The Effects of Enrollment Date on Academic Achievement

BACKGROUND

Is it academically profitable for universities to extend enrollment and registration dates? For many in university administration the answer is simple. The more time students have to enroll, the more students will enroll. While this may be the case, the question still remains, does this option provide students the best opportunity to succeed?

According to several researchers the answer is ‘No’. Bray and Hale (2011) found several factors that have a positive influence on grades and persistence, timing of enrollment was one of them. Other research has also shown that registering late specifically has a direct negative effect on persistence and grade performance (Street & Olivariez, 2002; Goodman, 2010).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this investigation is to determine if Chicago State University students registering early had higher Term GPA’s, a higher percent of students returning the following fall, and higher percent of students graduating than their normal and late registration counterparts.

METHODS

For the purposes of this investigation, aggregated academic and enrollment data from students enrolled during the fall and spring terms from 2006 to 2011 were analyzed. All undergraduates fall and part time students both new admits (first time freshmen and transfer students) and continuing students enrolled during the spring or fall terms of the aforementioned academic years were included in this study. Enrollment dates of the investigated students were categorized into three groups. Students enrolling for the fall term before August 1st and students enrolling for the spring term before December 15th were considered early registration students. Additionally, students enrolling for the fall terms between the dates of August 1st through August 20th and those enrolling for the spring terms after January 15th were categorized as late registration students.

A percent analysis was conducted between the groups to determine if noticeable differences were found between the areas of academic success [Term GPA’s, Percent of students returning the following fall and Percent of students graduating.] as defined by the three enrollment categories: early registration, normal registration and late registration.

TITILE: The Effects of Enrollment Date on Academic Achievement

Academic Success: Term GPA

This portion of the investigation looked to determine if students grouped in the early registration category had higher Term GPAs than students grouped in the normal and late registration categories.

New Admits

The data revealed that for first time freshmen and entering transfer students who were grouped in the early registration category earned higher term GPA’s than those students who were grouped in the normal and late registration categories. Students grouped in the late registration category earned the lowest Term GPAs.

Undergraduate Full Time Students

The data revealed that for undergraduate full time students enrolling for both spring and fall terms, who were grouped in the early registration category, earned a higher percentage of students returning the following fall than those students who were grouped in the normal and late registration categories. Students grouped in the late registration category earned the lowest percentage of students returning the following fall.

Undergraduate Part Time Students

The data revealed that for undergraduate part time students enrolling for both fall and spring terms of the 06-07 Academic Year as well as the Fall 07 term, students grouped in the early registration category had the highest Term GPAs with students grouped in the late registration category having the second highest Term GPA. All other terms revealed students grouped in the early registration category had the highest Term GPAs followed by students grouped in the normal registration category, with students grouped in the late registration category having the lowest Term GPAs.

Academic Success: Percent Return

This portion of the investigation looked to determine if students grouped in the early registration category had a higher percent of students returning the following fall than students grouped in the normal and late registration categories.

New Admits

The data revealed that first time freshmen and entering transfer students who were grouped in the early registration category had a higher percentage of students returning the following fall than those students who were grouped in the normal and late registration categories. Students grouped in the late registration category earned the lowest percentage of students returning.

Undergraduate Full Time Students

The data showed that undergraduate full time students enrolling for both spring and fall terms, who were grouped in the early registration category, had a higher percentage of students returning the following fall than those students who were grouped in the normal and late registration categories. Students grouped in the late registration category earned the lowest percentage of students returning the following fall.

Undergraduate Part Time Students

The data revealed that for undergraduate part time students enrolling for both fall and spring terms students grouped in the early registration category had the highest percentage of students returning the following fall term, with students grouped in the normal registration category having the second highest percentage. In all terms investigated, students grouped in the late registration category had the lowest percentage of students returning to the university the following term.

Academic Success: 6yr Graduation Rate

This portion of the investigation looked to determine if a noticeable difference occurred between the graduation rates of First-time Full-Time Freshmen cohorts by their registration category. Consistent with the previous findings of this investigation, students grouped in the early registration category recorded higher 6yr graduation rates than their normal and late registration category counterparts. Students grouped in the normal registration category had the second highest 6yr graduation rate and students in the late registration category had the lowest 6yr graduation rates of all the students investigated in this study.

The data revealed that students grouped into the early registration category out performed students in the normal and late registration categories. Further the investigation showed that students in the late registration categories performed lower than their normal and early registration counterparts in all but the Fall and Spring terms during the academic year of 2006-07 and the Fall 2007 terms for undergraduate part time students. During these terms undergraduate part time students recorded higher Term GPAs than their normal registration counterparts.

This research investigation and all others that fall in line with the findings of Bray and Hall (2011), Street and Olivariez (2002), and Goodman (2010) along with several others, indicates that universities throughout the nation should begin to reconsider how long registration occurs on their campus and the affect that it may have on their enrolled students.

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Bray and Hall (2011), Street and Olivariez (2002), and Goodman (2010)

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