

Improving Opportunities for Success and Transfer for College Students: Lessons Learned from the Indiana Project on Academic Success

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Improving Opportunities for Academic Success and Transfer

- Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Focus on Transfer
- Indiana Project on Academic Success (IPAS)
- IPAS Community College Projects
- Lessons Learned

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Database

- SAT questionnaires for Indiana students in 2000 senior class (about 60% of cohort) and national sample
 - Detailed background information
 - High school courses (self-reported)
- Indiana Commission on Higher Education (ICHE) Student Information System (SIS)
 - Records on all college students in public colleges
 - High school diploma types for students not taking SAT
- Independent colleges (two years of data only)
 - Student record data for private college (SIS format)
 - First two years only (not included in transfer after 2 years)
- Merged database to track students from high school through four years of college

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Studies Completed

- Patterns of preparation in relation to SAT (state and national database for comparison)
 - Impact of taking advanced courses on SAT, controlling for background
 - Impact of diploma types (Honors, Core 40 [college prep] and regular) on SAT
- Impact of background, preparation and SAT on types of colleges chosen within state
- Impact of background, preparation, SAT and other factors on
 - Persistence during first two years
 - Major choice and change
- **Impact of background, preparation and college experience on transfer (summarized here)**
- Patterns of success after four years (for public college students only)

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Focus on Transfer

- Students in 2000 cohort who transferred after two years
 - 16% transferred to state universities(683)
 - 16% transferred to regional campuses (672)
 - 13% transferred to urban universities (541)
 - 20% transferred to research universities (860)
 - 35% transferred to 2-year campuses (1,506)

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Focus on Transfer

Campuses students transferred from

- 2 year campuses (26%)
- State universities (16%)
- Regional (+ urban) campuses (34%)
- Research universities (24%)
- There was substantial transfer from four-year to two-year colleges (about 30% of transfers)

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Focus on Transfer

- College grades of transfers
 - A grades (13%)
 - C or lower (42%)
 - B grades (45%)
- SAT status of transfers
 - Missing (15%)
 - Low (32%) (standard deviation below mean)
 - High (15%)
 - Mid range (39%)

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Logistic Regression for Transfer

(N=18,000)

- Positively associated with transfer
 - Low income (compared with middle income)
 - Missing parents' ed (compared with college)
 - C or lower HS grades (compared with B)
 - 2-year college (compared with four-year)
 - Humanities major (compared with no major)
 - Health major (compared with no major)
 - A grades in college (compared with B)
 - C or lower grades in college (compared with B)

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Logistic Regression for Transfer

(N=18,000)

- Negatively associated with transfer
 - Missing race (compared with white) only significant race variable
 - Honors diploma (compared with regular)
 - Core 40 diploma (compared with regular)
 - HS A grades (compared with B)
 - High SAT (compared with mid range score)
 - Low SAT (compared with mid range score)
 - Remedial courses (compare to not), but positive for persistence
 - Full-time enrollment (compare with part time)
 - Grants as only form of aid (compared with no aid)

Assessment Using 2000 Cohort: Summary Observations About Transfer

- Transfer is a complex, multi-directional process
 - Transfer to and from 2-year and senior colleges
 - Prior preparation associated with transfer
 - Academic success and failure associated with transfer
 - Race was not a significant factor, but low-income students were more likely to transfer
- Collaboration between 2-year and senior colleges is necessary to improve academic success, including degree attainment

Indiana Project on Academic Success (IPAS)

- Provided statewide assessment
 - With 2000 cohort (studies distributed in initial meeting)
 - Persistence analyses by all students in combined databases as follow up (with breakdowns by race, income and race)
- Provided workshops on assessment, action inquiry and evaluation (for participating campuses)
- Provided campus persistence studies for participating campuses
 - Campus persistence studies (additional analyses in response to requests)
 - Provided assistance with interpretation of results and follow studies on campuses (focus groups, etc.)

Partner Campus	Campus Type	Critical Challenges
Indiana University Northwest	4-year regional, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undecided students 2. Supplemental instruction 3. Critical Literacy Program (remedial students) 4. Working students
Purdue University Calumet	4-year regional, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working students 2. Supplemental instruction 3. Academic Recovery Program
Ivy Tech Northwest	2-year, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First-year experience 2. Working students 3. Tutoring
Indiana Wesleyan	4-year, private	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Center for Life Calling and Leadership
Indiana University East	4-year regional, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 21st Century Scholars 2. Sophomore persistence
Ivy Tech Richmond	2-year, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remedial education 2. Financial aid 3. Academic support
IUPUI	4-year regional, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transfer program 2. Diversity and curriculum
Indiana University Kokomo	4-year regional, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning communities
Ivy Tech Central	2-year, public	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diverse students 2. Academic advising 3. IR capacity building 4. Transfer program

Role of Preliminary Evaluation in the IPAS Process for the Short Loop Through Inquiry



IPAS Community College Projects: Inquiry Process Completed

- Single campus community college
 - Focus on orientation (students did not apply for aid, etc.)
 - Pilot tested intervention: mandatory orientation for all admitted applicants
 - Evaluation
 - Identified areas needing further improvement (i.e. student aid information) after evaluation of pilot test
 - Found improvement in enrollment and retention resulting from improved orientation
 - There was very little collaboration with the regional campus (at adjacent campus)

IPAS Community College Projects: Evaluation of Implemented Project

- Urban university - community college collaboration
 - Urban university was raising admissions standards and had high drop-out rate for under-prepared students
 - Intervention: pilot-tested admitting some applicants to program in 2-year college (dual program)
 - Evaluation: found improved persistence compared with remediation at urban campus
 - Large difference in IR capacity between urban university and community college
 - IPAS could provide support with transfer analyses

IPAS Community College Projects: Focus on Building Understanding

- Regional campuses (IU, Purdue and community college campuses)
 - Persistence studies found
 - Drop out of first- and second-year students
 - Persistence by older returning students
 - Inquiry focusing on working students in collaboration
 - Joint conference on working students
 - Survey of students at three campuses focusing on work and enrollment
 - Merged survey with state database for analyses
 - Action planning for new projects

Lessons Learned: Standards for Research

- *Lesson 1: The minimum standard for inferential research on access and persistence requires sound theoretical foundations and the use of multivariate statistical models that control for the primary independent variables necessary to assess the effects of interventions (i.e., public finance policies and/or institutional interventions) on attainment outcomes.*
- *Lesson 2: To make causal inferences about interventions (i.e., public finance policies and/or institutional interventions) it is necessary to use experimental designs with random assignment or to test and control for selection effects.*
- *Lesson 3: Qualitative research on enrollment, persistence, and other attainment outcomes can enrich and illuminate understanding of linkages hypothesized by theoretical models, can reveal critical challenges overlooked by theory, and can provide explanations for the effects of public policies and institutional interventions.*

Lessons Learned: Theory Problem

- *Lesson 4: While a substantial amount of persistence research uses generally accepted theory, there has been relatively little prior evaluation research on persistence interventions that meets a minimum standard for inferential research.*
- *Lesson 5: Research on the effects of interventions (i.e., public finance policies and/or institutional interventions) should consider social theory and research on attainment and economic theory and research in the design of models for examining enrollment, persistence, and other attainment-related outcomes.*
- *Lesson 6: Institutional records on high school preparation, student aid, admissions, and student enrollment (i.e., workable models) provide a basis for models that evaluate the effects of interventions on attainment outcomes, provided that information of involvement in interventions is also available.*

Lessons Learned: Collaborations

- *Lesson 7: While substantial gains apparently are being made in retention during the first two years of college (e.g. learning communities), there are also critical challenges related to persistence to degree completion, especially in relation to transfer and patterns of academic success within and across academic fields.*
- *Lesson 8: Workable models for enrollment, major choice, persistence, and transfer can be used to identify critical challenges as part of a systematic assessment process including analyses within and across academic fields.*
- *Lesson 9: Using action inquiry can overcome the pattern of solutions seeking problems (and the paradox in the notion of best practices) in efforts to address critical challenges.*
- *Lesson 10: Collaborations between researchers and practitioners can be used to inform the organizational change process.*
- *Lesson 11: Integrating evaluative research into strategic planning and budgeting processes within institutions continues to be a challenge.*
- *Lesson 12: State data systems can be used to inform improvement processes in higher education when the barriers to collaboration are removed.*

Publications related to IPAS

- St. John, E. P. & Wilkerson, M. (Eds.), *Reframing persistence research to support academic success*. Vol. 130. New Directions for Institutional Research. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- St. John, E. P., & Musoba, G. D. (in preparation). *Pathways to academic success: Using research to inform reform (Analyses of Indiana's millennial cohort)*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- St. John, E. P. (in press). *Action, reflection, and social Justice: Integrating moral reasoning into professional development*. Hampton Press