Analyzing changes in retention and graduation

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Boise State’s retention and graduation rates have been steadily improving.
Which efforts seem to be related to changes in retention? Efforts include:

- Course capacity and waitlists
- Finish-in-Four
- More advisors
- First-year seminars, learning communities, and residential colleges
- Early warning systems in a number of first-year courses
- Restructuring early math courses
- Student review their Academic Advisement Report at 30, 60, and 90 credits
- Outreach to students who were eligible to enroll but had not
- Faculty development activities to help foster student learning and persistence.
Admissions has also attracted more students who:

- Have higher test scores
- Have higher high school GPAs
- Are younger
- Are more likely to be non-residents
Conducted 2 studies:

• Study 1: Predicting retention using 10 years of cohort data that includes both admissions and college experience variables

• Study 2: Looking at the pattern of change in key variables to see which ones followed a pattern similar to the changes in retention and graduation
Admissions data included:

- Index scores (combination of test scores and high school GPA)
- Age
- Residency
Early college experience variables included:

- Course withdrawals in 1st semester (Y/N)
- Took both math and English in 1st year (Y/N)
- Pell eligibility (Y/N)
- Credits attempted
- Unmet financial need
- Living on-campus (Y/N)

1st semester GPA added as a final step for retention and graduation analyses
What predicts first semester GPA?

• Step 1. Admissions variables (index score, residency, age) accounted for 23% of variability in GPA

• Step 2. Campus experience measures (taking math and English, course withdrawal, Pell eligibility, unmet need, credits attempted, and living on-campus) added another 5%

• Everything in final model was significant except Pell eligibility and living on-campus

• Index score had the strongest relationship to GPA
What predicts retention one year later?

• Step 1: Admissions variables accounted for 6% of variability
• Step 2: Adding early college experience variables raised percentage to 11%
• Step 3: Adding first semester GPA raised percentage to 27%
Final model for retention:

• First semester GPA was most predictive
• Index score fell out of significance for final model
• All other variables were significant except Pell eligibility
Predicting graduation: Variability accounted for at 3 steps in the process

• In 4 years:
  1. Admissions: 17%
  2. Add Early college experiences: 21%
  3. Add 1st semester GPA: 28%

• In 6 years:
  1. Admissions: 14%
  2. Add Early college experiences: 18%
  3. Add 1st semester GPA: 30%
Final models comparison:

- **At 4 years:**
  - Everything significant except age, unmet financial need, and taking both math and English in 1st year
  - Most significant variables were 1st semester GPA followed by credits attempted, and index score

- **At 6 years:**
  - Everything significant except age, residency
  - Most significant variables were 1st semester GPA followed by index score and credits attempted
Interesting information BUT

- How does it relate to changes in retention OVER TIME?
- Needed to look at patterns of change focusing on the variables that were identified as most significant
- Started at a point prior to when major changes occurred as the comparison point
Retention and graduation rates by cohort year compared to the 2005 cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort year</th>
<th>Percent retained</th>
<th>Significant compared to 2005?</th>
<th>Percent graduated in 4 years</th>
<th>Significant compared to 2005?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>68.6</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>69.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Variables with a similar pattern
(with comparisons to fall 2005 cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort year</th>
<th>Retention rate</th>
<th>Math grade</th>
<th>1st semester GPA</th>
<th>Course withdrawals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some variables with a DISSIMILAR pattern (using comparisons to the 2005 cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort year</th>
<th>Retention</th>
<th>Index score</th>
<th>Lived on campus</th>
<th>Credits attempted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Discovering what’s related to retention is not the same thing as discovering what is related to changes in retention
• First term GPA is strongest predictor of retention and graduation
• Although index scores have the strongest association with first term GPA, the lack of change in scores over time makes them an unlikely candidate for explaining changes in retention
• Instead, changes in math courses and other academic supports are more likely reasons
To view the studies:

• Go to: lassess.boisestate.edu
• Select “Research Publications”
• Look under “Retention” for report 2013-02 (Predicting Retention Using Ten Years of Cohorts and Retention Data)
• Also look for report 2013-03 (Addressing the Pattern of Changes in Retention and Graduation)