Academic Success & Gender

Beverly King & Ralf Schuster
Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research
East Carolina University

North Carolina Association for Institutional Research
2019 Conference
Introduction

- Nationally, men are retained and graduate at lower rates than do women.

- For example, among all U.S. 4-year post-secondary institutions reporting to IPEDS, the 6-year graduation rate for men is 52.4% whereas for women, it is 58.1%.

- Within NC, the comparable 6-year graduation rates for all 4-year post-secondary institutions is 57.4% and 64.9%, respectively.
Within the UNC system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECU</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCP</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6-year graduation rate (2011 full-time cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTITUTION</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECU</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCP</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two Studies within UNC System of Gender & Academic Success

2012-2013 UNC-Pembroke
- Funded by a Lumina Foundation grant
- Gender & race/ethnicity-specific focus groups + online survey for participants who could not attend focus groups
- Total of ~115 male participants & 310 female participants

2017-2018 East Carolina
- Collaboration between IPAR & Student Affairs
- Online survey followed by focus groups for those who volunteered to participate
- Response rate of ~10% for online survey; focus groups still ongoing
- 291 women & 196 men
- Over half seniors, 25% Jr, 20% Soph, 5% Fr
UNCP focus group/survey topics

• **Personal Definition of Success**
• **Factors Contributing or Hindering Success at UNCP**
• **Factors Unique to Race or Gender**
• **Factors Related to Retention and Graduation**
• **Awareness of Activities to Promote Student Success**
• **What does UNCP do best in supporting student success?**
• **What could be done differently?**
ECU survey/focus group topics

- Reasons for attending college
- Reasons for remaining at ECU
- Top 5 factors that have led me or others I know to leave or consider leaving
- Sources of financial, social, academic, or emotional support
- Definition of success
- Enrichment and success at ECU
- Proposed changes
Results: UNC-Pembroke

• Definitions of success
  – #1 for both men & women: Setting & achieving goals (about 1/3 of each gender)

• Success-aiding factors
  – Both men & women: Most frequent responses were personal characteristics, university personnel (mainly faculty), family & friends
  – Women, but not men, frequently mentioned campus resources & services (e.g., tutoring, supplemental instruction) as important
Results: UNC-Pembroke

• **Obstacles to Success**

  – **Most frequent response for women:** had not encountered any obstacles to success; this response provided by no men

  – **Men emphasized challenge of class and major availability but women did not**

  – **Women, but not men, emphasized the difficulty of juggling demands of school & family**

  – **Both men & women mentioned:** finances, faculty, personal issues; gender differences in types of personal issues
Results: UNC-Pembroke

- **Factors related to retention & graduation**
  - Both men & women emphasized personal goals, family support, and curriculum/faculty/advising
  - Commitment to education in general and to UNCP in particular more frequently cited by women than by men

- **What UNCP does best in promoting student success**
  - Both men & women: good academic resources (e.g., tutoring) & hiring good people (especially faculty)
  - Men more likely than women to mention small classes & good faculty/student ratio
  - Women more likely than men to comment on non-academic services (e.g., computer labs) & opportunities for campus involvement (e.g., organizations)
Results: UNC-Pembroke

• **What students wish they could change about UNCP**
  
  — **Women more likely than men to say nothing needs changing or to cite a specific service, program, or resource**
  
  — **Greater variability in men’s responses; most frequent (≈10% of men) was greater class availability (more classes offered more often)**
Results: ECU

• **Men** were more homogeneous in their responses than were **women**.

• **Women** and men did not differ in their top-ranked responses; **successful male and female students** seem to be more alike than they are different.

• **Some gender differences in response details**
Results: ECU

• Reasons important in choosing to attend college in general
  
  • Both men & women ranked *to have a better job, to make more money, & to have a good education* as their top three.

— Reasons important in choosing to attend college in general

  • Both women & men ranked *to have a specific career, to get a good education, & to learn about interesting things* as their top three.
Results: ECU

• Reasons remain at ECU
  – Both men & women ranked pursuing educational goals & pursuing personal goals as top reasons.

• Factors leading to leaving or thinking of leaving
  – Both women & men ranked balancing work & school responsibilities, transferring to another school, & financial considerations as their top three.
Some example differences in percentages of men and women choosing response options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balancing work &amp; school responsibilities</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer to another school</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing family &amp; school responsibilities</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with academic difficulties</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of personal skills related to academic work</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with personal illness</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Results: ECU

## Whom do you turn to for support?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female friend</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male friend</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female faculty</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male faculty</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female guardian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male guardian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other female family</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other male family</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Qualitative Results: ECU

• How do you define success for yourself as a student?
  – Future Preparedness
  – Academic Success
  – Persistence & Goal Completion
  – Interpersonal Skills
  – Intrapersonal Skills
Preliminary Qualitative Results: ECU

• What are the most important factors at ECU that have enriched your educational experience and made you a successful student?
  – Faculty & Staff
  – Academic Support
  – Personal Support
  – Program & Curriculum
  – Campus Environment & Community
Preliminary Qualitative Results: ECU

• If you could change anything about ECU that would enrich your educational experience here and help make you a more successful student, what would it be?
  – Improve Pedagogy & Course Curriculum
  – Marketing & Communication
  – Campus Facilities
  – Personal Development
  – Campus Environment
UNCP & ECU

Gender & Success Comparisons
Academic Success & Gender

Beverly King & Ralf Schuster
Institutional Planning, Assessment, and Research
East Carolina University

Contact: Dr. Beverly R. King, kingb14@ecu.edu