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# Retention and Graduation Rates of Students of Color Since 1997: Impact of New NU Admission Standards

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## Retention and Graduation Rates of Students of Color Since 1997: Impact of New NU Admission Standards

### Abstract

*The paper presents an ordinary least square analysis of the effect of the 1997 change in the University of Nebraska admission standards on enrollment and retention rates of students of color at UNL. An overview is provided of programs and services offered by the UNL Office of Academic Support and Intercultural Services (OASIS) that aim to improve retention and graduation rates of students of color.*

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The paper, Retention and Graduation Rates of Students of Color Since 1997: Impact of New NU Admission Standards, analyzes the 1997 change in the University of Nebraska admission standards and its effect on retention and graduation rates of students of color on the Lincoln campus. The paper first provides a summary of the circumstances preceding the 1997 change in [NT] admission standards, including concerns surrounding the university's national ranking and rates of retention. Prior to 1997, high school graduates needed to fulfill one of the following three requirements to qualify for admission to the University of Nebraska: (1) complete 4 years of language arts, 2 years of mathematics, 2 years of science, 2 years of social science; (2) rank in the upper half of their graduating high school class; or (3) have an ACT composite score of 20 or higher or a SAT combined score of 850. The policy implemented in 1997 required high school graduates to realize one of the subsequent requisites to be considered for admission to NU: (1) 4 years of English, 4 years of mathematics, 3 years of science, 2 years of a foreign language, and 3 years of social studies; (2) rank in the upper half of their graduating high school class; or (3) have an ACT composite score of 20 or higher or a SAT combined score of 850.

University officials projected a drop in enrollment as a result of the new policy, yet assumed this effect would be offset by higher retention and graduation rates and an improved institutional ranking. While their proved correct, the magnitude of the effects differed across demographic population. When the new admission standards were implemented in 1997, UN-L enrollment of white students fell by 12 percent, while black student enrollment dropped by 25 percent from the previous year. Hispanic, Asian, and Indian student enrollment increased by 17, 10, and 35 percent, respectively. Alien, or international, student enrollment experienced no change.

The authors present an ordinary least square analysis that measures the effect of the 1997 change in NU admissions standards on University of Nebraska-Lincoln student enrollment by ethnicity. The study employs UN-L enrollment data from 1990 to 2002. The sample includes all new freshmen or first year transfer students at UNL, self- identified as Black, Hispanic, Asian, Indian, White, or Alien (international).

Finally, the paper provides an overview of programs and services offered at the University of

Nebraska- Lincoln by the Office of Academic Support and Intercultural Services (OASIS) that aim to improve retention and graduation rates of students of color.

Academic Support Programs provided by OASIS include N Connections and its Success Lab, Academic Support Series, Academic Recognition Banquet, and ST AC (Students Taking Academic Control). OASIS Intercultural and Co-Curricular Programs consist of Cultural Celebrations, Shades of Leadership Banquet, Coffee Houses, Movie Nights, and various Social Nights.

The paper concludes with a case study on STAC, a program that provides academic and personal support to students of color who are placed on academic probation after their first semester at UN-L. In its pilot year (2003), 62 percent of ST AC participants were successfully taken off probation, compared to 42 percent of eligible students who elected not to participate in the program. ST AC combines the methods of self-reflection, peer support, professor feedback, advising by professionals, and academic tutoring to help UN-L students of color monitor their academic progress and determine a specific course of action to restore them to good academic standing.

#### Presenters

Katie Cervantes is working towards her Master of Arts in Economics with a specialization in International Trade and Finance at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In 2003, Katie earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with majors in Economics and International Business from T .JNL. Katie is writing her thesis on intellectual property rights and HN/AIDS drug therapy pricing in developing countries, and plans to graduate in May 2005.

John Lim is student at University of Nebraska-Lincoln working on his Master of Science in Leadership Education and minor in Industrial Engineering. Previously, John graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering from the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Currently, he is a graduate assistant at - the Office of Academic Support and Intercultural Service (OASIS). His research interest is on teamwork, particularly leadership in teamwork.