Graduation Close Up: How Underprepared Students are compared in a HBCU

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Introduction

• Time-to-degree completion is increasing for college students
• 6-year graduation rate has become a significant measurement on graduation and completion
• In more recent years, IPEDS starts collecting 8-year graduation rates reflecting this trend
Background

• The few studies that have been conducted on issues related to time-to-degree largely explore what factors predict time-to-degree (Wohlgemuth et al., 2006-07; Ishitani, 2006; DesJardins, Ahlburg, & McCall, 2002; Knight, 2002, 2004;).

• This line of research has in general shown that student course load, enrollment pattern variables, major, high school GPA, SAT/ACT score, and college GPA, ethnicity and gender have significant effects on time-to-degree.
Graduation Rate

- Graduation rate indicator is based on the assumption that institution cost depends on the calendar time it takes for a student to graduate.
- Gillmore & Hoffman (1997) challenged this assumption “institutions graduating higher percentages of students in four years may be no more efficient in educating students than institutions graduating lower percentages.”
- The graduate rate indicator, which is based on the calendar time from a student matriculate to graduate is also questionable for economically disadvantaged students in that college education is not affordable without an extensive work schedule that results in lighted course load each term. (Volkwein and Lorang, 1996).
- “Stressing the importance of a high graduation rate has the unfortunate side effect of punishing institutions for admitting economically disadvantaged students.” (Gillmore & Hoffman, 1997)
Alternative Indicators

- A few indicators have been suggested in the literature:
  - Credits to Degree
  - Active terms to degree
  - Graduation Efficiency Indicator (GEI): \( \frac{(\text{degree required hours} - \text{transfer hours}) \times 100}{\text{total credit hours taking at degree granting institution}} \).
The University

- Florida A&M University, a Historically Black University and also a public state university, has traditionally admitted large portion of economically disadvantaged students, but at the same time is measured on the same performance indicators as the other 10 universities in the Florida State University System.
- Has had the highest percentage of underprepared students in the entire State University System and the trend is going up every year.
- Under great pressure to reduce the number of underprepared students while maintaining sufficient enrollment at the same time.
Purpose

• This study compares the difference on the five graduation measures between profile admits who did not meet FTIC admission standard and regular admits who did meet admission criteria: 8-year graduation, total terms to graduate, active terms to graduate, credits to graduate, and Graduation Efficiency Indicator.
Research Methodology

• This study uses regression analysis to examine the differences in the five graduation measures between profile admits and regular admits.

• Data sources: Data files that is submitted to the state. The specific data files include Admissions Files, Student Data Course Files, and Degrees Awarded files, and Hours to Degree Files.

• Cohorts 2000, 2001, and 2002 totaling 6696 First Time In College students, 2407 of which did not meet admission criteria, are included in this study.
Dependent variables

• Graduate or not within 8 years
• Total terms to graduate
• Active terms to graduate
• Total credits to graduate
• Graduation Efficiency Indicator.
Independent Variables

- Gender, race, age, enrollment status for part time or full time, student type in terms of profile admit or regular admit, college GPA.
- Gender, race, age, student type are categorical variables
- Age and College GPA are ratio variables
- Since the admission standard are a combination of high school GPA and test scores, high school GPA and ACT/SAT scores are not repeated in the analysis
- The base lines that are compared against for these dummy variables are male for gender, African American for race since most students at this university are African Americans, regular admit for student type, and part time for enrollment status.
## Descriptive Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>8-Yr Graduation Rate</th>
<th>Active Term</th>
<th>Total Term</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>GEI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regular Admit</strong></td>
<td>51.60%</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td>151.82</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Profile Admit</strong></td>
<td>33.32%</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td>14.95</td>
<td>161.40</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>45.03%</td>
<td>11.72</td>
<td>14.22</td>
<td>153.96</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>.767***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active term</td>
<td>.932***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Terms</td>
<td>.997***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>9.750***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEI</td>
<td>-.050***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** P < 0.001
Results

Compared to regular admits, profile admits group has:

• Lower graduation rates
• Longer time to graduate in terms of both total terms to graduate and active terms to graduate
• More credits to graduate
• Lower Graduation Efficient Indicator
Discussion

• Decision making on admitting under-prepared students
  – Looks good on the front end - higher headcount enrollment
  – Gets hit on the back end – what do we do with these students when they get into college
Comments/Suggestions

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