Transfer Student Outcomes: Regional Campus Students Compared to Those from Other Public Institutions

Pamela M. Peters and Laura M. Yahn

Executive Summary

This report uses logistic regression to compare the likelihood of graduation for students who transfer to the University of Connecticut - Storrs Campus from regional campuses as compared to those from 2-year or 4-year public institutions. Analysis showed that transfer students from regional campuses have higher likelihood of graduation overall than the comparison groups. Having a STEM major and living on the Storrs campus were also significant predictors of graduation, with a stronger relationship between being a STEM major and higher likelihood of graduation among students from public institutions outside of the UConn system.

Background

Research has shown that students who change institutions during their undergraduate years feel less connected to their college communities. Students are more likely to leave college when they are not integrated into the school's intellectual or social communities (Tinto 1993, p. 112, 116). This study was designed to examine outcomes for comparable groups of students who transfer to the University of Connecticut - Storrs Campus from UConn's four regional campuses and from other 2- and 4-year public institutions.

Questions Addressed by the Study

1) Do students who transfer to the Storrs campus from regional campuses, 2-year public, and 4-year public institutions have different outcomes in terms of graduation vs. dropping out after controlling for demographic characteristics and campus experiences?

2) What demographic characteristics or experiences at UConn Storrs predict graduation/drop-out rates for these students?

3) Do these demographic characteristics or campus experiences predict graduation/drop-out rates in the same way for students from all three types of institutions?

Methods

Logistic regression is similar to linear regression in that it is often used to assess the usefulness of a set of conditions or variables in terms of each variable's ability to predict some sort of outcome. In the case of logistic regression, that outcome is binary (e.g., a student does or does not graduate). The other variables are used to examine the likelihood of an event happening; in this case, how likely a student is to complete their degree.

The results of logistic regression analyses are expressed in terms of odds ratios. There will be an estimate of the likelihood of graduation for a specific type of student, called the constant. This represents the likelihood of that group of students will graduate as opposed to dropping out. All other odds ratios will be for students who fall into specific other categories. These estimates are then multiplied by the constant to get the likelihood that a student in that group will graduate as opposed to dropping out.

It is also possible to look for significant interactions between variables, which occur when the relationship between two variables changes due to the presence of another variable, e.g., race by itself does not predict Outcome X but does when combined with gender.

Data

The data for this study included all students who had transferred to the Storrs campus from a UConn regional campus, a 2-year public institution, or a 4-year public institution between Fall 2006 and Fall 2020, inclusive, and who had either graduated or dropped out of the university during that timeframe. Transfers from 2- and 4-year institutions were primarily, but not exclusively, from community colleges and the state college system in Connecticut.

The data file included up to 20 terms, typically 10 years, of data on each student. Graduated students were defined as those who had a record of graduation in their file during the time of the study. Dropout status was defined as having been on the Storrs campus for at least one semester and then not enrolled for any of the remaining terms in the data file.

Variables used included race/ethnicity, gender, Pell recipient status, on campus residency, Honors Program participation, STEM major declared at any time while at Storrs, STEM major at separation (graduation/dropout), and prior institution.

Results

Logistic regression showed that the type of institution from which students transferred was a significant predictor of the likelihood of their graduation. Other significant predictors included gender, race/ethnicity, ending as a STEM major, and living on campus. There were also significant interactions between some of these variables.

The tables below show the likelihood of graduating vs. dropping out for different groups of students. Table 1 illustrates the differences between students from different types of institutions. It includes living on campus and STEM status, as those variables had different predictive values for students from different institution types.

Table 1.
Likelihood of Graduation by Prior Institution

	Regional	2-year	4-year
Did not live on campus/non-STEM major	3.83	1.65	1.76
Lived on campus/non-STEM major	5.36	2.31	4.31
Did not live on campus/STEM major	3.83	5.96	4.59
Lived on campus /STEM major	5.36	8.32	11.27

This table shows that among students who did not live on campus and were not STEM majors, those who transferred from regional campuses were 3.83 times more likely to graduate than to drop out. Those from 2-year institutions were 1.65 times more likely to graduate, and those from 4-year institutions were 1.76 times more likely to graduate. STEM majors were more likely to graduate than non-STEM majors from all transfer groups, but this effect was much bigger for students who transferred from 2-year institutions. This shows that prior institution type is related to students' likelihood of graduation.

There were significant predictors of students' likelihood of graduation in addition to type of institution. Table 2 shows comparisons between male and female students who did or did not live on campus and were or were not STEM majors. For each of these groups, you can see the likelihood of graduating as opposed to dropping out for students from four different racial/ethnic groups. This table can be read in the same way as Table 1. A female who did not live on campus and was not a STEM major was 3.93 times more likely to graduate than dropout if she was Black, 4.39 times more likely to graduate if she was Latinx, and 5.78 times more likely to graduate if she was Asian or White/other.

Table 2.

Likelihood of Graduation by Student Characteristics/Experiences

	Black	Latinx	Asian	White or
Male/Did not live on campus/non-STEM major	2.60	2.91	3.83	3.83
Female/Did not live on campus/non-STEM major	3.93	4.39	5.78	5.78
Male/lived on campus/non-STEM major	3.64	4.07	5.36	5.36
Female/lived on campus/non-STEM major	5.50	6.15	8.09	8.09
Male/did not live on campus/STEM major	2.11	2.94	7.43	3.86
Female/did not live on campus/STEM major	3.19	4.44	11.22	5.83
Male/lived on campus/STEM major	2.95	4.12	10.40	5.40
Female/lived on campus/STEM major	4.45	6.22	15.71	8.15

This table again shows that students who lived on campus or who were STEM majors had higher likelihoods of graduation than other transfer students. This table also shows that these effects are mitigated by race. Across all groups, Black and Latinx students had lower likelihoods of graduation than other students.

It should be noted that these racial differences in likelihood of graduation were not affected by prior institution.

Conclusion

These results indicated that students who transferred from the University of Connecticut regional campus system had a higher likelihood of graduation than students who transferred from other 2- or 4-year public institutions. The exception to this is STEM majors, among whom students from 2- and 4-year institutions had higher likelihoods of graduation than those from regional campuses. All STEM majors, however, had higher likelihoods of graduation than their non-STEM peers.

Reference

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.