

## The Effects of Institutional Factors on the Success of Community College Students

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### OVERVIEW

Community colleges provide the gateway to higher education for students, especially those from minority populations, low-income households, immigrants, and first-generation enrollees. A wide range of research has been done to look at ways to improve the success of community colleges. The research (Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl & Leinbach, 2005), titled "[The Effects of Institutional Factors on the Success of Community College Students](#)," explored the institutional factors that affect student success in the community colleges around the USA. The findings of this report provide interesting and meaningful information for institutional researchers and college administrators from a macro perspective. The following is the major findings using secondary dataset from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), and the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS: 88).

### FINDINGS

- I. **Institution size is negatively correlated with successful student outcomes.** Students finish at higher rates in smaller institutions, perhaps due to the fact that such institutions can provide a more personalized environment. It may also be that smaller colleges which have more limited and focused set of programs would attract more motivated students.
- II. **A larger percentage of minority students (black, Hispanic, and Native American) at an institution is associated with lower graduation rates.** The findings show that students in colleges with more minority students graduate at lower rates. The authors point out that this is a disturbing conclusion which needs further investigation.
- III. **Higher percentages of students who are part-time tend to be related to lower graduation rates.** A larger percentage of faculty who are part-time also correlates with lower student graduation rates at community colleges. Similar to the finding with minority students, the proportion of part-time students and part-time faculty at community colleges contributes to lower graduation rates.
- IV. **Rates of instructional expenditures and student service expenditures have some positive impacts on graduation rates.** More instructional and service expenditures appear to promote the graduation rates, but this effect disappears when controlling for individual student characteristics.
- V. **The state in which a college is located has significant impact on institutional graduation rates.** The results suggest that state policies and how they play out at individual community colleges contributes to student outcomes. This is consistent with other recent research on the impact of institutional finances on student retention at baccalaureate institutions (i.e., the percent of revenue derived from tuition is positively associated with student persistence.) The explanation could be that, as colleges rely more on tuition for revenue, they become increasingly more customer-focused.

### METHODOLOGY/DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are based on secondary datasets, which limits the way to measure important variables. Most of the analyses are just multiple regressions. This certainly limits the role of causality to interpret the results. More research should be done to explore the institutional factors on the success of community colleges.