DOES STUDENT ADVISING AFFECT PERSISTENCE AND GRADUATION RATES?

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Business has a centralized student advising office, the Student Success Center (SSC) where since April 2014 students log in to a database every time they visit. The first phase of this study examines the cohort of entering freshmen who first enrolled in Fall 2014. Subsequent analyses will examine other freshman cohorts as well as Community College Transfers who first enrolled in 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17.

For each cohort, student demographic and academic progress data are matched to the students who visited and logged into the CoB Student Success Center (SSC) over the 4-year period from May 2014 through May 2018. Some students in each cohort didn’t visit the SSC at all, some visited it only once, and some multiple times. Of those who visited, some visited earlier in their academic career than others. There is also data indicating “reason for visit” for each logged visit.

The initial analysis examines whether visiting the SSC for advising on major persistence and graduating within four years of first enrollment as Freshmen.

DATA

736 Freshmen enrolled 1st-time with major designated Business (any concentration)

705 were Business majors with concentrations other than Economics/Labor Studies (ECON/LABR students use departments for advising rather than the SSC, so these students were excluded)

Characteristics # (%)

Gender: Female 383 (54.3%)
Male 322 (45.7%)
URM status: URM 208 (29.5%)
Not URM 497 (70.5%)
Pell Eligibility: Eligible 349 (49.5%)
Not Eligible 356 (50.5%)
First Generation Attending College: 1st Gen 270 (38.3%)
Not 1st Gen 406 (57.6%)
N/A 29 (4.2%)

Visits to CoB Student Success Center (SSC)
The CoB Fall 2014 freshman cohort visited the SSC a total of 2,448 times between August 1, 2014 and August 1, 2018.

Reason for visit # visits
Major Advising/Choosing Classes 975
Change Major 351
Quick Question 281
Graduation Application 249
Other 204
Study Ahead 113
Academic Probation 80
Signature Needed 77
Petition 54
Prerequisites 44
Other 20
Total: 2,448

METHODS

I. Persistence through first 2 years of enrollment

Research question: What factors predict persistence (continued enrollment) beyond the first 2 years of college?

Of these 548 students, 202 (36.9%) visited the SSC at least once for Major Advising/Choosing Classes during their first 2 years.

The initial analysis examines whether visiting the SSC for advising on major persistence and graduating within four years of first enrollment as Freshmen.

Analysis

A binary logistic regression model was tested using persistence through Fall 2018 (No=0, Yes=1) as the dependent variable, and 7 independent variables:

- Resident Status: over 85% of Non-Resident students at SFU are International.
- Gender: Female/Male
- URM: Under-Represented Minority if African-American, Latin(-) American, or Native American.
- High School GPA: 3-year high school GPA on a 4.0 scale.
- Pell Grant Eligibility: Binary (Yes/No) proxy for family income.
- First Generation College: Neither parent attended college for any years.
- Visited SSC during first 24 months (Yes/No) at least 1 visit for Major Advising/Choosing Classes.

II. Likelihood of graduating within 4 years

Research question: For students who persist to their junior year, what factors contribute to likelihood of graduating within 4 years?

Of the 184 students who persisted to their junior years, 93 graduated within 4 years of first enrollment as Freshmen.

Analysis

A binary logistic regression model was tested using graduation within 4 years (No=0, Yes=1) as the dependent variable, and 7 independent variables:

- Resident (CA) Status: Over 85% of SFU’s Non-Resident students at SFU are International.
- Gender: Female/Male
- URM: Under-Represented Minority if African-American, Latin(-) American, or Native American.
- High School GPA: 3-year high school GPA on a 4.0 scale.
- Pell Grant Eligibility: Binary (Yes/No) proxy for family income.
- First Generation College: Neither parent attended college for any years.
- Visited SSC during first 24 months (Yes/No) at least 1 visit for Major Advising/Choosing Classes.

RESULTS

I. Persistence through first 2 years of enrollment

Variables in the Equation: B S.E. Wald df Sig. Exp(B)

| Resident Status (Y=0, N=1) | -.544 .198 3.925 1 .048 .619 |
| Gender (F=0, M=1) | .513 .199 8.262 1 .004* .638 |
| URM Status (Y=0, N=1) | -.347 .223 0.846 1 .358 1.000 |
| High School GPA | .239 .069 6.406 1 .011* .101 |
| Pell Eligibility (Y=0, N=1) | .785 .315 11.972 1 .000* 2.183 |
| First Gen Status (Y=0, N=1) | .585 .220 2.311 1 .127 1.000 |
| Visited SSC (Y=0, N=1) | 1.261 .388 11.770 1 .000* 3.560 |
| Constant | .427 1.013 0.177 1 .674 .653 |

Dependent variables with significance level < .05

- Gender: Being Female was associated with increased likelihood of persisting through the first 2 years.
- URM Status: Not being an Under-Represented Minority was associated with increased likelihood of persisting.
- First Gen Status: Not having First Generation status was associated with increased likelihood of persisting.
- Visited SSC: Visiting the SSC at least once for Major Advising/Class Planning was associated with increased likelihood of persisting.

II. Likelihood of graduating within 4 years

Variables in the Equation: B S.E. Wald df Sig. Exp(B)

| Gender (F=0, M=1) | -.544 .198 3.925 1 .048 .619 |
| URM Status (Y=0, N=1) | .513 .199 8.262 1 .004* .638 |
| High School GPA | .239 .069 6.406 1 .011* .101 |
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| Constant | .427 1.013 0.177 1 .674 .653 |

Dependent variables with significance level < .05

- Gender: Being Female was associated with increased likelihood of graduating within 4 years.
- URM Status: Not being an Under-Represented Minority was associated with increased likelihood of graduating within 4 years.
- First Gen Status: Not having First Generation status was associated with increased likelihood of graduating within 4 years.
- Visited SSC: Visiting the SSC at least once for Major Advising/Class Planning was associated with increased likelihood of graduating within 4 years.

CONCLUSIONS

I. Persistence through first 2 years of enrollment

The magnitude of the Exp(B) parameter estimate for the Visited SSC (during 1st 24 months) variable (4.96) is more than twice that of the next highest significant variable, URM Status (2.08).

II. Likelihood of graduating within 4 years

The magnitude of the Exp(B) parameter estimate for the Visited SSC (during 4 years) variable is lower than that of the other significant parameter estimates.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results of this and future studies will be distributed to various on-campus stakeholders, including the SFU Center for Equity and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CEETL), the SFU University Chairs Council, the Academic Senate and its Executive Committee, plus the President and Provost. These are key stakeholders and decision-makers who can help shape the form and access to student advising services.

In addition to conducting similar analyses for other Freshman cohorts and entering cohorts of Community College transfer students, I plan to examine in greater detail whether patterns of advising access might differ for URM or other sub-categories of students, and whether utilization of advising services has a disparate impact on the persistence and graduation rates for these sub-groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to the Director and staff of the Student Success Center in the SFU College of Business for their efforts in collecting, maintaining, and providing four years of data on student visits.

Thanks also to the SFU Office of Institutional Research provided demographic and success data for all students in the Freshman cohort first enrolled in Fall 2014.

Finally, many thanks for the support, training and encouragement provided by the Certificate Program in Student Success Analytics made possible by the generous support of the Stupski Foundation.