

Understanding College Completion Factors in the Early Childhood Workforce

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College BA Degree Completion Needs

- Studies indicate that a bachelor's degree with specialized early childhood content increases teacher performance, and subsequently, children's outcomes (Saracho & Spodek, 2007).
- However, only 52.5% of teachers for children 0-5 have an associate's degree or higher (Manning, et. al., 2019)

College Completion Barriers

- Various policy, opportunity, and economic factors are influencing these teachers to enter college to complete BA degrees (Mollenkopf, & Gaskill, 2021).
- They encounter multiple programmatic, financial, and systemic barriers to degree completion while balancing demands of home and work.
- Barriers are especially high for teachers from rural communities (Ontiveros, 2020), racially/ethnically diverse backgrounds, and those with limited financial and personal resources (Van Rhijn, Lero, & Burke, 2016).

Need for Research

- Leading experts recommend universities develop multiple pathways that remove barriers to degree completion (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).
- However, little is known about which early childhood teachers thrive in four year-college programs and what conditions impact their ability to access, persist, progress, and complete these programs.



Research Questions

- What factors contribute to early childhood teachers'
 - retention,
 - persistence,
 - progression and
 - degree completion
- What factors serve as barriers in each of these areas?
- Which early childhood teachers thrive in four year-college programs and what conditions impact their ability to access, persist, progress, and complete these programs?





Methodology

- Our research team is using archival data of all BA level Early Childhood Inclusive (ECI) Endorsement students at UNK, UNL, and UNO from 2011 to 2021 to identify potential contributing factors and barriers to degree completion.
- UNK's data are ready for analysis, and the logistics of the other campuses is still being arranged.
- We will use a Multilevel Logistic Model with students nested in campuses for dichotomous outcomes (e.g., graduation) and Multilevel Linear models for continuous outcomes (e.g., time to degree, GPA)

Data Processing and Analysis

- Started with UNK—largest data set and most complex
- Met with UNK's Registrar's Office after IRB and clearances
- Received data set in Excel, converted to SPSS, cleaned data sets and clarified data entries and field names with the Registrar's Office.
- Goal: use more concise definitions in request to the other campuses
- Data presented today are preliminary descriptive data only



Students Included in the Analysis

- Any student who declared the Early Childhood Inclusive (ECI) Endorsement as first or second major any time in their Bachelor Degree program was included in the analysis
- Definitions:
 - First Time Freshman: (entered college soon after high school and are less than 24 years of age)
 - Transfer Student: (transferred in at least one course from a college other than UNK-- not counting dual enrollments from high school)
 - Nontraditional Student: Age 24+ at entry
- Of 1007 students:
 - 484 (48.1%) were First Time Freshman
 - 453 (45.0%) were Transfer Students
 - 218 (48.1%) of the Transfer Students were non-traditional

Student Enrollment By State

- Students mostly from Nebraska (Midwest)
- First Time Freshman includes neighboring states with in-state tuition
- Transfer Students represent more states (14) than First Time Freshman (6) --online program allows remote access

Permanent State	Location by State			
	First Time Freshman		Transfer	
	Count	%	Count	%
	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
CA	0	0.0%	2	0.4%
CO	6	1.2%	4	0.9%
FL	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
GA	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
HI	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
IA	0	0.0%	8	1.8%
IL	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
KS	7	1.4%	4	0.9%
MI	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
MN	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
NE	468	96.7%	422	93.2%
NM	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
SD	0	0.0%	3	0.7%
TN	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
TX	0	0.0%	3	0.7%
VA	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
Total	484	100.0%	453	100.0%

Transfer Credit Hours

- On average, students transfer in about 66 credit hours (This is the community college transfer cap and equivalent to a 2-year degree).
- On average, students transferring within the NU system transfer 30 hours-- about a year's worth of courses.

	Transfer Student Credits		
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Total Transfer Hours	65.1634	3.0000	219.0000
Total NU System Transfer Hours	30.3167	3.0000	153.0000

Graduation Rates of Not Enrolled Students

- 68.26% of all students no longer at UNK graduated.
- 78.27% (most) of the First time Freshman graduated.
- Only 55.84% (a little over half) of Transfer Students graduated.

	Not Enrolled Students				
	Did Not Graduate		Graduated		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	Row %
First Time Freshman (n = 382)	83	21.72%	299	78.27%	100.00%
Transfer Students (n = 308)	136	44.16%	172	55.84%	100.00%
Total Students (n = 690)	219	31.74%	471	68.26%	100.00%

Student Enrollment Gaps

- Many (61.2%) First Time Freshman take a semester off (e.g., summer).
- Transfer Students are more likely to stay continuously enrolled (38.9%) but will also take a semester off (32.7%).
- Transfer Students are somewhat more likely (5.5%) to take 2+ years off than First Time Freshman (2.1%).

	Largest Gap Between Semesters			
	First Time Freshman		Transfer	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
First semester dropped out	38	7.9%	56	12.4%
Continuously enrolled	118	24.4%	176	38.9%
One semester off	296	61.2%	148	32.7%
Two semesters off	11	2.3%	23	5.1%
Three semesters off	3	0.6%	9	2.0%
Four semesters off	6	1.2%	10	2.2%
Five semesters off	2	0.4%	6	1.3%
Six or more semesters off	10	2.1%	25	5.5%
Total	484	100.0%	453	100.0%
Note: semesters include summers				

Student Enrollment Gaps for Students Not Enrolled vs. Currently Enrolled

- First Time Freshman no longer enrolled are:
 - Slightly less likely to be continuously enrolled (23.6% vs. 27.5%) and
 - More likely to take a semester off (62.8% vs. 54.9%) than those currently enrolled.
- Transfer students no longer enrolled are:
 - Less likely to be continuously enrolled (33.8% vs. 49.7%) and
 - More likely to take a semester off (35.7% vs. 26.2%) than those currently enrolled.

	Largest Gap Between Semesters for Enrolled and Not Enrolled Students							
	1 First Time Freshman				2 Transfer			
	0 Not Enrolled		1 Still Enrolled		0 Not Enrolled		1 Still Enrolled	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
first semester dropped out	30	7.9%	8	7.8%	43	14.0%	13	9.0%
continuously enrolled	90	23.6%	28	27.5%	104	33.8%	72	49.7%
one semester off	240	62.8%	56	54.9%	110	35.7%	38	26.2%
two semesters off	8	2.1%	3	2.9%	15	4.9%	8	5.5%
three semesters off	2	0.5%	1	1.0%	5	1.6%	4	2.8%
four semesters off	5	1.3%	1	1.0%	6	1.9%	4	2.8%
five semesters off	1	0.3%	1	1.0%	5	1.6%	1	0.7%
six or more semesters off	6	1.6%	4	3.9%	20	6.5%	5	3.4%
Total	382	100.0%	102	100.0%	308	100.0%	145	100.0%

Credit Hours Per Semester

- First Time Freshman are more likely to attend full time (12 hours)
- Transfer Students are more likely to attend part time and average one 3-credit hour course less than First Time Freshman.
- Students who graduated took more courses per semester than their counterparts who have not graduated.
- Students who never graduated and are no longer enrolled take the fewest hours per semester.

Average Credit Hours Per Semester (Includes Summers)					
First Time Freshman			Transfer		
Not Graduated		Graduated	Not Graduated		Graduated
Not Enrolled	Still Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Still Enrolled	Not Enrolled
Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
11.63	12.57	13.07	8.11	9.08	10.56

Grade Point Average

- To graduate from UNK, students must have a GPA of 2.0 or higher (4-point scale.)
- The average GPA for First Time Freshman and Transfer Students is similar.
- The lowest GPA for First Time Freshman is slightly higher than the lowest GPA for Transfer Students, but this could reflect the requirements of the major selected.
- There were students in both groups who graduates with GPA's of 4.0.

	GPA of Graduates					
	1 First Time Freshman			2 Transfer		
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Degree GPA	3.565	2.353	4.000	3.528	2.127	4.000

In Summary:

- Both First Time Freshman and Transfer Students enter the ECI Endorsement program in similar proportions. This speaks to the program's accessibility.
- Nearly half of Transfer Students are non-traditional students.
- Compared to First Time Freshman, Transfer students:
 - take fewer credit hours per semester and
 - attend continuously,
 - are more likely to stop out or drop out, and
 - take longer to graduate.
- But they will have similar GPA's upon graduation.



Questions?



Facilitated Discussion

- What information resulted from this investigation? What are the key take-away points?
- How can information from this study inform or advance early childhood practice?
- How can information from this study inform or advance early childhood public policy?
- What additional research is needed to inform or advance early childhood practice and/or policy?
- How can lessons from practice or policy inform this line of research?

Thank You!!

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