

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

## Introduction to this Issue

This issue of the *OSU Perspective* is the second in a series highlighting information on the facilitators and barriers to success for OSU domestic students of color. In this issue, we will further examine data from the study, *Underrepresented Students*

*at Oregon State University: Modeling Data from a Study of Student Success*. Further we will examine highlights from a recent AAC&U publication, *High-Impact Educational Practices*, and the influence of these practices on different racial groups. Lastly we will

introduce our new graduate assistant in the Student Affairs Research & Evaluation office and provide some brief findings from the latest OSU Student Health Services surveys.

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# Predictors of Likelihood to Persist

During Winter term, 2008, OSU surveyed 2,405 undergraduate students of color concerning the facilitators and barriers to their success at OSU. Of those, 28.7%, or 688 students responded to the survey. Volume 6(1) of the *OSU Perspective* detailed the initial findings from this research including specific demographic representation and variables. The current article contains information from further analysis of the data “. . . using statistical modeling to overcome limitations of small sample sizes of particular minority populations” (p.1). Specifically, we were interested in determining possible predictors of

success as well as possible risk factors for attrition. Success was defined as the level of student confidence in ability to graduate from OSU regardless of the obstacles.

### Demographic Factors/ Participation in Activities/ Service Use and Graduation Confidence

□ Higher levels of doubt about graduating from OSU were associated with lower class standing.(i.e., first year students had higher levels of doubt than did sophomores, sophomores had higher levels of doubt than juniors, etc.).

- Level of confidence about graduating from OSU was overall not related to academic performance (i.e., GPA, academic standing, etc.).
- Generally, resident students were more confident about graduating from OSU than non-resident students.
- Students who were very confident about graduating participated in more campus activities and organizations than did students who were not confident about graduating.

- A very high proportion of UESP and pre-business students were not confident about graduation from OSU. Part of this could relate to the high proportion of first year students in these two programs; however the same was not true for students in the pre-engineering program which also has a high proportion of first year students.
- Students who had been in leadership positions in a club or organization or who had served as a

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# Predictors of Likelihood to Persist

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mentor/advisor to other students were significantly more confident about graduating than students who had not had these experiences.

- Sophomores who had participated in orientation programs were significantly more confident about graduating than sophomores who had not participated.
- Among sophomores and seniors, graduation confidence was reported higher for students who utilized services such as the Intercultural Student Services (formally known as the Minority Education Office), Academic Advising, the Cultural Centers and Disability Access Services. "Sophomore students who had used the services of OSU's cultural centers showed a significantly higher level of confidence about graduation, with 79% being very confident, compared with 62% of sophomores who had not used the cultural centers" (p 15).

## Obstacles and Graduation Confidence

A list of 34 items were presented to students who were asked to rate them as "not an obstacle," "minor obstacle" or "major obstacle." It was hypothesized that students who faced more obstacles would be less confident about graduating from OSU. This was true for first year students; however, juniors and seniors did not see a significant difference between having fewer or more obstacles in relation to their confidence in graduating. Sophomores, on the other hand, reported higher levels of confidence with having more obstacles.

The following obstacles showed statistically significant differences between students rating them as major obstacles and graduation confidence.

- Lack of positive interactions with faculty;
- Inadequate amount of financial aid;
- Lack of adequate finances;
- Finding a job to help pay for school;
- Campus environment; and,
- Finding foods, health and beauty products, clothes, etc. in the community or on campus.

## Sense of Community and Social Networks

Study after study have shown that finding connections on the campus matter to student success and retention. In this study we asked students of color to rate the degree to which eight items matched their experiences at OSU. The ratings were on a likert-type scale with one being "not at all" and 5 being "a great deal."

Using the responses to these items to set up a community index, a higher score denoted a greater sense of community and belonging and a lower score represented not feeling a sense of community and belonging on the campus. As expected a ". . . strong sense of belonging to the campus community is

positively associated with student confidence about graduation" (p. 25). This was especially true for first year students and senior students

## Strongest Predictors of Graduation Confidence by Class Standing

Results point to a strong sense of belonging as the strongest indicator of whether freshmen are confident about graduating from OSU, while for sophomores, receiving financial aid, a scholarship or fellowship was the strongest indicator of confidence in graduating. The degree to which a student perceived the OSU experience as positive was the best predictor of the confidence of graduation by juniors. Finally, the best indicator of confidence of graduation for seniors was the degree to which a student felt respected by faculty members.

## So What?

These results suggest that students of color at different levels of class standing have different needs in terms of supporting their confidence in graduating from OSU and that some of this may be developmental in nature. For first year students and sophomores, successfully finding a place at OSU (i.e., belonging) and the means to continue are essential in maintaining confidence that regardless of the obstacles, graduation is possible. In essence there are some instrumental needs that must be met for underclassmen to believe that they can graduate from OSU.

For Juniors and Seniors who have a high degree of confidence about

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## High Impact Educational Practices and Who Benefits

The following article is excerpted from the 2008 AAC&U publication by Carol Geary Schneider and George Kuh entitled, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. (The full publication is available from AAC&U on their website, <http://www.aacu.org>).

High impact educational practices have been widely tested and have demonstrated their value in improving student retention and engagement. Briefly, these teaching and learning practices include: 1) First year experiences that bring faculty and small groups of students together regularly; 2) Common experiences both curricular and co-curricular that allow students to share a common set of intellectual experiences; 3) Involvement in an intentional learning community experience; 4) Intensive writing experiences across the curriculum; 5) Collaborative projects that increase students' abilities to work together and

also to effectively listen to others; 6) Undergraduate research with a faculty member (i.e., doing research as research is done); 7) Studies emphasizing diversity and global learning—both a classroom and an out-of-classroom experience; 8) Service or community based learning as a instructional strategy; 9) Internships and field experiences; and 10) Capstone courses and projects where a final project is required.

These practices positively influence the retention and engagement of all students. However, students from historically under-represented groups appear “. . . to benefit *more*

from engaging in educationally purposeful activities than majority students” (p. 17). Unfortunately the very students who may benefit more are also the most unlikely to experience these high impact practices.

To raise all students' achievement, the answer seems to lie in making it possible for ALL students to participate in at least two of the high impact practices during their college career—. . . one in the first year and one in the senior year” (p. 19).

To learn more about high impact practices, the students who benefit and how, read the full report.

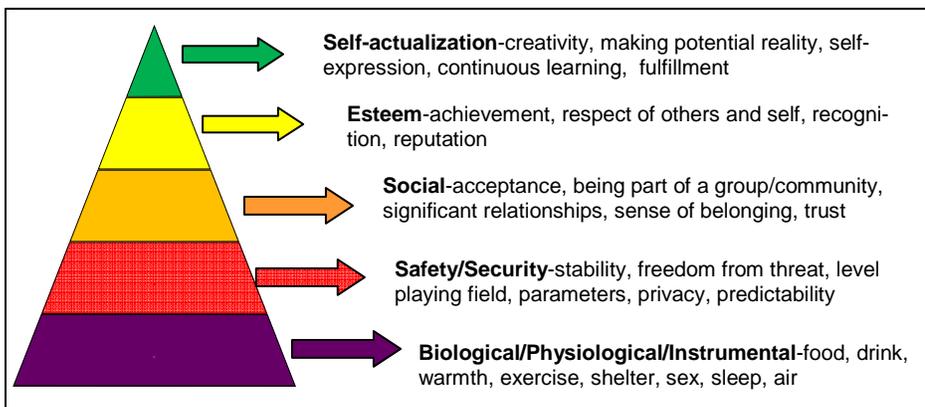
## Predictors of Likelihood to Persist

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graduating the needs are related more to higher order issues concerned with experiencing respect from faculty members. This hierarchy of needs may be akin to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 1 below) and may point us to ways of constructing support services and interactions with students to meet these differing needs.

It is clear from this and other data that the impact of the educational milieu on students of color confidence about graduating is significant. In order to believe in the

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



possibility of graduation students must successfully develop a sense of belonging at OSU. They must have some belief in stability, especially as it relates to finances, and they must have certain instrumental needs met (e.g., shelter, food, drink, etc.).

As they progress from being first year and sophomore students, higher order environmental cues must be present to continue the belief in the possibility of graduation. These include specifically knowing that they and their work are respected by faculty. If we are to help students to realize their full potential, then we must attend to the issues that this study raises in terms of the needs of students of color at OSU.

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## Introducing . . .

### 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>

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

## Did You Know?

- The most important goal for OSU students who reported gambling was to have fun/excitement.
- The most common *monthly* gambling behaviors for OSU students were buying lottery or Powerball tickets (males 9% and females 6%).
- Approximately 95% of students report they do NOT gamble on the internet. (OSU Gambling Survey, 2008)
- Last year students reported stress as one of the most common impediments to academic performance.
- About 36 percent of OSU students felt so depressed it was difficult to function. (Oregon State University, ACHA-NCHA, 2008)

Since the Student Affairs Research and Evaluation was established in 2001, the office has been a one person operation until now!! Meet our new graduate assistant.

#### Who am I:

My name is Angi Baxter and I am a first year MAIS student. My areas of emphasis are Women Studies and Ethnic Studies. I got my BA in Liberal Studies from OSU, go beavs! I have a significant amount of experience in social justice work. I came to the position by referral and am very happy, I am learning so much about assessment! I am a single mother of two wonderful daughters whom you will see from time to time if you come to my office in Poling 103. I grew up in the Midwest but have been in Oregon for the last 5 years and never plan to leave, I love it here!

#### What do I do:

As the Student Affairs Research and Evaluation GTA I have taken on various responsibilities that will assist in creating a stronger department. I am responsible for implementing the StudentVoice PDA's. This means that if you want to do a survey by utilizing the StudentVoice software on the PDA's, you should contact me. I make sure the PDA's are all functioning correctly and that they get to where they need to be, in your hands to conduct your surveys. I am in the process of creating a PDA user manual that will assist each of you in your PDA use.

I am also responsible for getting the OSU Perspectives newsletter in your hands. Therefore, I will be putting the newsletter together, sending it to printing and mailing, then sending it out to you. I will also be writing articles and soliciting articles for future

newsletters. So if you get an email from me asking about interesting facts or information that you have learned from your assessments, or simply asking for something related to assessment that you'd like to write about, don't be surprised.

In addition, I have the opportunity to create an Assessment Plan for the Queer Leaders organization here on campus. This will assist in implementing all of the wonderful information I am learning as the GTA. This new knowledge base includes writing learning/service outcomes, understanding what the principles of a learning community are, understanding how to measure effective communication skills, examining how intentional learning cycles correspond with assessment, to name just a few of the topics. Honestly, I feel like there is so much to learn and so much that I have already learned that I would bore you with the details, so I'll spare you the agony!

#### I am here for you:

Ultimately, one of my primary reasons for being here is to assist you in creating a stronger OSU community through assessment and integration of what you learn from those assessments. Therefore, if I can be of any assistance, please feel free to contact me. If I do not have the answer, I will find the right person who does! I look forward to working with many of you. Have a wonderful term!

Angi Baxter,  
Graduate Teaching Assistant