RETENTION RATES FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR

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Freshman Retention to 2nd Fall Term

White/Other vs Asian/Black/Hispanic/Native Am

Freshman Retention to 2nd Fall Term
Percentage-point Gap - White/Other vs Asian/Black/Hispanic/Native Am
CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

We find that holding student preparation and other demographic and socio-economic factors constant, there is no statistically significant difference in retention to the second year between students of color and white students, with the exception of the students who identify as Asian. These students tend to have a higher retention rate than their white counterparts.

The most notable finding is a 6.2 percentage-point increase in retention rate for students living in on-campus housing. Only about 7% of first quarter freshmen live off-campus, but those that do have a very low retention rate. Appendix 1, Table 3 (see full report for appendices) shows retention rates by housing status and class standing. We see that entering freshmen who live off-campus their first term have only a 74.1% retention rate.

Along with High School GPA and test scores, being a Washington state resident is associated with higher retention rates. We find a negative effect for students who identify as first-generation.

Other significant predictors, all with a negative effect on retention are Running-Start students, students receiving a PELL grant, and students who indicate an interest in pre-medicine.

Note that student retention behavior is highly complex, and this model does not capture nearly all the variance in student retention. We mention this because it is not necessarily the case that mandatory on-campus housing for new freshmen, for example, will increase retention rates. There may be other factors, not accounted for here, that affect both living off-campus and retention.

Future study:

We note that in Chart 1 of the full report that the retention trend for the group of Black, Hispanic and Native American students peaks dramatically for the fall 2010 cohort. This needs further study.

The possible effect of the advanced class standing of new freshmen has been mentioned in this report, but transfer-in credits were not accounted for in the model. This could improve the results.

There are many potentially valuable data elements collected and generated by the Admissions and Financial Aid offices that are not used here. Our model includes a “PELL Paid” element, but we know that there are many other types of financial aid that may influence student persistence. Another example that comes to mind are two fields that come from the College Board. The College Board flags students with a “School Cluster” and a “Neighborhood Cluster”. Their research has identified several distinct socio-economic groupings for schools and neighborhoods. These data may have strong explanatory power for studies of student performance and persistence.