do.

These statements provide insight into the ways in which students internalized the external support and encouragement to help spur their efforts, and how the aid itself, beyond the financial benefits, provided an ongoing source of motivation.

Reason for Aid: Ongoing Need to Work and for Loans

Evidence from past research has emphasized the risk factors that family presents for independent students (American Council on Education, 2003; Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek, 1994). Yet participants in our study, interestingly, identified family members, especially their own children, as intense motivating factors that caused them strive to attain their educational goals. Though participants acknowledged the stressors placed on them by parental responsibilities, children were a central source of motivation and inspiration for students, as evidenced by this comment: "My kids are my motivation. I want to do better for me—so they can prosper. So anything that I base anything on, that I do, I do it for them. They are my drive."

While children were a source of inspiration, they also were a driving force behind the need to work. The scholarship program did not cover all expenses, and most participants in the program, and certainly in this sample, supplemented the support with other financial aid or employment or both. One student described the financial situation in these stark terms:

> [I]t would have been hard to eat without student loans. I pretty much, I used like the grant and the scholarship to pay for my tuition. There was usually like a little bit left over so I can pay for books and get school supplies, and whatever I need—anything else I might need for the semester. Then I would get the loans and work to help pay for everything else.

The "everything else" often included actual living expenses, but for several of these students, anything else was often associated with children, as described by one female scholarship recipient: "We did end up having to take loans because we have two kids at home and the scholarship provides for my tuition. It doesn't, yeah, it doesn't pay my living expenses."

The participants, although indicating that the scholarship enabled them to seek their bachelor's degrees, still encountered undergraduate experiences that differed from their higher socioeconomic status peers, due to their need to work and the need to obtain student loans. Our findings within this metatheme are congruent with the findings of Terenzini et al. (2001).

Discussion

Students in this study were representative of the national and regional lowest economic groups. One student worked full time, earned less than $17,500 annually, and supported two children. Given that most were from the lowest economic quartile, and several supported families, it should not be surprising that these students needed both to work full time and to take out loans to cover the added expenses of higher education. The scholarship program provided support for tuition and books; however, living expenses and miscellaneous costs were not included. The scholarship provided insufficient funding for family support.

All clearly identified their postsecondary undertaking as an investment; all recognized the potential payoff in the future. Nevertheless, most reported that throughout their enrollment they struggled and considered dropping out or quitting. One student described the dilemma of the hardships of the present versus the hardships of her past when considering the role played by the scholarship during particularly difficult times.

> [I]t also helps because you can really get frustrated. Especially with being a single parent and especially with low income, you are ready to get out there and work, but knowing that if I were to quit without those initials by my name, I am right back where I started from, and I don't want to be back where I started from.

Each of the participants completed their degree programs, several have secured employment, and others have enrolled in graduate programs. Each case can be considered a success. Yet without the private support, it is unlikely that these students would have been able to pursue higher education—absent significant student debt, which each student considered a nonviable option. These cases reflect the ongoing relevance of earlier models of financial decision making (Cabrera, et al., 1990; Cabrera, et al., 1992).

Were it not for that private need-based aid, students simply did not believe they would have enrolled or persisted beyond the two-year school. Students were not against taking out *any* loans, but the exclusive use of loans to finance higher education was a barrier to enrollment. Each of these students also took out loans and incurred financial debt in the process, but the private source funding provided the launching pad—apparently tipping the scales from too much debt to a reasonable amount in the opinion of these students. It should also be remembered that each of these students was eligible for Pell disbursements, yet they continued to face unmet need.

Finally, the motivational aspects of the aid program must be acknowledged and contrasted against other forms of aid. As described by Terenzini et al. (2001), low-income students are affected by a myriad of forces throughout their college experiences—and tend to "swim against complex and powerful currents" (p. 19). As evidenced by the motivational metatheme, these students found special meaning in the nature of the private support and personal commitment from the funding organization. To some extent, the perceived commitment and attention provided just enough to buoy the students, and using Terenzini et al.'s analogy, provided them a new kick to win out and "slip the tide." Like the students in this study, it is not uncommon for low-income students to receive financial support, but not packages that cover all expenses (Gladieux & Swail, 1998). Although the low-income students have seen that college is accessible, they have not been freed from socioeconomic realities. Yet they persisted and achieved their educational objectives, citing the motivating nature of the award as a primary driver and influence.

Although a component of the program required mentoring and ongoing interaction with the program, the limited opportunities with the foundation and founder impressed these students. They did not speak negatively about the mentoring component; however, they tended not to emphasize it as an influential factor in their discussions. Perhaps this tendency was a function of age or perhaps they most associated the mentoring with the initial transition from the community college to the four-year setting and gave little credence to the need for mentoring in their later college years.

Limitations

Because we purposefully sampled our participants, these findings are limited. Additionally, components of privately funded scholarship programs vary widely. The findings and implications associated with this study are perhaps most applicable to aid programs most similar to the one provided to these participants. Given these limitations, our findings are not generalizable to the broader population of low-income students receiving scholarship aid. With these limitations in mind, implications for policy and practice are discussed below.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Tinto (2007) has recently called for more in-depth investigations into "the nature of institutional practices that enable more low-income student to transfer to and, in turn, succeed in four-year colleges and universities" (p. 13). The results of this study suggest several implications for practice and policy that are both timely and relevant given the state of financial aid nationally. As presented, the context for low-income student access to higher education is much worse today than just four years ago (Mortensen, 2008). The 25-year campaign to favor loans at the expense of grant aid, coupled with the previously documented shift toward merit aid at the expense of need-based support, creates hurdles for low-income students under the guise of financial aid. The present loan industry upheaval creates a new set of burdens for those faced with the dilemma of financing higher education absent other aid—increased loan origination fees and more restrictive lending (Baskin, 2008; Quinn, 2008). All the while, the low-income population increases as a percentage of the national population.

At an institutional level, reduced state appropriations are driving colleges and universities to emphasize private support in general (Newfield, 2008) and specifically to support student aid (Supiano, 2008). The absence or decline of scholarship and grant aid may serve to further reduce the already declining low-income student population (Fischer, 2008). As suggested by these cases, private scholarships or grants should be viewed as seed money to overcome concerns about ability to pay. The often cited million-dollar lifetime pay difference associated with a bachelor's degree will not be a sufficient influence to overcome concerns about ability to pay, as suggested by reports from the study participants.

Most significant among our thematic findings was the role played by the belief of the funder and the encouragement the students perceived in that support. Although it is unlikely that all institutions can find benefactors to endow program such as the one under consideration, an important aspect was the institutional funding of one half of the scholarship. This dimension may provide important implications for institutions, in that student exposure to significant persons (if not funders, then administrators or community leaders)

In the absence of a marked shift in national financial aid policy, the private sector may represent the best alternative available.

who express belief in and understanding of what the students are attempting and going through may provide the needed sense of empowerment and motivation expressed by the students in this study.

Conclusions

As the price of higher education increases, and as the lower socioeconomic population also increases, it is imperative for colleges and universities to continue seeking private support from individuals and philanthropic organizations to supplement already constrained budget environments. These results reflect the principle that private funding can be leveraged in effective and meaningful ways to support student success. The personal and motivational aspects identified in this program appear to be key elements in supporting low-income students in degree attainment. Furthermore, in the absence of a marked shift in national financial aid policy, the private sector may represent the best alternative available. These data suggest that increased fees and decreased availability of funds from lenders may continue to sideline low-income students from postsecondary attendance. This program serves as a model for institutional leaders, who may find that, in collaboration with private foundations and benefactors, they themselves will increasingly assume responsibility for supporting an economically diverse student body.

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First Generation Students' Acquisition of College Knowledge: Examining the Effectiveness of Outreach Programs in South Texas

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Abstract

Many college outreach programs such as GEAR-UP and Upward Bound have been employed to prepare minority, low-income, and first-generation students for college. The effectiveness of these two outreach programs in South Texas was evaluated based on a 35-item College Knowledge Test (CKT) developed by the researcher through focus group interviews. Data were collected from students enrolled in a GEAR-UP program, students enrolled in an Upward Bound program, and a comparison group of students with no experience with either program. A one-way analysis of variance indicated group differences were statistically significant. Post hoc analysis showed that both the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP groups outperformed the comparison group based on CKT scores. The focus group interviews revealed students were satisfied with the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP programs. Students in Upward Bound regarded the program to be most effective in providing academic preparation. Students in GEAR-UP regarded the program to be most effective in providing exposure to college and careers along with dissemination of college information.

Introduction

Federal and state initiatives have focused on preparing students for postsecondary education with the intent to close educational gaps that currently exist between (a) Anglo and minority students, (b) high- and middle-income students and low-income students and (c) non-first-generation and first-generation college bound students. Outreach programs may help fill the gaps and may offer an equal playing ground when considering access to postsecondary education.

The need for effective outreach programs is supported by studies affirming the gaps between minority and nonminority college students. Figures compiled by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in the summer and fall of 2005 indicated first-time undergraduate enrollment as 52% Anglo, 25% Hispanic, 14% African American and the remaining 9% Asian, American Indian, or international student. *Closing the Gaps* (n.d.) reported that (circa 2000) only 5% of the Texas population here enrolled in higher education compared to the national average of 5.4%. The difference of .4% may seem minuscule, but it actually represented 76,000 students. Of the ten most populous states in the union, Texas ranked 5th in respect to enrollment in higher education. Texas students participating in outreach programs, i.e., Upward Bound and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) are exposed to postsecondary options between 7th and 9th grades.

Selected Literature Review

Students decide to attend college at different times of life. According to Noeth and Wimberly (2002), first-generation students often aspire to attend college late in high school. The students do not receive timely college-planning information, may not take rigorous courses, and may struggle with cultural conflicts between the college-oriented world and the world of friends, family, and community. Choy (2001), in a study for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), found most high school students come to a decision about postsecondary education between 8th and 10th grades. Choy further reported that educational aspirations in both 8th and 12th grades varied significantly with parents' level of education among 1992 high school graduates. First-generation students reported lower educational aspirations than non-first-generation students did as early as the 8th grade.

Bourdieu (1992) posited that the dominant class is born into a position of society where the rules of the game are lived and learned. Children of the privileged learn the rules and know how to navigate them effectively. The social groups to which the children belong influence their approach to school and educational aspirations. Children not born into privilege must learn through multiple means and cannot rely on family alone.

School personnel and community members must take notice and help build the networks necessary to inspire students to attain college education. Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee (2002) indicated less-educated parents do not necessarily have lower aspirations for their children, but the aspirations are less likely to be supported by knowledge of how to navigate the college admissions system. Evidence from studies published by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2005) suggested students are more likely to attain a college education when students and their families are informed about how to prepare and plan for college.

Low-income, minority, and first-generation students (Vargas, 2004) lack specific types of college knowledge. These students often do not understand the steps necessary to prepare for higher education. The steps include knowing how to finance a college education, complete basic admissions procedures, and make connections between career goals and educational requirements. Underrepresented students frequently need encouragement to take rigorous college-preparatory courses. High achieving students from low-income backgrounds aspiring to attend college often encounter informational barriers preventing the students' enrollment.

Making productive choices about college usually requires some basic knowledge about the college experience as well as relative costs and advantages. Tornatzky et al. (2002) stated that students and parents need to take the initiative in finding information from teachers, counselors, and college representatives by asking for advice, attending conferences and open houses, and making use of the Internet. Parents must know what to do and when to take action to prepare children for college.

The cited research appears to place the responsibility for obtaining information on parents and students, who face a difficult task. Parents and students must seek out information and adequately ask questions on an unfamiliar topic. Parents and students often do not know what they do not know. Case study results (Smith, 2004) have demonstrated that students, when left unguided, take meandering and lengthy routes that may not lead to the desired goal. Tornatzky et al. (2002) concluded that, to facilitate the task of leading parents and students through the process, political and cultural organizations should make increased college knowledge a priority.

Outreach programs assist minority and low-income students in the college-planning process. Outreach programs offer different activities; however, the overall goal is to enhance students' academic skills and increase college awareness. Outreach programs, according to Martin (1999), are key elements of providing a solid framework to increase the number of first-generation, low-income minority students entering the college ranks. Private organizations sponsor outreach programs such as I Have a Dream, Project GRAD, and A Better Chance. Upward Bound, Talent Search, and GEAR-UP are federal government initiatives. Colleges rely on outreach programs, such as GEAR-UP and Upward Bound, to prepare minority, low-income, and first-generation students for college. How effective are such programs in Texas?

Methodology

The purpose of the mixed-methods study was to evaluate the impact of the two college outreach programs on the college knowledge of high school students. This paper presents the research questions; describes the participants, the instruments, and the analysis; and offers a discussion of the results and their meaning for outreach programs and students' capacity to understand the factors related to college enrollment.

Research Questions

The data were used to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP programs on college knowledge among students in South Texas?
2. What are the perspectives of Upward Bound students regarding the effectiveness of the program?
3. What are the perspectives of GEAR-UP students regarding the effectiveness of the program?

Participants

Schools in South Texas that had students participating in Upward Bound and GEAR-UP were selected in 2006. Data were collected from students in the summer of 2007. Participants providing quantitative data through a questionnaire included the entire population of 18 Upward Bound juniors, volunteers from GEAR-UP (n = 29), and volunteers (n = 11) from the population of students not engaged in an intervention program.

Description of Participants: Upward Bound

The 18 Upward Bound students had participated in the program for three years and had just completed the 11th grade. The majority of the participants were female (n = 13; 72.2%). Seventeen (94.4%) students were identified as having low-economic status, as determined by participation in the free/reduced school lunch program. Four (22.2%) Upward Bound students reported having one parent who attended college, and 14 (77.8%) reported neither parent had attended college. The average grade point average (GPA) was 3.7 (SD = .2) and the average number of advanced courses the students had taken while in high school was 9.0 (SD = 5.9).

Description of Participants: GEAR-UP

The GEAR-UP group included 16 (55.2%) females and 13 (44.8%) males. The GEAR-UP program participants had been in the program for five years. The number of students identified as having low-economic status, as determined by participation in the free/reduced school lunch program, was 11 (37.9%). Twenty-eight (96.6%) of the GEAR-UP students were in the 11th grade and one (3.4%) student was a 10th grader. The number of GEAR-UP students reporting both parents had attended college was seven (24.2%); six (20.7%) reported one parent had attended college, and the remaining 16 (55.1%) reported that neither parent attended college. The average grade point average (GPA) of GEAR-UP students was 3.4 (SD = .4), and the students had taken an average of 2.4 (SD = 2.8) advanced courses while in high school.

Description of Participants: Comparison Group

The comparison group consisted of 11 students who had not participated in either the Upward Bound or the GEAR-UP programs. The comparison group included six (54.5%) males and five (45.5%) females. The number of students identified as having low-economic status, as determined by participation in the free/reduced school lunch program, was three (27.3%). The majority of students, six (54.5%), were classified as 11th graders, four (36.4%) were 10th graders and one (1.7%) student from the comparison group was classified as a 9th grader. All comparison group participants, 11 (100%), reported neither parent attended college. The average grade point average (GPA) was 3.2 (SD = .7) and the students had taken an average of 1.2 (SD = 1.9) advanced courses while in high school.

Instrumentation

A 35-item, researcher-developed College Knowledge Test (CKT) was administered to the 58 participants previously described. The CKT consisted of multiple choice and true/false items. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed to estimate the reliability of the test instrument, which was found to be .80, attesting to the internal consistency of the CKT.

Twelve members of Upward Bound and GEAR-UP programs participated in focus groups to explore further the phenomenon of effect of participation in outreach programs. Two focus groups were conducted—one for each of the two programs.

Procedures

The 35-item multiple choice and true/false College Knowledge Test was administered to all participants. The researcher scored each test by assigning one point to a correct response and zero to an incorrect response. Data were analyzed and results determined. Focus groups were scheduled for selected Upward Bound and GEAR-UP participants.

Data Analysis

For the quantitative analysis, the researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis included descriptive statistics, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), Cronbach's coefficient alpha to estimate the internal consistency of the CKT, Levene's test to examine the homogeneity of variances assumption, Tukey's HSD for the purpose of post hoc analysis, and the effect size to examine the practical significance of the findings. The focus group analysis used qualitative data analysis methods that are described later in the paper.

Quantitative Results

Scoring of the CKT was completed by the researcher. The descriptive results are displayed in Table 1.

TABLE 1 | Descriptive Statistics for College Knowledge Test (CKT) for Each Group

	N	Mean*	SD
Upward Bound	18	24.7	4.6
GEAR-UP	29	23.1	5.2
Comparison	11	17.1	4.7

* Theoretical range: 0–35.

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) compared the three groups on the basis of CKT scores. The homogeneity of variances assumption was met: Levene's $F(2, 55) = .9$, $p = .4$. Group differences were statistically significant, $F(2, 55) = 8.7$, $p < .01$, and the effect size was large ($f = .6$). Tukey's HSD post hoc analysis showed that both the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP groups outperformed the comparison group based on CKT scores. The difference between the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP groups was not statistically significant. Overall results showed that students participating in either the Upward Bound or the GEAR-UP program gained more college knowledge than did their comparison group counterparts.

Additional analysis

Group differences based on GPA and the number of advanced courses students had taken were statistically significant. A series of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to test group differences on the basis CKT scores adjusted by (a) GPA, (b) number of advanced courses, and (c) GPA and number of advanced courses. When the CKT scores were adjusted on the basis of GPA and number of advanced courses, $F(2,48) = 1.9$, $p = .2$, and on the basis of only GPA, $F(2,49) = 2.4$, $p = .1$; group differences were not statistically significant. However, when CKT scores were adjusted on the basis of the number of advanced courses, group differences were statistically significant, $F(2,54) = 5.6$, $p < .01$. These results were not surprising, because it was expected that participation in either the Upward Bound or the GEAR-UP program would results in higher GPA, and that Upward Bound participants were encouraged to take additional advanced courses. Observed and adjusted means are reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2 | Observed and Adjusted Means for College Knowledge Test

	Observed Mean*	Adjusted M1	Adjusted M2	Adjusted M3
Upward Bound	24.7	24.6	22.3	22.5
GEAR-UP	23.1	23.1	24.0	24.1
Comparison	17.1	19.0	18.6	20.2

* Theoretical range: 0–35
Adjusted M1 = Adjusted on the basis of GPA
Adjusted M2 = Adjusted on the basis of number of advanced courses
Adjusted M3 = Adjusted on the basis of GPA and number of advanced courses

Qualitative Results

Two focus groups, one for each of the two outreach programs, were conducted in an effort to document the perspectives of students participating in the outreach programs. The Upward Bound focus group consisted of six students at the end of the 11th grade: two boys and four girls. The GEAR-UP focus group consisted of six 11th-grade students: four boys and two girls.

A systematic data analysis process, as described by Kruegar (1998), was followed:

- Presession small talk and observations were noted.
- A standard open-ended interview approach was used for focus groups.
- The moderator and assistant were debriefed immediately following the focus group session.
- Field notes were documented.
- Transcripts were prepared.
- Data from transcripts were extracted and coded through the identification of recurring themes and emerging concepts.
- Data were divided and identified by question.

The validity of the data was ensured by utilizing Creswell's (1998) member-checking method. Questions and comments were posed during the focus group in order to provide participants an opportunity to revise or correct responses as understood by the researcher. A flip chart was utilized to record responses and to provide participants an opportunity to verify responses as understood by the researcher. Data triangulated through focus group interviews and informal presession observations provided confirming evidence as a way to verify trustworthiness.

The primary purpose of both Upward Bound and GEAR-UP is to inform and prepare students for postsecondary education. Students were familiar with this concept and the majority (n = 12, 66.7%) agreed the outreach programs were effective in providing guidance and direction. The students differed in their perspectives as to how each program imparted college knowledge and preparation. The Upward Bound students' major theme was academic preparation. GEAR-UP students focused on exposure and dissemination of information.

The lead questions asked of focus group participants frame the discussion:

- What did you learn by participating in Upward Bound/GEAR-UP?
- What would you change about Upward Bound/GEAR-UP?
- Do you feel ready for college?

What did you learn by participating in Upward Bound/GEAR-UP?

Four Upward Bound students (66.7%) responded that they learned how to prepare for college. The major emergent theme was academics. The responses were summarized in five categories: 1) teachers, 2) tutoring, 3) small class size, 4) relationships, and 5) study skills. Six students (100%) stated that the teachers helped them to better understand academic concepts taught at the high school. One student commented, “they [Upward Bound teachers] give us more attention than our teachers at our home school. We are more prepared.” Two students (33.3%) credited the one-on-one tutoring and small class sizes provided by Upward Bound for their academic success. Four students (66.7%) indicated that the close relationships developed with Upward Bound staff helped in motivating students and gave them a greater command of high school subject matter. A student described the Upward Bound teachers in the following statement: "if you don't get it, they'll keep on teaching it until you get it. Like they won't give up on you like the other teachers." The Upward Bound curriculum incorporated study skills. Six students (100%) credited the study skills curriculum with teaching note taking, vocabulary building, time management, and other positive study habits that could be applied in college.

Four GEAR-UP students (66.7%) responded that they learned how to prepare for college. The major theme that emerged was exposure and dissemination of information. One student mentioned, "I feel more prepared than my other sister was." The responses of the students were summarized in three categories: 1) field trips, 2) speakers/information sessions, and 3) college catalogs/internet searches. Five students (83.3%) credited their college knowledge to exposure gained through field trips to colleges and job sites. Two students (33.3%) stated guest speakers and general informational sessions provided them with a knowledge bank to draw upon. Five students (83.3%) indicated that information gained through college catalogs and internet searches helped in their understanding of the college admissions process. One student felt the information provided him not only understanding but also "focus," which his older sister lacked as she planned for her future.

What would you change about Upward Bound/GEAR-UP?

Six Upward Bound students (100%) indicated that they were happy with the program and found it difficult to think of any changes. The one change that came to mind was to add a higher level science course to the program. Three students (50%) informed the researcher they found science difficult and thought the extra instruction would help them. One student commented, "[science] is the only academic course we're lacking." The request for an additional science course emulated the major theme of academics presented in the first question.

GEAR-UP students also maintained the major theme of exposure and dissemination of information that appeared in the first question. The categories of field trips and speakers were extended to this question. Three students (50%)

stated a need for more college and job site visits. The remaining three students (50%) believed different speakers were needed to enhance the program. One student indicated the program brought in the same speakers. The student summarized the need for different speakers in the statement, “We need to find out about different jobs out there and give us a variety of what you can be.” One student (16.7%) indicated she wanted more information pertaining to financial aid because she did not know how she and her parents were going to pay for her college education.

Do you feel ready for college?

The major themes of academics for Upward Bound students and exposure and dissemination of information for GEAR-UP students carried through in the third question. Among the Upward Bound students, eight categories were revealed: (a) confidence, (b) study habits, (c) academics, (d) relationships, (e) competitions, (f) contacts, (g) testing, and (h) applications. Five Upward Bound students (83.3%) stated that they were ready for college. The students attributed their confidence, study habits, and the strong academic background gained while in the program to the relationships developed with Upward Bound staff and competitions among other Upward Bound students. Several students (n = 4, 66.7%) stated that they had built close relationships with the Upward Bound staff that gave them the confidence they needed to succeed not only in area competitions but also in life in general. Two students described the relationship they have with the Upward Bound assistant director: “You know how the principals don't pay attention to the students or even know the students. The directors actually know us. Like Mr. [name withheld], he knows everyone, everyone. He can tell you who's that.” “You can have a normal conversation with him.” “With Mr. [name withheld], or the other director, you don't [have to be scared] and that's because he knows you personally.” Three students (50%) had established contacts with university personnel that they believed would benefit them in the transition from high school to college. One student stated,

> Yeah, he [director] talked to Jackie for me and told her that I was interested. And she said she was going to help me go over there [specific university in

> Texas]. Like just to visit. But, like if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have known who she was. And I will feel comfortable calling her because if I was calling her randomly she wouldn't know who I was. But now she's kind of like expecting my call.

Four students (67.7%) mentioned that the college prep class helped them with the necessary testing requirements and application process.

Interviews with GEAR-UP students revealed five categories: (a) focus/direction, (b) internet search/college catalogs, (c) field trips, (d) speakers, and (e) academic preparedness. Four GEAR-UP students (66.7%) indicated they had gained focus and direction by participating in the program. One student indicated that without GEAR-UP, "I think I wouldn't know where to start off or know where to go for college information." According to four (66.7%) students, the facts gained through internet searches and catalogs will help make navigating through the college process less overwhelming. Five students (83.3%) stated that the field trips helped provide information needed to get into college. Three students (50%) reported that the field trips helped them in choosing a career. One student described a trip to [name] Children's Hospital as giving him the opportunity to see "what really goes on with real doctors." Two students (33.3%) credited speakers with providing information and realistic insight into college. The speaker's perspective was important to the students because "[t]hey [speakers] tell us what their life experiences were." "Maybe telling us we can do the same thing. If they can do it, we can do it." Four students (67.7%) mentioned that they were not academically ready for college courses. The students observed that high school teachers gave students too many chances and accepted late work. One student stated, "I like that, but in college they are going to lecture. In college, it's more your responsibility." One student realized his academic weakness by stating, "So that I can get used to college courses, I'll start small then go to a bigger college."

Students regarded Upward Bound to be most effective in providing academic preparation. Students regarded GEAR-UP to be most effective in providing exposure to college and careers along with dissemination of college information.

Summary

Data indicated that both Upward Bound and GEAR-UP programs made a significant impact on college knowledge among the participants. The CKT indicated students participating in an outreach program possessed a greater amount of college knowledge than students who did not participate in an outreach program. The students who participated in the focus groups voiced satisfaction with Upward Bound and GEAR-UP. Students regarded Upward Bound to be most effective in providing academic preparation. Students regarded GEAR-UP to be most effective in providing exposure to college and careers along with dissemination of college information.

Federal and state initiatives have focused on preparing students for postsecondary education with the intent to close educational gaps that currently exist between (a) Anglo and minority students, (b) high- and middle-income students and low-income students, and (c) non-first-generation and first-generation college bound students. Many college outreach programs such as GEAR-UP and Upward Bound have been employed in order to prepare minority, low-income, and first-generation students for college. The study sought to examine the effectiveness of two outreach programs implemented in South Texas.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are warranted:

1. The quantitative data revealed students participating in Upward Bound or GEAR-UP had acquired more college knowledge than had the students in the comparison group.

2. The quantitative data indicated group differences based on GPA and the number of advanced courses students had taken were statistically significant.
3. Qualitative focus group interviews demonstrated a theme indicating students felt Upward Bound and GEAR-UP were effective in providing the guidance and direction necessary in encouraging students to pursue postsecondary education.
4. Qualitative focus group interviews demonstrated a theme indicating students regarded Upward Bound to be most effective in providing academic preparation. Relationships forged between students and Upward Bound staff were credited with encouraging students to maintain high academic standards.
5. Qualitative focus group interviews demonstrated a theme indicating students regarded GEAR-UP to be most effective in providing exposure to college and careers along with dissemination of college information.
6. Qualitative focus group interviews demonstrated a theme indicating GEAR-UP students felt they were not academically prepared for college. Upward Bound students did feel academically prepared.

Discussion

The study examined the effectiveness of both the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP programs. Careful examination of programs is crucial in determining program effectiveness. The perspectives and knowledge of students must be investigated to fully understand the impact of a program. Local outreach programs play a part in affecting state and national data. The examination of social programs, as observed by Miller and Salkind (2002), is important not only to the communities served, but to the nation as a whole. Initiatives such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Closing the Gaps* have set a goal of increasing the number of minority and low-income students entering postsecondary education.

Research has shown students are more likely to attain a college education when provided information on how to prepare and plan for college (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2005; Vargas, 2004). Students in the Upward Bound or GEAR-UP programs had been provided with activities designed to help guide students through the college admissions process. The Upward Bound and GEAR-UP students participating in the study had developed a knowledge bank essential in navigating through the college admissions process. Smith (2004) indicated students left to their own devices ended up taking meandering and lengthy routes often not leading to the desired goal. GEAR-UP students felt the outreach program had provided direction and focus older siblings did not have.

Martin (1999) found outreach programs were key in providing a solid framework to increase the number of first-generation, low-income minority students entering the college ranks. Students participating in the focus groups indicated a desire to attend college. GEAR-UP students reported that the field trips and speakers led to a conviction to prepare for college. Upward Bound students indicated relationships were significant to the students gaining the confidence and preparedness necessary for success in college.

Relationships are one component of Berry's (2004) ecocultural framework that consists of three components: (a) physical and social settings, (b) cultural and educational customs, and (c) psychological characteristics of significant adults. Upward Bound students referred to all three during focus group interviews. Gandara (2001) and Vargas (2004) described frequent connections sending the message of “you belong here” to students as being necessary in order to allow first-generation students to set goals of attending college.

Relationships fostered in the Upward Bound program and the intervention strategies used by the staff increased the academic achievement and confidence of the students. Staff members informed Upward Bound and GEAR-UP students of the importance of maintaining a high GPA and were encouraged to enroll in advanced courses. Research has shown that students who take rigorous coursework in high school were more likely to be academically prepared for postsecondary education and had increased chances of succeeding in college (Adelman as cited in Gandara, 2001; Warburton, Bugarin, & Nunez, 2001).

Upward Bound students attributed small student–teacher ratio in allowing positive relationship to be developed between students and staff members. The high student—teacher and student—counselor ratios in high schools, especially in large urban high schools, are not conducive for developing such relationships. Relationships are an important component in guiding and preparing students for postsecondary education. Studies cited by Vargas (2004) found students in most need of access to college preparatory guidance in schools were least likely to receive it.

Gandara (2001) indicated good programs helped students expand goals and showed evidence of increasing the college-going rate of participants. The results of this study revealed that both programs did make an impact on the students in the programs served. The information gathered may be used by the program directors to evaluate the programs based on college knowledge gained by students. Analyzing student responses to specific questions presented in the College Knowledge Test may pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in the program. Goals, objectives, and activities can be reexamined for effectiveness. Strategies proven successful can be expanded upon while strategies not meeting program objectives can be revamped.

Effective and thorough evaluations must be in place in order to determine the full impact that outreach programs have on students. Measuring effectiveness based solely on the number of activities completed and the number of participants attending the activities does not give complete information. Evaluation procedures currently in place provide limited data. Program directors report data based on individual participants and include anecdotal records. The lack of adequate funding may be linked to insufficient evaluation measures in place (Gandara, 2001; Martin, 1999; Tierney & Hagedorn, nd).

Students participating in the outreach programs studied acquired college knowledge based on results of the College Knowledge Test. Further research could determine whether the knowledge gained was factual knowledge or a true understanding that will be applied as the student goes through the college admissions process and enters the college ranks. Data gathered in the study revealed that both the Upward Bound and GEAR-UP programs were effective, but different. The programs met the goal of preparing students for postsecondary education, but each applied a distinct approach.

Upward Bound, like so many other outreach programs, existed outside the public school setting. GEAR-UP was unique as the program was incorporated within the school system. GEAR-UP school administrators must take advantage of the opportunity afforded to the school and incorporate proven strategies in the curriculum, thus reaching not only students fortunate enough to be included in the cohort, but also the many students who will enter the school system behind the cohort group. GEAR-UP programs have the potential to create systemic change within a school system.

The number of subjects participating in each group was unequal. Obtaining permission from program directors and school personnel to allow the study to take place was an arduous task. The researcher recognized the inequity as a limitation. A focus group was not conducted with students from the comparison group. The lack of qualitative data from the comparison group limited the data in respect to understanding the students' perspectives on the type of college readiness made available to students through the required state curriculum and counseling program.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

1. The study should be expanded to include more outreach programs across the state and nation.
2. The study should be expanded to include qualitative data from parents and staff members in order to compare perspectives of students to adult perspectives.
3. The College Knowledge Test should be adapted for administration to students, parents, and staff in order to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the outreach program.
4. Demographic data collected by schools should include participation in outreach programs in order to make comparisons between students who participate in outreach programs and those who do not in respect to (a) enrollment in advanced courses, (b) high school completion rates, and (c) college enrollment rates.

5. Schools might consider implementation of homerooms at middle and high schools in order to provide students a sense of community and develop relationships with peers and a staff member who can act as a mentor and academic advisor. A study examining the effect of homerooms at middle and high schools could then be conducted.
6. Schools might investigate means to embed study skills into the curriculum and day-to-day instruction.
7. Longitudinal studies should be conducted in order to determine both the college enrollment rate and college completion rate of students.

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Prospective Music Majors: How the Audition Process Influences Their Choices

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Abstract

This study examined the college audition process for prospective music students as experienced by individuals who matriculated at a large public university or a small private university. The positive and negative aspects of the audition process were revealed as well as other important factors in making a college choice, including communication with the music department, scholarships, and the influence of the student's high school music teacher on his or her decision.

Students who choose to enter fine arts professions (i.e., dance, music, theater) by completing a college degree program have unique steps to take in the admissions process. In order to be accepted as a music major student, virtually all postsecondary institutions require an audition, which includes a performance on the major instrument, an aural or written music theory placement test, and often an interview with faculty. The audition serves both the prospective student and the university faculty by exchanging information necessary for both parties to make a decision about the appropriate fit of the program with the auditioning student. While there are a number of aspects involved in the college selection process, the audition process—a visit to the school, time with the music faculty, and feedback concerning the student's performance and music theory background—the audition presents prospective music students with an experience that has great potential to influence institutional choice. The purpose of this study was to examine the process of the music audition through a mixed-method approach incorporating information provided by incoming freshmen music majors from two universities in a Midwestern state.

The competitive aspect of college recruitment demands that every component of the admissions process be carefully planned and executed. The audition is an important stage of admissions for both the institution and the student. Yet there is a paucity of literature concerning the insights of auditioning music students. Developing an audition process that enables prospective students to be in the most conducive performing/interviewing environment will provide music faculty with the best opportunity to evaluate the student's abilities, another justification for study in this area. In addition, both music and admissions personnel can benefit from hearing the voices of students as they share their perceptions of the audition process and its ultimate influence on the decision to attend a specific school.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have examined the process of college selection (Allen, 2007) but little research has been performed on the subject of college selection within the field of music. Locke's (1982) study of 631 vocal and instrumental students from 22 public and private colleges and universities in Illinois revealed that the most influential recruiting techniques were the receipt of a music scholarship; attendance at a music department admission audition; attendance at an invitational honors ensemble on the college campus; receipts of a tuition fee waiver; and personal contact by a music faculty member. In a related study, Brimmer (1989) surveyed a random stratified sample of 150 higher education administrators offering some form of bachelor's degree in music concerning the recruitment techniques employed by their respective institutions. The findings indicated that most of the institutions recruit music students using strategies similar to those identified in Locke's study, with the chief music administrator as the most active individual in recruiting activities.

Carlson (1999) reviewed the recruiting practices of public higher education music departments. Her study included 194 public institutions that held membership in the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). Responses revealed that 98% of the band, choir, and orchestra conductors at NASM institutions were involved in recruiting students. The recruitment materials of 90% of the respondents emphasized the reputations of the music faculty and the overall reputation of the music department. More than 75%

of the administrators at the NASM institutions perceived that the following five items were important in the college selection decisions of prospective students: ensemble reputation (93%), amount of financial aid offered (90%), cost of attendance (89%), faculty reputation (83%), and prestige of institution (78%). Housing was perceived to be the least important consideration of the students, reported by only 29% of the administrators.

We found only one study in a review of the literature that examined the college selection process from the viewpoint of a music student. In a qualitative account, Gose (2006) presented a case where a high school counselor helped the prospective student make the decision of which institution to attend based on the high quality of the program as opposed to the cost of the institution. We did find five articles written to assist the music student prepare for the audition (Carr, 2006; Keating, 2003; Sutherland, 1998; Talbott, 2000; Uhl, 2000). The articles by Sutherland and Uhl focused on appropriate repertoire for auditions. Talbott, Keating, and Carr each provided practical suggestions to prepare the prospective student for the visit to the school—making sure their instrument works properly; developing basic music theory, ear training, and keyboard skills; and demonstrating leadership skills. A review of the literature, however, did not identify any studies regarding the specific process of the audition in terms of the students' perspectives or implications to improve the audition experience.

Research Design

In order to examine the audition process through the lens of the matriculated music student, we gathered information from first-year students who successfully auditioned and subsequently matriculated to two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern state. The State University School of Music (SUSM) is an academic component of a public research university. SUSM has an enrollment of approximately 500 music majors in bachelor's through doctoral degree programs. The Private University Department of Music (PUDM) is an academic component of a private master's-level university. PUDM enrolls approximately 40 undergraduate music majors.

A survey instrument was administered to all first-year music majors immediately prior (SUSM) or during the first week (PUDM) of autumn matriculation. In addition to demographic information, the survey included questions about the experiences at institutions where the student auditioned and was accepted and information about individuals who influenced the college selection process. The survey was conducted in two consecutive years, resulting in a subject pool of 137 individuals.

At the end of both of the academic years, 25% of the first-year students from SUSM as well as 25% of the first-year students from PUDM were randomly selected and invited to participate in a personal interview. Thirty-two students were interviewed. A series of open-ended questions provided the opportunity for the students to reflect on their audition experiences and to provide recommendations for improving the experience. A professional transcriptionist recorded and transcribed each interview.

A two-step process, following the strategy of Huberman and Miles (1994), was employed in the analysis of the qualitative data. In the first step, we independently reviewed each interview transcript, highlighting key words and phrases and then developing codes for the word or phrase. We then compared our codes, discussing differences and similarities until we had consensus. In the second step, we categorized codes to identify themes.

Findings and Discussion

As shown in Table 1, prospective students at both SUSM and PUDM received a high level of both telephone and e-mail communication with the music school prior to the audition. In addition, a large percentage of the students who matriculated had met with faculty prior to the audition. During interviews, respondents revealed that both institutions provided the opportunity to take a private lesson with a studio teacher when it was available to them. The students indicated they had enjoyed this opportunity. The private lesson helped to personalize and destress the upcoming audition process by connecting the

As the market for students becomes increasingly competitive, music units may consider a more personal approach to communication prior to the audition.

TABLE 1 | Communication with Music Department prior to the audition

Did you exchange E-mail with someone in the Music Department?				
SUSM	77%	Yes	23%	No
Other Institutions	64%	Yes	36%	No
PUDM	86%	Yes	14%	No
Other Institutions	47%	Yes	53%	No
Did you have a telephone conversation with someone in the Music Department?				
SUSM	60%	Yes	40%	No
Other Institutions	47%	Yes	53%	No
PUDM	96%	Yes	4%	No
Other Institutions	40%	Yes	60%	No
Did you visit the Music Department prior to the audition day?				
SUSM	74%	Yes	26%	No
Other Institutions	50%	Yes	50%	No
PUDM	75%	Yes	25%	No
Other Institutions	100%	Yes	0%	No
Did you attend an organized Music Department Campus Visit Day?				
SUSM	37%	Yes	63%	No
Other Institutions	35%	Yes	65%	No
PUDM	46%	Yes	54%	No
Other Institutions	35%	Yes	65%	No
Did you meet with faculty on or off campus prior to the audition day?				
SUSM	63%	Yes	37%	No
Other Institutions	47%	Yes	53%	No
PUDM	70%	Yes	30%	No
Other Institutions	43%	Yes	57%	No
Did you find the faculty and staff to be flexible to your particular situation?				
SUSM	97%	Yes	3%	No
Other Institutions	74%	Yes	26%	No
PUDM	100%	Yes	0%	No
Other Institutions	63%	Yes	37%	No
Did you have opportunities to ask questions?				
SUSM	99%	Yes	1%	No
Other Institutions	86%	Yes	14%	No
PUDM	100%	Yes	0%	No
Other Institutions	78%	Yes	22%	No

student to a faculty member. One SUSM student recalled, “The violin teacher personally helped me. It was a special day where he talked with me about coming to college, let me observe his class, and gave me a personal tour.”

In examining the procedures of communication, we found that an administrative assistant in charge of the audition process at SUSM communicates audition schedules and pertinent information regarding audition preparation. PUDM, however, has a faculty member contact each prospective student to provide not only audition information, but also to promote the value of the institution to the prospective student. This appears to have the added value of helping the student feel more relaxed at the audition because she or he has communicated with the faculty member and eventually meets the faculty member at the audition. “I knew before I sat down in my interview that the music staff was very friendly and it made me feel very welcomed,” a PUDM student reported. As the market for students becomes increasingly competitive, music units may consider a more personal approach to communication prior to the audition. Several students also indicated that it would be helpful to have a current student from the university present on the audition day to lend support and to answer questions about various aspects of the music program.

The survey data also indicated that three quarters of matriculated students at both institutions visited the campus prior to the audition. It is important to note that fewer SUSM students visited other institutions, while all PUDM students visited at least one other campus. It is apparent that campus visits are important in the college decision process of music students.

The primary theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis regarding communication is that potential students desired additional information. Two categories emerged within this theme. The first category included items of general information regarding the institution or the music program—the difference between performance and music education programs, the amount of paperwork involved in applying to the institution, and the amount of practice time expected. The second category included items specific to the audition process—that the audition would include sight-reading, piano skills assessment, and music theory and ear-training assessments.

The survey also asked students to respond to specific questions regarding the audition experience at the institution where they matriculated and other institutions where they were accepted through audition. As shown in Table 2, students attending both institutions reported that the experience was friendly and personal. While the audition experience creates a snapshot of the talent

TABLE 2 | Student Perceptions of the Audition

Did you find the audition to be friendly?				
SUSM	97%	Yes	3%	No
Other Institutions	74%	Yes	26%	No
PUDM	100%	Yes	0%	No
Other Institutions	58%	Yes	42%	No
Did you find the audition to be fearful?				
SUSM	48%	Yes	52%	No
Other Institutions	46%	Yes	54%	No
PUDM	28%	Yes	72%	No
Other Institutions	40%	Yes	60%	No
Did you find the audition to be challenging?				
SUSM	81%	Yes	19%	No
Other Institutions	62%	Yes	38%	No
PUDM	64%	Yes	36%	No
Other Institutions	60%	Yes	40%	No
Did you find the audition to be personal?				
SUSM	88%	Yes	12%	No
Other Institutions	59%	Yes	41%	No
PUDM	100%	Yes	0%	No
Other Institutions	47%	Yes	53%	No
Did you find the sight-reading to be challenging?				
SUSM	61%	Yes	39%	No
Other Institutions	28%	Yes	72%	No
PUDM	32%	Yes	68%	No
Other Institutions	28%	Yes	72%	No
Did you find the sight-reading to be fair?				
SUSM	92%	Yes	8%	No
Other Institutions	76%	Yes	24%	No
PUDM	100%	Yes	0%	No
Other Institutions	70%	Yes	30%	No

level for the music faculty, it is a powerful experience for the potential student. It is clear that students will more likely matriculate to an institution if the audition experience is friendly and personal.

Almost one half of the matriculated students at SUSM found the audition experience to be fearful. This was equally true of their comparative institutions. One student expressed, “The audition was one of the most intimidating things I've ever experienced.” Another student commented, “We all deal with stress in different ways but I don't think you can get adequate representation of someone's musical achievement and ability if they are not free to express.” In contrast, 28% of PUDM students were fearful during the audition, and were much more fearful at the comparative institutions. While the data at SUSM is not conclusive, PUDM results may point to an approach to the audition that lowered anxiety. Specifically, PUDM auditions were typically held in a studio where faculty were seated in close proximity to the students as opposed to many of the SUSM auditions, which took place in a large room or auditorium. A PUDM student stated, “I wish I had known what the audition was going to be like—that you would have to sight-read and they would talk to you and you would be in close quarters.” While close proximity may create anxiety in some, other respondents suggested that it created a more intimate experience for the potential student. Another PUDM student responded in the interview, “Having a friendly atmosphere is the greatest thing you can do to make the audition more comfortable.”

Matriculated students at SUSM reported that the audition itself was more challenging than their comparative institutions, but overwhelmingly felt that the experience was fair. One student stated, “It was the hardest theory test that I took out of all four of my auditions.” In contrast, PUDM students felt that the challenge was equal to their comparative institutions, but also felt that the experience was fair.

The primary theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis regarding the audition is that the atmosphere of the event is important. Students used phrases such as “very welcoming,” “well-organized,” “good food,” “nice to have the dean present,” “friendly accompanist,” and “comfortable atmosphere” to describe the event.

A number of suggestions to improve the audition process also emerged from the interviews. The greatest number of suggestions recommended additional interactions—having more faculty members present for students to meet and interact with and having current students available to answer questions from potential students. One student suggested holding a “mock audition,” so that potential students have a trial run through the audition process as a way to alleviate nervousness or fear.

We were also interested in whether a scholarship or particular individuals influenced the college decision choice among the music majors in our study. Table 3 presents information about the extent of this influence. Locke (1982) cited talent scholarships as a major influence of student decisions to attend a particular college. The data from SUSM students do not provide strong support for this assertion. SUSM students reported that they received more talent scholarship offers at the other institutions where they successfully auditioned, yet they decided to attend SUSM. Among the students that did receive talent scholarships, 58% indicated that the scholarship was important to their decision to attend SUSM. Locke's assertion suggests that a greater percentage would have indicated the importance of the award to their institutional choice. On the other hand, the data from PUDM does support the contention that talent scholarships are a major influence on the college choice of music majors. As with many private institutions, PUDM incorporates talent scholarships as one strategy to recruit students in fine arts majors. An overwhelming majority (88%) of the matriculated students received a scholarship and indicated that the scholarship was important in their decision to attend PUDM.

There is consensus that a number of individuals or that experience with the institution (i.e., a “legacy”) can also influence college choice. We posed a series of questions to identify the extent to which these individuals or legacy status influenced the college selection process. As shown in Table 3, music teachers were reported to influence college choice by more than the majority of music majors at both SUSM and PUDM. This was the only question where more than one third of the respondents indicated influence.

TABLE 3 | Influences on College Choice

Were you offered a talent scholarship by the school in recognition of your potential?				
SUSM	42%	Yes	58%	No
Other Institutions	53%	Yes	47%	No
PUDM	88%	Yes	12%	No
Other Institutions	44%	Yes	56%	No
Was the scholarship important to your final decision?				
SUSM	58%	Yes	42%	No
PUDM	80%	Yes	20%	No
How influential were your parents in your college selection process?				
SUSM	Very 23%	Some 61%	Not 16%	
PUDM	Very 40%	Some 48%	Not 12%	
How influential were your friends in your college selection process?				
SUSM	Very 3%	Some 32%	Not 65%	
PUDM	Very 8%	Some 36%	Not 56%	
How influential was your school counselor in your college selection process?				
SUSM	Very 0%	Some 32%	Not 68%	
PUDM	Very 12%	Some 28%	Not 60%	
How influential were your music teachers in your college selection process?				
SUSM	Very 57%	Some 30%	Not 13%	
PUDM	Very 54%	Some 33%	Not 13%	
How influential were alumni in your college selection process?				
SUSM	Very 16%	Some 39%	Not 45%	
PUDM	Very 17%	Some 21%	Not 62%	
Did either of your parents attend this university?				
SUSM	Yes 30%	No 70%		
PUDM	Yes 13%	No 87%		
Did any of your siblings attend this university?				
SUSM	Yes 14%	No 86%		
PUDM	Yes 0%	No 100%		

Implications for Practice

This study focused on the audition process for the prospective music major. Examining the processes at two institutions provided us with the opportunity to compare students' thoughts about communication and campus visits prior to the audition, the audition itself, and the college decision process. Schools and music departments may use this information to reflect on their own audition procedures to facilitate enhanced efforts to recruit music majors in a highly competitive environment. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population, we present the following recommendations:

- Encourage music faculty members to communicate with students prior to the audition to assist in the exchange of information and to build rapport;
- Clearly communicate all audition requirements such as sight-reading, music theory, and aural-skills assessments;
- Offer the opportunity to experience a private lesson with a studio teacher prior to the audition;
- Create a welcoming atmosphere to diminish student fears;
- Have faculty and current students available to interact with potential students at the audition day;
- Recognize the importance of a scholarship in the college decision process; and
- Recognize the importance of the students' music teachers in the college decision-making process

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From the Field

Enlace: Empowering Latina/o Students

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Introduction

Evergreen Valley College, located in San José, California, has a diverse student enrollment of approximately 11,000 students comprised of Latina/o 30%, Vietnamese American 15%, Other Asian/Pacific Islander 20%, Anglo 15%, African American 4%, Native American 1%, and Other/Unknown 15%. The *2005 EVC Student Equity Plan* identifies the Latina/o course success rate (grade of C or better) at 62%, 6% below the overall college success rate of 68%. Therefore, one goal stated in the *2005 EVC Student Equity Plan* is to increase the success and persistence rates of Latina/o students. The Enlace Program represents one college effort to achieve this goal.

One criterion established by the San José /Evergreen Community College District to evaluate Enlace program effectiveness is student success rates in Enlace courses. As documented by the District Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness, for 24 years, Enlace course success rates for Latina/o students have been consistently greater than the success rates for other Latina/o students enrolled in similar courses. For example, for Fall 2001, Fall 2002, Fall 2003, and Fall 2004, 893 Latina/o students enrolled in Enlace courses had a 76% course success rate. During the same period, 2,321 Latina/o students enrolled in non-Enlace courses had a success rate of 55%. Furthermore, for Spring 2006, the overall Enlace Program success rate was 82%, while the success rate for all other students enrolled in similar courses was 55%.

In addition to accelerating course success rates, Enlace develops strategies to increase the number of Latino/a graduates and transfers. Most recently, Enlace has provided the leadership for an innovative partnership between Evergreen Valley College and San José State University. The Enlace program coordinator and Dr. George Castro, a founding member of the Enlace Mentor Advisory Council, were coprincipal investigators for a Title V HSI cooperative grant application. One goal of the project funded in 2005, titled “Strengthening Support for Hispanic Student Transfer,” is to increase the number of Latinas/os from Evergreen Valley College (EVC) who transfer to and graduate from San José State University. Enlace staff have contributed to the project by providing project management, counseling support, curriculum innovation, and staff development. The project's first annual performance report noted that, during the first year of the project, a 30% increase from the baseline was achieved in the number of EVC students who completed guaranteed transfer agreements with San José State University, and a 20% increase from the baseline occurred in the number of EVC Latina/o students who enrolled at San José State University.

The effectiveness of Enlace to increase Latina/o student success and transfer rates has been recognized at local and national levels. For instance, Enlace has received the Noel Levitz Retention Award, the California State Academic Senate Exemplary Program Award, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors Student Success Award, the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley Award, and the *Excelencia* in Education Associates Award for 2007.

Background

The Enlace Program, which began in 1983, represents an alternative approach to meeting the educational needs of Latino/a students. The name Enlace comes from the Spanish word enlazar, which means to unite, to connect, to link. Enlace is a network of students, staff, and community members united by a shared vision of Latina/o student success.

Three faculty members at EVC, each with more than 10 years of experience in the San José/Evergreen Community College District, acknowledged the relative lack of academic success of Latina/o students; however, at EVC there were no institutional strategies in place to address this problem. Therefore, the three faculty members developed Enlace as a nontraditional approach to Latina/o student success, a holistic approach sensitive to the experiences, needs, and strengths of Latina/o students. The approach combines a culturally and linguistically relevant teaching, counseling, and mentoring pedagogy with structured community participation to enhance Latino/a students' navigation between their homes, community, and Evergreen Valley College.

At the start, Enlace staff offered one English course each semester with Latina/o students as the target population. A counselor and 30 community mentors supported the course. After six years, Enlace staff added two new academic components—math and science—increasing the Enlace section offerings to four each semester. Subsequently, additional sections of English, math, science, and guidance were offered, supported by increased counseling services, supplemental instruction, and extracurricular activities. English, math, and science were selected as the instructional focus because these disciplines are at the heart of students' academic success in college and because they are disciplines in which Latina/o students traditionally have not been successful.

How the Initiative Works

The Enlace Program is composed of a team of college staff and community mentors. The current Enlace college staff consists of two English professors, a math professor, a science professor, a program counselor, a program coordinator, an outreach/recruitment specialist, a program specialist, two instructional assistants, and several peer student tutors.

Enlace offers courses in developmental and college level English, reading, math, and science. In addition, Enlace offers a guidance course for first semester students and one for transfer students. Enlace offers 24–26 classes during the fall, spring, and summer sessions, with an annual enrollment of over 700 students; approximately 90% are Latina/o students.

The full-time Enlace counselor supports the academic component. The main responsibility of the Enlace counselor is to provide academic, career, and personal counseling for Enlace students, many of whom are generation 1.5

and first-generation college students. The Enlace counselor also provides services for students previously enrolled in Enlace courses. In addition, the Enlace counselor meets with Enlace professors to increase program retention and success rates by devising nontraditional intervention strategies. The Enlace counselor collaborates with Enlace professors in early alert activities and regularly visits the Enlace classes to make presentations and to schedule individual conferences. The Enlace counselor helps plan and conduct Enlace Program student orientations, college transfer workshops, and on-campus student conferences. The Enlace counselor also participates in program activities that strengthen relationships with local high schools and community based organizations.

To foster academic success, community involvement, and student leadership, Enlace staff members serve as advisors for three student organizations: the Enlace Student Association (ESA), the Enlace Honors Society (EHS), and the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in the Sciences (SACNAS). One example of a student coordinated cocurricular activity is the annual Enlace Honors Society Conference held on campus each spring for Enlace students. The conference theme for 2007 was "Academic Success and Student Activism as a Means to Latina/o Community Empowerment." On Saturday, March 10, 2007, approximately 250 Enlace students and 15 high school students participated in the conference. Dr. David Lopez, President of the National Hispanic University, served as the keynote speaker. One workshop presenter was Dr. Susie Reyes, a former Enlace student and a recent graduate of the UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine.

Two bodies contribute to strategic planning and program evaluation: the Enlace Coordinating Committee, a college coordinating committee, and the Enlace Mentor Advisory Council, a community advisory group. The Mentor Advisory Council (MAC) represents 70 community mentors, providing continuous community input for program evaluation and strategic planning. The MAC advocates for Enlace at the administrative and governing board levels. Two members of the MAC are Enlace/EVC alumni.

During the past 24 years, a profile of effective Enlace staff members has developed. They are culturally competent and aware and appreciative of the cultural and social experiences of Latina/o students. They are proficient in Spanish, able to communicate with students and parents. They are active in the community and committed to social justice, serving as role models of leadership, civic engagement, and community service. They reject the “deficit” theory of education. Instead, they accept a strength-based model of student empowerment, utilizing an innovative, culturally responsive approach to maximize student success.

While Enlace staff has modified Enlace over time to improve program effectiveness and to reflect changing resources, the original program goals have remained constant.

- To successfully retain Latina/o students;
- To enable Latina/o students to successfully complete the Enlace English, math, science, and guidance courses;
- To mainstream Latina/o students into the general education and transfer curricula;
- To increase the number of Latina/o students who graduate with an Associate of Arts or Associate of Sciences degree;
- To increase the number of Latina/o students who transfer to four-year colleges and universities; and
- To create a cadre of student leaders

Work Processes and Resources

Three central organizing principles describe the Enlace approach and inform all program decisions. Enlace staff operate with the principle that the existing college instructional and counseling models are not effective for a significant number of Latina/o students, as indicated by low retention and success rates, low graduation rates, and low transfer rates for Latina/o students at EVC and other postsecondary institutions. The second organizing principle is that a culturally responsive instructional, counseling, and mentoring approach significantly accelerates the academic success of many Latina/o students. The third program principle is that student success ultimately is not the sole responsibility of an individual instructor but is the shared responsibility of program and college staff, family, and the community—an “enlace” of key stakeholders.

Initially, Enlace staff did not receive college funds for counseling and program management activities. Program staff volunteered for the first years to perform Enlace-related activities. Gradually, after Enlace demonstrated program success, the college began to direct funds to support Enlace activities. Currently, in addition to supporting the Enlace courses, the college funds a full-time Enlace counselor, a full-time Enlace program specialist, and a part-time program coordinator. Additional funds derived from local contributions and federal grants are used primarily for cocurricular and extracurricular program activities.

Attributes and Challenges in Development and Implementation

One issue faced by program staff at the start of the project was the resistance of several persons on campus to accepting and supporting Enlace. For some, Enlace represented a radical change from the status quo, a change implicitly critical of the mainstream approach to the education of Latina/o students. Contributing to the resistance was the program's emphasis on a culture-centered approach to Latina/o academic success—in contrast to the dominant generalist approach. Others resisted Enlace because they saw Enlace as a counter narrative to the “deficit” theory believed to explain the relative lack of success of Latina/o students.

To deal with the resistance, Enlace staff maintained a low campus profile at the onset, not drawing attention to program activities and not comparing program student success rates to those of the general student population. Enlace initially was referred to by project staff as a “pilot” or a “project” that was testing one approach to student success. With increased support within the college, Enlace staff proposed and achieved incremental program growth, adhering to the prescribed college procedures. The growth was justified to college administration and others by means of student need and documented program success. Enlace has created an educational model that values and utilizes community participation.

Enlace has fashioned a community network that provides a means for individuals and organizations in the community to contribute time and financial support to EVC students. To identify and meet the needs of Latino/a students, Enlace has solidified partnerships with educational and community-based organizations. These partnerships include the East Side Union High School District, San José Unified School District, California Community Partners for Youth, Latino College Prep, San José State University, National Hispanic University, NASA Ames Hispanic Advisory Committee, Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley, Latino Peace Officers Association, Castellanos Family Foundation, Pan American Roundtable of Los Gatos, and La Raza Roundtable of Santa Clara County.

EVC administration has acknowledged and highlighted the uniqueness and effectiveness of Enlace in student equity reports, accreditation reports, and Title V HSI grant applications. EVC President David Wain Coon and Chancellor Rosa Perez champion the accomplishments of Enlace in the district and community.

Applicability

In their recent efforts to share the Enlace approach, Enlace staff participated in a panel presentation at a national Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) conference and at a joint National Educators Association/American Federation of Teachers (NEA/AFT) conference. In addition, the Enlace Coordinator and the EVC President participated in a briefing of the Hispanic Congressional Caucus that focused on the applicability of three college programs that effectively accelerate the success of Latina/o students.

At Evergreen Valley College, faculty members have modified the Enlace model for African American students (AFFIRM) and for Asian/Pacific Islander students (ASPIRE). The faculty modified the essential elements of Enlace based on their understanding of the particular needs and experiences of their target student populations. The AFFIRM Program (Academic Force for Inspiration, Retention, and Matriculation) was established in 1989; the ASPIRE Program

(Asian/Pacific Islander Resources for Excellence) was established in 2000. According to the *2005 EVC Student Equity Report,* students in all three programs have achieved course success rates greater than the course success rates of students in the general courses. Because of the effectiveness of these programs, EVC has made an institutional commitment to sustain and enhance AFFIRM, ASPIRE, and Enlace.

In order to create and implement a program based on the Enlace model, the following steps should be considered and modified when necessary.

1. Assemble a core group of college staff and community members who will create a working model that responds to students' needs, experiences, and strengths and that reflects available campus and community resources.
2. Realize that traditional instructional and counseling approaches are not effective for many students.
3. Conduct extensive research on "best practices" for the targeted student population.
4. Take risks by being innovative and experimental.
5. Implement a holistic, culturally responsive approach.
6. Use student success as the basis for measured, incremental program growth.
7. Gain support from college and district administration and from the governing board.
8. Establish a community network for input, financial contributions, and advocacy.

As the Enlace Program completes its 25th year, the program staff has identified five short-term goals to increase the scope and effectiveness of Enlace. First, with an augmentation of the EVC Enlace budget supplemented by external funds, Enlace staff will expand the number of English, math, and science sections offered each semester. Second, to maintain support for an increased number of students, Enlace staff will propose a budget increase in counseling hours and supplemental instruction. Third, to provide students a complete college experience, Enlace staff will expand and institutionalize its cocurricular and extracurricular activities, which include orientations, workshops, conferences, and leadership seminars. Fourth, Enlace staff will assume the leadership in developing a Title V HSI institutional grant proposal to help improve services for Latinas/os and other underrepresented students. Fifth, Enlace staff will strengthen its network with feeder high schools, community-based organizations, and San José State University to help improve the EVC to SJSU pipeline.

Lessons Learned

Enlace has faced several challenges while initiating and expanding its services. However, the Enlace staff has remained resolute and committed to providing a quality program that offers and delivers culturally competent and relevant services. With the guidance and advocacy from the community advisory group and with the support of college and district administrators, the Enlace program has flourished and become an effective program that empowers Latina/o students and the Latina/o community. Above all, Enlace has been a story of student success since 1983.

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Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher

Rita C. Kean
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Introduction

Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher is the title of a University of Nebraska–Lincoln report guided by a simple question: How do we better prepare our students to be intentional learners? This institution-wide effort grew from a Noel-Levitz consultation during the 2001–2002 academic year. At that time, focusing on the recruitment and retention of first-year students was a new topic for UNL. Because of senior administrative support and efforts by administrators, faculty, and staff representing all segments of the university, retention rates for first- to second-year returning students have risen from 80.9% in 2001 to 83.9% in 2008. Four- and five-year graduation rates have also increased.

Background

In the fall of 2003, the senior vice chancellor for academic affairs at UNL formed the Transition to University Task Force, comprised of a group of faculty, staff, and students. Prior to developing recommendations, the Task Force reviewed a number of university documents and the 2002 AAC&U report, *Greater Expectations: A Nation Goes to College*. Faculty responsible for teaching first-year courses, faculty noted for their teaching expertise, and student affairs personnel and administrators held conversations regarding best practices. Focus groups were conducted with groups of UNL students representing various academic constituencies and all levels of study. In December of 2003, the Task Force outlined a number of goals in the report, *Everyone a Learner, Everyone a Teacher*.

The Chancellor formed the Enrollment Management Council in 2003 to provide an integrated, university-wide coordination of efforts to manage enrollment and to enhance the recruitment and retention of students.
The Council is cochaired by the dean of undergraduate studies and the dean of admissions. Membership of the Council includes associate deans from each

of the undergraduate colleges; directors of the University Honors Program, Division of General Studies (undeclared majors), University Communications, Extended Education, Scholarships and Financial Aid, Registration and Records, Student Involvement, University Housing, and representatives from Institutional Research and Planning and the Chancellor's Office. Two subcommittees were formed to contribute to the activities of the Council, one to focus on recruitment and admissions and the second on advising and retention. Recognizing the relationship between advising and retention, the advising and retention subcommittee has representation from each college, general studies, the honors program, the office of admissions, and the athletic department. A corollary to this forum is that advisors become much more active in translating policy to students and in sharing information with upper-level administration.

Members of the Transitions to University Task Force were reunited in December 2006 to review progress toward the recommendations of the report. The group recommended that they continue to be involved in campus-wide efforts to stimulate discussion about the importance of student retention, serving as an informal advisory group to the dean of undergraduate studies. This article focuses on three initiatives that have had a major impact on our undergraduate student population.

Mid-Semester Check

Students who participated in the Transitions to University Task Force focus groups indicated that their initial orientation (new student enrollment) to UNL was beneficial, but that they needed follow-up. Mid-Semester Check was implemented in fall 2004.

Held during the last week of September, Mid-Semester Check activities are scheduled purposely at a time in the semester when incoming first-year students are ready to move past issues related to college adjustment, and academic issues begin to surface. It is a time to check on how the students are doing and to suggest where they can turn for assistance. New students have the opportunity to reconnect with the new-student enrollment leaders from their summer orientation and the leaders present skits about the first weeks in student life. Some of our most revered faculty present sessions on how to succeed in large classes, on success in science classes, and on writing and math for college. Other topics include working successfully with an academic advisor, undergraduate research opportunities, study abroad programs, and time management.

One night is dedicated to career options. Students can take an inventory assessment from career services and representatives from our respective colleges are available to talk to students about possible majors. Increasing numbers of students participate in Mid-Semester Check. A few of the colleges with orientation courses require their first-year students to attend. The overwhelming majority of attendees are on-campus residents. Resident assistants escort first-year students living in their halls and the learning/scholars community mentors accompany students in their communities. We also have a special session for transfer students, since close to 30% of our new students each year are transfers. We have been able to track students because we scan their identification cards at the close of the evening. Attendance has risen from 750 participants in 2004 to 2500 participants in 2008 (slightly more than 50%, although attendance is not required by all colleges). We have found that the student retention rate for those first-year students who attend the Mid-Semester Check is higher than for those students who do not attend.

Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences (UCARE)

UCARE was launched in 1999 when the then senior vice chancellor and the vice chancellor for business and finance negotiated a contract with a local beverage company. Proceeds from the sale of these products on campus were then directed into a special fund to support undergraduate students working with faculty on the their research or creative programs. Having proceeds from a product go directly to an academic initiative is unique and is something for which UNL has been recognized. It emphasizes that students who make a deeper connection with faculty and the discipline are more likely to become intentional learners. UCARE is a two-year program open to all students who meet a minimum GPA requirement. Students collaborate with a faculty sponsor and submit a proposal in February for funding that begins the next academic year.

During the first year, the student works with his or her UCARE faculty mentor 10 hours a week, learning aspects related to the scholarship of the discipline. In the second year, the student completes an independent research project with the faculty member serving as a mentor. UCARE has changed the nature of student/faculty engagement on campus. Beginning with 100 students in the first year, we have increased to over 400 students this year with approximately 289 faculty members participating as mentors. Primarily sophomores and juniors participate in UCARE. Close to 80% of UCARE students go on to professional or graduate school. We have added a research service learning option for students whose faculty mentor's scholarship is in the area of community service. Students have presented papers at both national and international conferences and our graduates who are selected for Truman, Rhodes, Goldwater, Marshall, and Fulbright programs have generally had a UCARE experience.

Undergraduate Teaching Assistance Corps (UTAC)

UTAC was patterned after the UCARE model—providing opportunities to increase student/faculty interaction in instructional activities. UTAC was piloted in 2003, building upon the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program that uses trained peer mentors to work with students in large, first-year classes. UNL has offered SI since 1991. The SI program is led by a trained graduate student leader and undergraduate "peer mentors" who help students integrate course learning and improve reasoning and critical thinking skill sets and study habits. SI has made a significant difference, as the course grade-point average for students who participate in designated SI sections of a course range from .5 to one point higher in comparison to non-SI sections. Faculty who participate in UTAC agree to serve as a guide and interact with the peer mentor, sharing with the student peer mentor their instructional philosophies, pedagogies, and course management techniques. To serve as a UTAC/SI peer mentor, the student must have previously earned an A in the course. The peer mentor is required to attend the large lecture class and meet regularly with the faculty member to discuss expectations, student progress, and course issues.

Everybody's Business

Retention is everybody's business, from senior level administration to front-line staff. There is no one answer to addressing student retention. The Office of Undergraduate Studies Web site provides links to information on best practices in retention. Tuition revenue continues to increase in importance toward supporting the budgetary needs of the University. It is important that all constituencies are knowledgeable about our current undergraduate students. Our vice chancellor for business and finance made a multiyear commitment to support professional development and training for staff. Materials from that initiative to retain students can be found at http://www.retain.unl.edu/GetToKnowMeBook.pdf. University Communications works with Undergraduate Studies to remind faculty and staff on a regular basis about the importance of retaining our undergraduate students and assisting students toward degree completion.

Applicability to Other Institutions

Visibility and endorsement of efforts by key units on campus is vital to the development and success of any initiative. Enhanced undergraduate education has been a strategic priority of our chancellor since he took office in 2000. The chancellor, the senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and the vice chancellors for research, student affairs, and business and finance have continually shown their support both through funding and endorsement of initiatives. The Office of Undergraduate Studies has served as a bridge between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, recognizing each has a distinct culture, yet at the same time identifying and building upon the interconnections related to improvement of the undergraduate student experience.

Lessons Learned and Future Plans

The process of change in an institution's culture can be characterized as a series of "baby steps." We are continually learning how to walk the fine line between the various divisions and units of the University. At times we stride smoothly and at times stumble and fall. Many of my associates would agree that when one trips or falls down, the key is to take a minute to reflect on how and why we fell down, regroup, get back up on our feet, and continue!

There are several lessons learned including the need to respect and appreciate each individual's role in supporting our undergraduate students. There is no one solution and as our student populations change, we must continue to adjust our support for them. One avenue that has proven valuable has resulted from our campus-wide emphasis on assessment of student learning both inside and outside of the classroom. We have learned to appreciate the importance of assessment of student learning outcomes across the academy. Viewed as a program of continuous improvement, the entire campus is engaged in assessing programmatic impact on students from the unit level through the institutional level. We believe this provides us with more robust and valuable information about our students' experiences. Information is available at http://www.unl.edu/ous/faculty_resources/assessment.

Our next efforts will focus on the second-year student experience. In spring 2009, our senior vice chancellor will appoint a task force of faculty, staff, and students to review and examine the Second-Year Experience. We will continue to strive toward our overarching goal of providing a quality educational experience that facilitates the successful completion of the undergraduate degree, resulting in alumni who value their education experience as they contribute to the greater good.

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Legislative Update

State Budget Outlook and Implications

George Torres
TG

The National Conference of State Legislatures'(NCSL) latest budget survey asked legislative fiscal officers for general assessments of their state economies. The responses overall indicated that most states are experiencing or anticipate experiencing problems in the housing, financial, and manufacturing sectors. This is especially true for housing in Arizona, Florida, and Nevada; finance in Delaware and New York; and manufacturing in Michigan and Ohio.

The survey noted that from Puerto Rico to Maine to Illinois to Oregon, legislative fiscal officers point to housing, financial, and manufacturing sectors as worrisome. Furthermore, construction, manufacturing, financial, and real estate activities accounted for more than a third of gross domestic product (GDP)in 2007. These sectors link to the economy in ways that can promote growth when they perform well and exacerbate slowdowns when they do not.

The report states that housing is one example of this.

> Housing troubles affect American consumers—whose purchases account for more than 70 percent of US economic growth. Fewer home purchases mean fewer sales of "durable goods" to fill them such as washing machines, furniture, etc. In addition, many Americans accustomed to borrowing on their homes now have less access to credit—credit that is often used to shop for items not limited to home decor. (p. 11)

And, since most states fund their education programs through property taxes, and property tax revenue generates a significant portion of a state's general funds, the impact on state legislatures' ability to increase appropriations for education is impacted by the condition of the housing market. The bottom line is that, for states, problems in the general economy mean declining sales tax revenue going into state treasuries.

According to a July 2008 report by the Security Industry & Financial Markets Association, state tax revenues are heading toward budget deficits for FY 2009 totaling $40.3 billion.

Alabama — $784M
Arizona — $1.9B
Arkansas — $107M
California — $22.2B
Connecticut — $150M
Delaware — $217M
District of Columbia — $96M
Florida — $3.4B
Georgia — $650M
Hawaii — no estimate of size of shortfall
Illinois — $1.8B
Indiana — Though the budget in Indiana is currently in the black, there is an expectation that an effort to implement a sales tax on services will emerge.
Iowa — $350M
Kentucky — $266M
Maine — $124M
Maryland — $808M
Massachusetts — $1.2B
Michigan — $472M
Minnesota — $935M
Mississippi — $90M
Nevada — $898M
New Hampshire — $200M
New Jersey — $2.5–3.5B
New York — 2009–2010 $6.545B
2010–2011 $9.532B (11%)
2011–2012 $10.862B (12%)
Ohio — Forced to do a midbudget correction this year on their two-year operating budget, which had a gap of $733M–1.3B (2.4–4.7%). The cuts were achieved via state spending cuts.
Oklahoma — $114M
Pennsylvania — No shortfall estimate yet. Taxes and budgeting in Pennsylvania are substantially based upon the tax year 2 years prior, so the state is always late to respond to a slowdown.

Rhode Island — $430M
South Carolina — $245M
Tennessee — $468–585M
Texas — Though Texas is currently in the black, that can be misleading since the state has a biannual budget process, and can only roughly estimate due to the recent implementation of the margins tax. There should be updated revenue estimates in the late fall as the Legislature begins work on the 09 and 10 budget. A lot of attention will be focused on the corporate and margins taxes when the Legislature convenes in Regular Session in January 2009.
Utah — $100M, which is expected to rise substantially by the end of the year.
Vermont — $59M
Virginia — $1.2B
Wisconsin — $652M

Until the recent problems in the country's financial and credit markets, a few bright spots could be found in the energy-producing and agricultural states. Ten states reported strong performance from oil, gas, or mining sectors. High fuel prices translated into strong state economies for states like Texas and Alaska with increased corporate profits, job creation, increased demand for housing, increased demand for ethanol, and large contributions to state revenue surpluses.

Health care, education, tourism, and trade sectors were other bright spots in the NCSL survey.

> Ten states reported health care as an industry with strong performance. Six listed the education sector as strong—five of those specifically noting expansion in employment in education. Both of these sectors seem poised for further growth. Demand for health care services is expected to increase as the demographic shift described as the "graying of America" at NCSL's 2008 Legislative Summit begins to accelerate. If personal spending on education continues to steadily increase as it has over the past 20 years (seen in data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis) then this sector is also likely to continue to grow.

> States also pointed to tourism and trade as sectors with strong growth. Eleven states from almost every region of the country listed tourism as performing well. Florida and Vermont both specifically identified international tourism as strong, although the former notes that it "represents a small portion of the economy." A notable exception to robust tourism was the traditional hotspot of Hawaii, reportedly down due to increasing travel costs.
>
> International trade was listed by only two states as one of their strongest performing sectors. This may represent an opportunity that states have yet to realize or take advantage of. Now might be a particularly opportune time to focus on exports as the US dollar remains weak and economic growth in many developing countries is at record levels. In the short term, increases in exports may help to offset some of the effects of the current domestic downturn. In the long term, states establishing more ties to expanding areas of the global economy will be better positioned to compete in and benefit from international trade. (p. 11–12)

However, again, with the dramatic downward change in fortunes in the financial and credit markets, mostly associated with complicated, unregulated, high-risk investment transactions, which have devastated all sectors of the economy, possibly resulting in a doubling of the annual federal budget deficit for FY 2009 and a doubling of the national debt over a short 8 year period, these bright spots are likely temporary.

If the current trend continues, state legislatures will be forced to make tough budget and appropriations decisions (as the new 111th Congress and Administration will have to do at the national level). Of course, state legislatures (with the exception of Vermont) are required by their constitutions to operate "pay-as-you-go" governments. Projected deficits must be paid for with current revenues through increased state taxes or reduced spending or both.

Traditionally, when faced with this dilemma, higher education is usually the victim. Most state legislatures generously fund their higher education systems when times are good (some to the tune of 25%–30% of the state's annual budget) because of the collateral benefits generated by a strong higher education sector. An educated population generates increased tax revenue, attraction for businesses locating in the state, federal research dollars, etc. However, in times of a lagging economy, reduced tax collections, and projected budget deficits, state legislatures choose to reduce spending in lieu of, or at least before, increasing taxes. Consequentially, higher education is first to "pay the piper."

Since conditions have worsened as state lawmakers are developing their FY 2009, 2010, and 2011 budgets, a growing number are facing projected imbalances not existent in recent years. Until the national and global fiscal and monetary issues are resolved, or at least until clear progress can be seen, state support for higher education will be tenuous at best. However, with challenges there are opportunities. Higher education associations and advocates are front and center in identifying and proposing those changes which will allow higher education to both adapt and progress.

Upcoming Issues

Future Issues of *Enrollment Management Journal*

The *Enrollment Management Journal* will follow a quarterly schedule beginning with this issue, with delivery scheduled for March (Spring), June (Summer), September, (Fall) and December (Winter).

Manuscripts are accepted and evaluated continuously throughout the year.

Additional information for authors can be found on the EMJ Web site at www.tgslc.org/emj or by contacting the editors.

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- *Ready, Willing, and Unable: How Financial Aid Barriers Obstruct Bachelor-Degree Attainment in Texas*
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