

<http://oregonstate.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/osuperspective.html>

Success of Students of Color

This issue of the OSU Perspective will report on several studies that have been undertaken in the last year which sought to highlight issues that serve as facilitators or barriers to the educational success of domestic students of color. At OSU, students of color first to second year retention rates are overall less than those for white students and secondly, graduation rates for students of color lag behind OSU's white students by between 10-30 percentage points. Only the graduation rate of Asian American/Pacific Islander students compares reasonably well to white students overall. (Information based upon OSU Office of Institutional Research Report: Retention and Graduation Rates for Cohort

Classes: Fall Term 1994 - Fall Term 2006).

Increasing the first to second year retention rate and graduation rate of OSU students of color helps us to diversify the campus, aids in the educational development of all students, fosters educational relevance to Oregon communities, and helps to drive the state's economy in a positive direction. This is part of OSU's land grant mission that we cannot afford to let languish or to lead haphazardly. As educators, we must use our education and the privilege it bestows upon us to assist others to develop their best possible selves.

The three studies highlighted in this issue of *OSU Perspectives* focus on increasing the success of students of color

The first study, entitled, *Breaking Barriers: Oregon community forums on college access and success* was released in July, 2008. It was developed and written for the Oregon State Board of Higher Education by the Oregon Student Participation and Completion Committee.

The second study reported on in this edition was completed during the winter term, 2008, by a consortium of 25 universities in collaboration with Eduventures, Inc. This study looked at learning beyond the classroom and its impact on students in general and students of color specifically.

The third study was done by the OSU Student Affairs Research and Evaluation Office and Eduventures, Inc. For this study OSU surveyed un-

In This Issue

- **Feature Focus: Success of Students of Color**
- **Breaking Barriers**
- **Learning Beyond the Classroom**
- **Facilitators and Obstacles to Minority Student Success**

dergraduate students of color to ascertain what they believed to be the facilitators and obstacles to their success at OSU.



Breaking Barriers

An educated citizenry is essential for the overall welfare and prosperity of our towns, our state, and our nation. This was one of the early beliefs upon which the American system of public education was founded. That long-standing belief still holds true today, however, segments of the population do not have adequate access to education and particularly

to higher education. In June 2007, the Oregon Board of Higher Education (Board) asked Dr. Dalton Miller-Jones ". . . To lead an effort to identify the specific barriers that are limiting many students' abilities to access and complete a college education" (*Breaking Barriers*, 2008, p.1). A committee commissioned by the Board engaged in research and outreach into the community to identify

the needs of underserved populations in order to increase the educational opportunity of all Oregon students. The committee focused on the barriers and needs of first generation students, low-income students, rural students, students of color, and students with disabilities.

In all categories these stu-

dents shared some common issues as well as having barriers and needs that were specific to a given population.

("Barriers" continued on page 3)

Learning Beyond the Classroom

During the 2007 Fall term, OSU participated in a research project hosted by the Eduventures, Inc. as a part of a Student Affairs Learning Collaborative. The Collaborative is composed of 25 colleges and universities across the country. The research was designed to address several questions but only one of them will be addressed in this article: "What levels and types of co-curricular engagement are associated with greater student satisfaction among minority students?" (Student Affairs Learning Collaborative Research Report, August, 2008).

A web-based survey was distributed to 8,314 sophomores and seniors at participating colleges and universities during the fall term. Four racial/ethnic groups were used for analysis in this study: Asian/Asian-American, Black/African American, Latin/Hispanic, and White students.

The following are some key findings from this research:

- Across racial groups, students reported spending the most time engaged in academic pursuits.
- Relaxing and socializing was the second most time-consuming activity across all groups.
- Time spent on working for pay was one of the most notable differences between racial groups. Black and Latino students reported spending significantly more time ($p < .01$) on work for pay than did either of the other two racial groups.
- White students reported spending more time relaxing and socializing than did any other group. Black students reported the least amount of time relaxing and socializing.

- Black students reported the most time engaging in co-curricular/leadership activities than did any other group.
- There is a significant negative association between hours working for pay and GPA across groups.
- The association between high GPA and co-curricular activity is significantly positive.
- Across groups students who spend one to five hours engaged in co-curricular activity. . .
 - are more satisfied with the sense of community at the university than those who do not devote time to co-curricular involvement;
 - are more satisfied with the institutional commitment to student well-being; and,
 - are less dissatisfied with opportunities to provide feedback, except for Latino students whose dissatisfaction rate is 67%.

Involvement in co-curricular programs and activities does have positive effects on student satisfaction, feelings of community, and engagement at the university. This is true for the four racial ethnic groups involved in this study. The degree to which these activities contribute and the types of co-curricular experiences in which students participate all have positive effects on the student experience at universities.



Facilitators and Obstacles to Minority Student Success

During the 2008 Winter term, OSU surveyed 2,405 undergraduate students of color about the facilitators and barriers to their success at OSU. Altogether 28.7% responded to the survey invitation. Specific respondent characteristics are in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Characteristics

Response Rate by Racial Group	Am Indian/Alaskan Native	34.5%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	30.7%
	Black/African American	16.8%
	Hispanic	26.5%
Class	1st Yr	24%
	2nd Yr	21%
	Junior	23%
	Senior	32%
Academic Status	Good Standing	87%
Mean Age		21.67
Residency	Resident	82%

In a self-evaluation of likelihood to persist to graduation at OSU more than 75% planned to return to OSU in Fall, 2008. Though twice as many African American students than other racial groups reported that they did not plan to return in the fall. Further, overall more than 75% of students of color surveyed planned to graduate from OSU with a degree regardless of the obstacles they encountered. Yet, OSU data indicates that this kind of graduation rate for students of color does not even approach 75%.

("Facilitators" continued on page 4)

Barriers (continued from page 1)

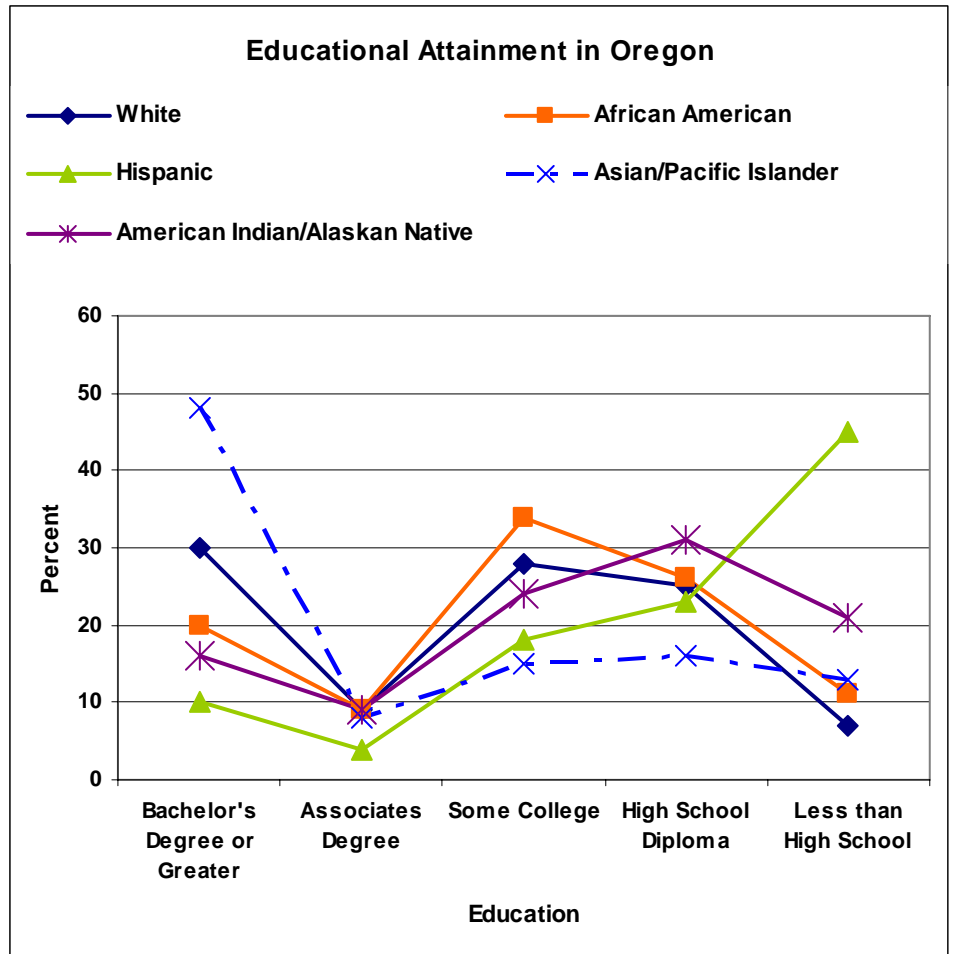
Overall Findings (in no particular order).

1. Money matters: Students reported most frequently that money issues were a barrier to attending college. Affordability of college is an issue not only for low-income students and families but also for those of moderate income.
2. First generation college students span many categories including income level, race, gender, age, and parenthood status.
3. In Oregon there are disparities by race and ethnicity in educational attainment.
4. Rural students are much less likely to attend an OUS institution than their urban counterparts. (2008, p. 3, 4, 5)

Feedback from Communities:

The following feedback was provided to the committee by community members and is summarized below (in no particular order).

1. "Lack of academic preparation for college"
2. "Low aspirations and expectations for students; and insufficient communication between schools/ colleges and underserved communities"
3. "Language, residency or family situation impediments"
4. "Campus climate issues inhibiting student success, retention; and need for mentors and role models"
5. "Financial barriers to access and affordability"
6. "Insufficient guidance for students/families on how to apply for and select a college, and apply for financial aid"
7. "Lack of college-going 'savvy' and



- college skills leading to academic and other retention problems"
8. "Need to expand and improve culturally inclusive pedagogies of faculty, educators." (2008, p.6)
- In order to help underserved students, these barriers to their success must be addressed. The following is a list of best practices and areas that work to both increase access and success in higher education.
1. "In and out-of-school academic enrichment programs; rigorous college prep offerings"
 2. "Adult and peer mentors, and diverse educators who utilize culturally inclusive pedagogies to reach

- all students"
3. "Outreach by colleges to students, and parents in K-12 schools, including meaningful student visits to colleges with relevant programming"
 4. "Academic help and other comprehensive campus support services for students, including problem solving to enable persistence"
 5. "Connections made between careers and appropriate academic preparation, and ties to the work world through internships in K-12 schools and colleges"

("Barriers" continued on Page 4)

Facilitators and Obstacles to Success at OSU

OSU Perspective: What is it?

The **OSU Perspective** was developed to provide assessment and other information about our students and programs. We hope that by making this information available to OSU faculty and staff, we can stimulate conversation that helps keep students and student learning at our core.

The **Perspective** is published both in print and on the web: <http://oregonstate.edu/studentaffairs/assessment/osuperspective.html>

Please contact Rebecca Sanderson, Ph.D., Student Affairs Research and Evaluation Office, 102 Buxton Hall, 541-737-8738, or email: rebecca.sanderson@oregonstate.edu.

Masthead designed by Judy Burks, OSU. Editing assistance conducted by Jodi Nelson, OSU.

Barriers

(continued from Page 3)

6. "Need-based aid and scholarships, and help with the FAFSA"
7. "High aspirations and expectations for students by teachers, counselors, parents, and other adults"
8. "Informational, training programs and outreach to students, parents, teachers and counselors on all aspects of college-going"
9. "Cultural 'homes' for students on campus, helping with campus climate and retention" (2008, p. 11).

Each of these recommendations can be implemented which will increase the opportunities for underrepresented student populations to increase levels of educational attainment.



("Facilitators" continued from Page 2)

Students of color reported several activities that had a high positive impact on their persistence and satisfaction at OSU. These included:

- social fraternities/sororities;
- officer/leadership position in student club;
- study abroad programs;
- National Student Exchange program, and;
- experiential learning programs.

While each of these activities were reported by students to have a high positive impact, they unfortunately, had low participation rates. This was especially true of the Study Abroad and National Student Exchange programs with less than 5% of students participating in either of these experiences.

Student services that were reported as having both high participation (>75%) and high positive impact included: academic advising, orientation programs, financial aid, and student health services.

Students reported five overall areas that served as obstacles to their success. They included:

- concern over finances (e.g., scholarship in jeopardy, lack of adequate financial aid, finding a job, etc.);
- managing time spent on work, social life and academics;
- stress (e.g., pressure to live up to other's expectations, pressure from family to come home, feeling isolated);
- academics (e.g., classes too hard,

poor grades, poor study habits, etc.); and,

- finding human support resources (e.g., good mentor, faculty help, good social fit, friends, etc.)

Students were also asked to rate their perceptions of OSU in relationship to themselves. Ratings ranged from not at all (1) to a great deal (5). The ratings reported below are a combination of 4 and 5 ratings for each question.

Table 2: The degree to which I . . .

	% rated 4/5
Feel accepted at OSU	65.2%
Feel I can be myself on campus	72.6%
Feel I belong on this campus	53.6%
Feel I am respected by faculty who teach	63.6%
Feel most of my experiences at OSU have been good	70.6%

These perceptions of belonging and being respected at OSU may also say something about the everyday obstacles that students of color must overcome in order to believe that they are a valued part of the OSU community and as such can be successful here.



For Further Information

For further information on any of these studies, contact Rebecca A. Sanderson, PhD, Director of Student Affairs Research and Evaluation.

Rebecca.sanderson@oregonstate.edu