Iowa Undergraduates: Who Are They and Why Does it Matter?

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Agenda

✓ Context for Conversation: Why Student Success? What Matters in College?

✓ Research about What Matters for Student Success:
  • Institutional Conditions for Student Success
  • Iowa Student Experiences (RISE)

✓ Discussion: Implications for Teaching and Learning at The University of Iowa
Current Context for Attention to Student Success

- External Pressures
- Internal Pressures
- It’s what we do . . .
“Colleges and universities, for all the benefits they bring, accomplish far less for their students than they should.”

“Has the quality of teaching improved? More important, are students learning more than they did in 1950?....The honest answer to these questions is that we do not know.”

“The moment has surely come for America’s colleges to take a more candid look at their weaknesses and think more boldly about setting higher educational standards for themselves.”

The Iowa Promise, a Strategic Plan for the University of Iowa

Goal #1: To create a University experience that enriches the lives of undergraduates and helps them to become well-informed individuals, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and productive employees and employers.
Defining Student Success in College

Academic achievement; engagement in educationally purposeful activities; satisfaction; acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies; persistence; attainment of educational objectives; and post-college performance
Defining Student Success at Iowa (UI SST, 9/2007)

- University of Iowa students succeed when they achieve personal and institutional educational goals. Successful students develop skills and knowledge, become more mature in their thinking, assume greater responsibility for their own lives and learning, develop understanding of diversity and multiculturalism, and become effective leaders.

- Student success at . . . Iowa is a shared enterprise. Students succeed by active engagement in educationally-purposeful activities. Faculty, staff, and students create . . . learning opportunities [and] policies, programs, and practices that foster student engagement.
What Matters to Student Success

Pre-college Characteristics Associated with Student Success:

- Academic preparation
- Ability
- Family support
- Financial wherewithal
The greatest impact appears to stem from students’ total level of campus engagement, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular involvements are mutually reinforcing . . .

Pascarella & Terenzini, How College Affects Students, 2005, p. 647
Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement.
Lessons from Research on College Impact

1. What **students** do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities

2. What **institutions** do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
Lessons From the Research on College Impact

✓ What matters most is what students do, not who they are.

✓ Rather, a key factor is the quality of effort students expend.

✓ Educationally effective institutions channel student effort and energy toward the right experiences.
To discover, document, and describe what high performing institutions do to achieve their notable level of effectiveness.
DEEP Schools*

*Higher-than predicted NSSE scores and graduation rates

Doctoral Extensives
- University of Kansas
- University of Michigan

Doctoral Intensives
- George Mason University
- Miami University (Ohio)
- University of Texas El Paso

Master’s Granting
- Fayetteville State University
- Gonzaga University
- Longwood University

Liberal Arts
- California State, Monterey Bay
- Macalester College
- Sweet Briar College
- The Evergreen State College
- Sewanee: University of the South
- Ursinus College
- Wabash College
- Wheaton College (MA)
- Wofford College

Baccalaureate General
- Alverno College
- University of Maine at Farmington
- Winston-Salem State University
Project DEEP

What does an educationally effective college look like at the turn of the 21st century?
Points to Ponder

- Which of these practices do we/you offer? What proportion of our/your undergraduate students engages in and benefits from them? Is that enough?
- What are the outcomes of these practices for our/your students? How do you know?
- Which of these practices are transferable and adaptable to The University of Iowa? Which are not, and why?
Six Shared Conditions

1. “Living” Mission and “Lived” Educational Philosophy
2. Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success
3. Improvement-Oriented Ethos
4. Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality
5. Environments Adapted for Educational Enrichment
6. Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning
“Living” mission and “lived” educational philosophy

- A clear mission, widely understood and endorsed.
- A web of complementary policies and practices tailored to the school’s mission and students’ needs and abilities.
- Institutional values really do guide important policy and operation decisions, from admissions to orientation to graduation requirements.
Recall the 3 short stories:
- Fayetteville State University
- University of Michigan
- Cal State Monterey Bay

One theme: We know our educational mission, we know our students, and we have brought our resources to bear in a coherent fashion to foster success for those students.
“Sea change” at KU to emphasize undergraduate instruction: “We’re all in this together”

- Awards and rewards for good teaching
- Faculty in each academic unit serve as “Faculty Ambassadors” to the Center for Teaching Excellence; CTE ‘fall teaching summit.’
- Course enrollments kept low in many undergraduate courses; 80% have 30 or fewer students; 93% 50 or fewer students. Plus ‘super size classes.’
Lessons from Project DEEP

Clearly marked pathways to student success

- Acculturation
- Alignment
Mutually reinforcing student expectations and behavior, institutional expectations, and institutional reward systems.

Clear messages to students about the resources and services available to help them succeed – and clear expectations for their use: “First-year students don’t do optional”
Miami’s First Year Experience (FYE) Committee designed a way to bring more coherence to the first-year by linking: (1) Miami Plan Foundation courses; (2) optional first-year seminars; (3) community living options that emphasize leadership and service; and (4) cultural, intellectual, and arts events.
Among the explicit goals for MU students are: “Invest considerable time in your own and your peers’ academic learning. [Ask yourself] ‘Why did I come to college? Am I devoting enough time to my studies?’ Identify your educational goals and make purposeful choices about your major, courses and extracurricular experiences to advance those goals.”
Clear Pathways

- Among the explicit goals for MU faculty are: “Set high expectations for learning in your courses. Partner with others on campus to deepen students’ learning.”

- Goals for student affairs staff include “Assist students in focusing on their educational objectives and devoting time to their studies.”
All DEEP institutions have some form of “early intervention system” consistent with student and institutional characteristics, and composed of multiple safety nets as appropriate.

- Ursinus and Wheaton: “We ‘tag team’ students.”
- Michigan: Comprehensive Studies Program – “You can’t make a small university large, but you can make a large university small.”
- WSSU: University College
Lessons from Project DEEP

Improvement-oriented ethos

- “Positive restlessness”
- Investments in student success
- Decision-making informed by data
- “We know who we are and what we aspire to.”
Kansas University: “Data drive most of the things we do.”

Gen Ed Assessment Interviews, conducted by faculty to assess impact of Gen Ed courses, provide annual opportunity for faculty to “sit across” from 120 graduating seniors and learn how to improve the experiences of students in their major fields. Results of this assessment, including major-specific results, are available to academic units.
Lessons from Project DEEP

Shared responsibility for educational quality

- Supportive educators are everywhere
- Student and academic affairs collaboration
- Student ownership
- A caring, supportive community
Characteristic of almost all the DEEP institutions:
Advising networks – comprehensive systems which combine the resources of professional advisors, faculty, students, and others.

Keys to design and implementation: Who are our students? What do they need? What are we trying to accomplish?
Shared Responsibility

- **Wheaton**: Each First-Year Seminar includes a faculty member, a student affairs staff member, a librarian & 2 student preceptors.
- **George Mason**: Comprehensive program of advising integrating advising center staff, faculty, career center, orientation, librarians, and others.
- **Ursinus**: Academic advising is a joint effort between academic and student affairs.
What is 1 thing you’re taking away or learning so far? Why?
Research on Iowa Student Experiences

Center for Research on Undergraduate Education, 2005-2006
Context:
- The Iowa Promise, Goal #1
- Office of the Provost priorities and commitments

Framework (content and methods):
- Research on college impact
- Research on institutional conditions for student success
RISE Research Questions

• What are the dimensions of undergraduate experiences and outcomes at UI? What matters for UI undergraduates?
• What outcomes do UI undergraduates achieve and how?
• How do UI undergraduates describe their experiences and the impact of college?
• In what ways, if any, do the experiences and outcomes of UI undergraduates differ from those desired by the university and/or described in its mission?
RISE Research Methods

- Quantitative Methods:

- Qualitative Methods:
RISE Results

- Qualitative Methods
  - Why did you come? Why did you stay? How do you spend your time? How would you describe your experiences?
Senior Interviews:

- “I stayed [at UI] because I got involved.”
  - But, in most cases, “I wasn’t involved my freshman year.”

- “I stayed [at UI] because I had a great experience my freshman year.”

- Key elements: “My floor,” “my friends on my floor,” “my dorm,” “someone encouraged me to get involved.”
First-Year Interviews:

- Job 1: adjusting to college, learning to be a college student: “Time management is the big one.”
  - Key elements: “My floor,” “my roommate,” “my friends on my floor,” “my dorm,” and the floor environment.
- “I have more free time than I expected,” “I have a lot of free time.”
- Generally, “a typical day,” doesn’t include formal out-of-class experiences or other types of “formal” involvement.
Themes across both frosh and seniors:

- Reasons for attending UI: Location, location, location
- General satisfaction with UI and interactions with faculty, staff, and other students
- Lack of academic challenge
- Alcohol use: “A culture of drinking,” including excessive consumption and underage drinking.
- “You’re on your own”
RISE Results

- Results of Quantitative Portion of the Study
- Analyses conducted w/controls for ACT, UI gpa, work, race, sex, residence, financial aid, parents’ education, etc.
- Items based on what we know ‘matters’ for student success.
RISE Results: Outcomes

- Results of analyses for first-year students and seniors
  - “Worked on a research project with a faculty member”: positive association with cumulative GPA, growth in general/liberal arts education, growth in career/professional preparation, personal/interpersonal growth, overall composite growth.
RISE Results: Outcomes

- Results of analyses for first-year students and seniors
  - “Member of an honors program”: positive association with cumulative gpa, growth in general/liberal arts education.
  - “Tutored or taught other students”: positive association with cumulative gpa, personal/interpersonal growth
RISE Results: Outcomes

- Results of analyses for first-year students and seniors
  - “Participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop”: positive association with growth in general/liberal arts education, personal/interpersonal growth, overall composite growth.
RISE Results: Outcomes

- Survey Results for First-Year Students
  - “Participated in a living-learning community”: Significant positive relationship to cumulative grade point average.
Survey Results for First-Year Students:
- Assigned books and readings read this academic year (as of the end of March/1st of April): 0-4 19.5%; 5-10 43.5%; 0-10 63%
- Essay exams this academic year: 0-4 65.1%; 5-10 23.4%; 0-10 85.5%
- Term papers and written reports this academic year: 0-4 28.3%; 5-10 47.4%; 0-10 76%
RISE Results: Engagement

- Survey Results for First-Year Students:
  - 17.5% participated in a living-learning community
  - 14.6% taught or tutored other students
  - 8.8% worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of class
  - 6.3% participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop
Results of analyses for first-year students:

- 87.8% of first-year students were involved in ‘extracurricular activities’ 0-5 hours per week in the current semester (Spring ‘06).

- 81% of first-year students worked 0 hours per week for pay on campus; 82.3% worked 0 hours for pay off campus.
Results of analyses for first-year students:

- 62.2% of first-year students were involved in community service activities 0 hours per week in the current semester.
- 34% of first-year students spent 0-10 hours per week preparing for class during the current semester (Spring ‘06); 0-15: 57%
Results of analyses for seniors:

- Assigned books and readings read this academic year: 0-4 34%; 5-10 39.4%; 0-10 73%.
- Essay exams this academic year: 0-4 68%; 5-10 21.4%; 0-10 83%.
- Term papers and written reports this academic year: 0-4 50%; 5-10 30.3%; 0-10 80%.
Results of analyses for seniors:

- 36.9% held a leadership position; 10% participated in leadership training
- 24.2% worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of class
- 22% taught or tutored other students
- 17.4% belonged to a fraternity or sorority
- 11.9% participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop
Results of analyses for seniors:

- 88% were involved in ‘extracurricular activities’ 0-5 hours per week in the current semester.
- 62% worked 0 hours per week for pay on campus; 59% worked 0 hours for pay off campus.
Results of analyses for seniors:

- 53% were involved in community service activities 0 hours per week in the current semester.
- 42% spent 0-10 hours per week preparing for class during the current semester; 0-15: 64%; 0-20: 84%.
RISE Results: $1^{st}$- to $2^{nd}$-Year Retention

- Variables predicting return of $1^{st}$-year students for a $2^{nd}$ year at UI (w/controls for ACT, UI gpa, work, race, sex, residence, financial aid, parents’ education, other experiences):
  - Participation in $1^{st}$-year living-learning program
    (note: 17.5% of sample)
  - Perceptions of overall quality of teaching received (i.e., clarity and organization)
Results regarding binge drinking

- Binge drinking is defined here as consuming 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a single sitting; this is the widely-accepted definition used in research on binge drinking in college.
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- First-year students reported substantial increase (21.6 percentile points) in binge drinking behavior between high school and first year at Iowa.
- No statistically significant difference in binge drinking behavior between first-year students and seniors.
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Binge Drinking
  - 25.4% of first-year students said they had 5 or more drinks in one sitting 3 to 5 times in a ‘typical’ 2-week period in college.
  - 10.5% of first-year students said they had 5 or more drinks in one sitting 6 or more times (that is, at least 30 drinks) in a ‘typical’ 2-week period in college.
  - So: 36% of first-year students reported binge drinking 3 to 6 or more times in a typical 2-week period in college.
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Binge Drinking
  - 29.2% of seniors said they had 5 or more drinks in one sitting 3 to 5 times in a ‘typical’ 2-week period in college.
  - 13.5% of seniors said they had 5 or more drinks in one sitting 6 or more times (that is, at least 30 drinks) in a ‘typical’ 2-week period in college.
  - So: 43% of seniors reported binge drinking 3 to 6 or more times in a ‘typical’ 2-week period in college.
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Experiences enhancing (+) binge drinking for 1\textsuperscript{st}-year students (w/controls):
  - Belonged to fraternity/sorority (+)
  - Participated in intramural sports (+)
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Experiences enhancing (+) binge drinking for seniors (w/controls):
  - Belonged to fraternity/sorority (+)
  - Participated in intramural sports (+)
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Experiences inhibiting (-) binge drinking for 1st-year students (w/controls):
  - Living/Learning community (-)
  - Honors program (-)
  - Racial/Cultural awareness workshop (-)
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Experiences inhibiting (-) binge drinking for seniors (w/controls):
  - Peer Educator (-)
  - Honors program (-)
  - Racial/Cultural awareness workshop (-)
  - Tutored/Taught other students (-)
In the presence of all statistical controls, binge drinking had no significant relationship to any of the outcome measures except cumulative grade point average.
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Binge Drinking
  - Binge drinking had a significant negative association with grade point average for first-year students (and for seniors, but more negative for frosh); more binging, more negative relationship (with controls for high school GPA, ACT scores, etc.).
  - These effects were particularly negative for women.
RISE Results: Binge Drinking

- Significant Net Negative Effects of Binge Drinking Frequency on Cumulative Grades for 1st-year students:

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<tr>
<td>2 v. 0</td>
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<td>3-5 v. 0</td>
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<td>- .149</td>
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<td>6&gt; v. 0</td>
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<td>- .318</td>
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**RISE Results: Binge Drinking**

- Significant Net Negative Effects of Binge Drinking Frequency on Cumulative Grades for Seniors:

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RISE Results: General Conclusions

- First-year – Senior Differences
- Engagement in Educationally-Purposeful Activities
- Use of Time
- “A culture of alcohol”
Reflective Moment

- What is 1 thing you’re taking away from this information? Why?
Implications for the University of Iowa
Student Success at Iowa

- 2005: The Iowa Promise
- 2005: Special-Emphasis Self-Study for Re-Accreditation – Undergraduate Education
- 2005: RISE
- 2006: Student Success Team (Tom Rocklin, Senior Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education)
- 2007:
  - SST Retreat
  - SST Action Plan for 2007-2009 (TBA 9/14/07)
Key Components:

- “Positive Restlessness”
  - Build on what’s going well, address what’s not; Do more of what works, do less of what we can’t demonstrate does.
  - Research and assessment
Student Success at Iowa

- Key Components:
  - Focus On
    - “Lived” – clear, shared -- mission
    - Clear pathways for success
    - Expand and enhance engagement (in educationally-purposeful activities)
    - Shared responsibility and collaboration across our silos: “We’re all responsible for Iowa students’ success.”
Student Success at Iowa

- Student Success Initiatives in Process:
  - Defining Student Success at Iowa
  - “The Message Project”
  - Learning Communities Task Force
  - Inventory of Engagement Opportunities
  - Friday Classes
  - Research Coordination Council
    - Spring 2008: NSSE, ACT CAAP
  - Related efforts: Healthy Living Network, Outcomes Assessment in undergraduate majors
Proposed Student Success Projects (2007-2009)

- “Pick One”
- Task Force on First-Year Experiences
- Comprehensive Early Warning System
- Barriers to Student Success
- Peer Educators
- Healthy Traditions
- “One Community, One Book”
One Last Story
Questions & Discussion
More Points to Ponder (and Discuss)

- What do you find most interesting or surprising about the RISE results?
- What do the results imply/suggest about undergraduate teaching and learning at Iowa?
- What opportunities and challenges do we face in improving undergraduate teaching and learning at Iowa?
- What practices/programs/policies might enhance opportunities/address challenges?
- What can you do in your role?