Connecting Admissions Success and Student Success: Using Data to Improve Graduate Education

Coming from a variety of research backgrounds, this panel will discuss how data can help graduate programs improve their admissions and administrative processes throughout a student’s academic career cycle.

**Moderator:** JoAnn Canales, Former and Founding Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Professor, College of Education and Human Development, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

**Steve Matson,** Dean, The Graduate School at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Hironao Okahana,** Associate Vice President, Research and Policy Analysis, Council of Graduate Schools
Connecting Admissions and Student Success: Using Data to Improve Graduate Education

Steve Matson
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Program Completion is the Goal

- Changing admissions process
  - Nursing programs waive the GRE requirement
  - Biological and Biomedical Sciences program moves to holistic review
- Retention initiatives
  - Training Initiatives in Biomedical & Biological Sciences (TIBBS)
  - Diversity and Student Success (DSS)
Admissions: Two Case Studies

**Nursing programs – DNP, PhD and MSN**
- Requested a waiver of GRE requirement
- Intended goal – increased diversity
- Realized impacts
  - Initial increase in applications
  - No significant increase in diversity in applicant pool

**Biological and Biomedical Sciences**
- Adopt holistic admissions practices
  - Educate faculty; use app material appropriately
- Increased diversity from 15% to over 30%
Recommendations for File Review

- Do not assign undue predictive power to UGPA or GRE scores
- Define criteria for admission in advance
- Train committees on implicit bias
- Consider relevant experience particularly when coupled with enthusiastic support letters
- Consider ways to assess non-cognitive qualifications
  - Motivation
  - Perseverance
  - Adaptability
- Read every application
  - Read the entire application
- This can be done at scale
Support for Retention is Critical

• Must spend as much time and effort in training and supporting students focused on
  ▪ Professional Development
  ▪ Internships
  ▪ Career advising
  ▪ Building community
  ▪ Providing a resource hub
  ▪ Financial incentives
  ▪ Faculty advocates
Thank You
Conversation Starters

Connecting Admissions and Student Success: Using Data to Improve Graduate Education
Symposium: Strategies for Increasing Graduate Program Diversity
Tuesday March 26, 2019

Hironao Okahana, MPP, PhD
Council of Graduate Schools
@HironaoOkahana
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Fit</th>
<th>Research Focused</th>
<th>Professional Focused</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of a suitable research supervisor for the applicant</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of a suitable practicum/internship supervisor for the applicant</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The applicant’s potential to adapt to the program culture</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The applicant’s potential to adhere to the professional norms and ethics</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The applicant’s potential to work with diverse groups of people</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential of the applicant to contribute to the diversity of this program</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for completing the requisite course work</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for completing the capstone requirements (e.g., thesis, exams, etc.)</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for fulfilling the internship/practicum requirement</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for completing the degree in a timely manner.</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for meeting eligibility requirements for licensure examinations</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for making contributions to the scholarship (publications, etc.) in the discipline/field</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for continuing to work or secure employment in the discipline/field</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for pursuing a doctorate in the discipline/field</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for achieving leadership roles in the discipline/field</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for receiving job promotions</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for contributing to the local community</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An Institution Has Determined That An Applicant Has a High Potential of Completing the Requisite Coursework and the Capstone Requirements.
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What Do We Mean by “Student Success”? Is It a Synonym to “Degree Completion”?
An Institution Has Determined That An Applicant Has a High Potential of Completing the Requisite Coursework and the Capstone Requirements.

Student success depends on more than just potential at the time of admission.

\[ Y = g(f(x, \tilde{y}), y) \]

What Do We Mean by “Student Success”? Is It a Synonym to “Degree Completion”?
Faculty are aware of issues facing URMs (Disagree/Strongly Disagree)

This program is doing a good job helping URM students succeed (Disagree/Strongly Disagree)

Worried about your mental or physical health (Agree/Strongly Agree)

Isolated from other students (Agree/Strongly Agree)

Data Sources: Sowell, R., Allum, J., & Okahana, H. (2015). Doctoral Initiative on Minority Attrition & Completion. Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools. Table 4.1 URM Students’ Perception of Program Climate by Candidacy Status and Table 4.2 URM Graduate Student Experience by Candidacy Status.
What Data Do We Need to Improve Graduate Education?

What do we mean by “Improving Graduate Education”? Limits of Multipurpose “Good Enough” Data Unit of Analysis for Data
Fewer doctoral programs focus their efforts for latter stages (e.g., dissertation phase).

And, even fewer doctoral programs offer mentoring/advising resources for faculty members.

“Really doesn’t acknowledge that minority students are minority. I wasn’t discriminated against, but I wasn’t acknowledged either. You aren’t going to offend minority students because you acknowledge their background. Don’t treat them differently, but acknowledge them. I felt like the program was color blind…but a color acceptance model might be a better fit for minority students.”

STEM doctoral degree recipient from a research university in Florida