Barriers to Success for Underrepresented Students 2014

Norco College

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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Barriers to Student Success

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According to the Equity Report 2009-2014, barriers to student success would be investigated, especially those concerning underrepresented students (i.e. Hispanic and African-American students). This report compiles the efforts to discover barriers underperforming students may be encountering as indicated in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Student Campus Climate Survey (SCCS) at Norco College.

After reviewing the individual items on both the CCSSE and SCCS, it was decided that these surveys were adequate for identifying behavioral barriers, and environmental barriers (both at home and at the college). The CCSSE was administered in spring 2011 and the SCCS was administered in spring 2013.

From the CCSSE, the following items were selected as indicators of academic preparation and involvement. These indicators represent potential behavioral barriers to success if respondents from underperforming subgroups scored higher percentages of low preparation or involvement than other subgroups.

Table 1-Percent of Subgroups Selecting 'Never', 'None', or 'Never or Rarely' on Preparation/Involvement Items

		Asian	White	African American	Hispanic	Native American	Hawaiian	Other	Total
2 or more drafts of paper	Count	18	74	8	60	0	0	5	165
	Percent	24.3%	23.5%	14.8%	14.7%	.0%	.0%	8.1%	17.8%
Emailed instructor	Count	8	29	4	41	0	2	9	93
	Percent	10.8%	9.2%	7.4%	10.0%	.0%	40.0%	14.5%	10.0%
Discussed grd/assign w/ instructor	Count	8	35	6	51	1	1	5	107
	Percent	11.0%	11.0%	10.9%	12.4%	14.3%	20.0%	7.9%	11.5%
Wrk harder than possible meet instr standards/expect	Count	9	34	6	40	1	2	8	100
	Percent	12.2%	10.8%	10.9%	9.8%	14.3%	40.0%	12.9%	10.8%
Number of textbks, manuals, books, course rdgs	Count	0	6	2	10	0	2	0	20
	Percent	.0%	1.9%	3.6%	2.4%	.0%	40.0%	.0%	2.2%
Number of papers/reports	Count	4	22	8	32	0	2	7	75
	Percent	5.4%	7.0%	`14.5%`	7.8%	.0%	40.0%	11.1%	8.1%
Hours per week preparing for class	Count	0	6	1	8	0	2	3	20
	Percent	.0%	1.9%	1.8%	2.0%	.0%	40.0%	4.8%	2.2%
Frequency of use-skill labs (writing, math, etc.)	Count	7	40	6	58	0	1	10	122
	Percent	9.5%	12.9%	11.8%	14.4%	.0%	20.0%	16.9%	13.4%
Frequency of use-computer lab	Count	27	101	14	101	1	1	17	262
	Percent	36.5%	32.5%	26.9%	24.9%	14.3%	20.0%	29.3%	28.7%

For the purposes of discussion, comparison of subgroups will be limited to African-American, Hispanic, White, and Asian since Hawaiian and Native American are too small in number to make any inferences. The Other subgroup will also be omitted from discussion as it is ambiguous. Since the above table indicates item responses of no preparation or involvement in class, higher percentages than other subgroups for African-American and Hispanic students could indicate potential barriers. Comparing these two subgroups to their Asian and White counterparts on each of the items in the table above, there is little to indicate major barriers in class preparation or involvement. The only area that showed considerable differences was for African-Americans answering "None" for the number of written papers or reports of any length they had produced during the school year. African-Americans indicated a "None" response of 14.5%, the average for the entire survey was 8.5%. This may be due to behavioral issues (writing papers less than other subgroups) or it could be due to the type of courses they are taking (requiring less written reports/papers), but at this point the reason for the difference needs more exploration.

Another barrier to student success involves responsibilities to work, home, childcare, and co-curricular college activities that may interfere with academic responsibilities. These barriers were assessed through CCSSE items that identify: average number of hours per week devoted to work, caring for dependents, co-curricular college activities; and whether they have children, or are married. Table 2 indicates the percentage of subgroups who devote hours as indicated to each activity, and Table 3 identifies percentage of subgroups who are married and/or have children at home.

Table 2-Hours per Week Devoted to Outside Responsibilities

		Asian	White	African American	Hispanic	Native American	Hawaiian	Other	Total
Working for pay (>30 hrs/wk)	Count	11	82	11	101	1	1	6	213
	Percent	14.9%	25.9%	20.0%	24.6%	16.7%	20.0%	9.7%	22.9%
Care for dependents (>30 hrs/wk)	Count	9	48	16	66	1	1	5	146
	Percent	12.3%	15.2%	29.1%	16.1%	14.3%	20.0%	7.9%	15.7%
Co-curric college activities (any # hrs)	Count	60	269	45	342	4	5	51	776
	Percent	17.8%	14.6%	18.9%	16.6%	42.9%	.0%	19.0%	16.4%

Table 3-Percent Married & Percent with Children at Home

		Asian	White	African American	Hispanic	Native American	Hawaiian	Other	Total
Have children at home	Count	25	60	20	120	0	2	14	241
	Percent	33.8%	19.0%	36.4%	29.3%	.0%	40.0%	22.2%	25.9%
Married	Count	14	32	9	43	2	2	6	108
	Percent	18.9%	10.1%	16.4%	10.4%	28.6%	40.0%	9.5%	11.6%

Table 2 doesn't indicate any disproportionate difference in outside responsibilities for Hispanic students, but African-American students indicated a considerably larger percentage (almost double that of most other subgroups) in hours per week (more than 30) devoted to care for dependents. This may be students with their own children, but it could also be siblings or possibly aging parents or grandparents. On Table 3, African-American students indicated they had children at home at 36.4% which was somewhat higher than the other groups (excluding Native American, Hawaiian, and Other categories). However it was not in proportion to the much higher percentage that indicated care for dependents. This seems to indicate a potential barrier to academic success from responsibilities relating to child care. Finally, there didn't appear to be any disproportionate differences between subgroups for married students. There was a 20 percentile difference between African-American students indicating they had children at home (36.4%) and students indicating they were married (16.4%); and a 19 percentile difference for the same gap with Hispanic students. This gap was considerably larger than the White and Asian gap which was an 8.9 and 14.9 percentile difference, respectively. It cannot be conclusive that this gap correlates directly to the percentage of students who are single parents in each subgroup. However, single parenthood may be a factor contributing to this gap and therefore may indicate another barrier to student success with African-American and Hispanic students. To be conclusive, this will need more research.

In spring 2013 semester, Norco students were given the student campus climate survey (SCCS). This was an extensive online questionnaire that assessed various aspects of the campus environment with respect to ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and other factors that may present barriers to students based on their perception of respect, acceptance, discrimination, or harassment regarding these personal characteristics. After reviewing individual SCCS items, it was decided that the following represented potential institutional climate barriers to students based on ethnicity:

12. I feel accepted as an individual by the instructors at my college.

13. I feel accepted as an individual by the students at my college.

14. I feel accepted as an individual by the staff at my college.

17. I know who to contact at my college if I experience or witness discrimination.

19. In the past 12 months at my college, I have witnessed other individuals being treated unfairly based on their: (Selected responses to "Race" and "Ethnicity" under this question).

20. *In the past 12 months while at your college, how many times have you felt that you have been treated disrespectfully?*

21. *While at my college, I feel individuals respect my:* (Selected responses to "Race" and "Ethnicity" under this question).

22. *My college is a welcoming environment for individuals who:* (Selected responses to "Are from various racial or ethnic backgrounds" under this question).

25. *While at my college in the past 12 months, I have been sent email and other correspondence from others in my college community that contains derogatory comments and/or jokes that might be viewed as offensive to some groups.*

28. *In the past 12 months I have been offended by a conversation I have overheard while at my college.*

33. The environment at my college encourages individuals from a variety of backgrounds to meet and interact with one another.

34. My college is committed to creating an environment that respects and accepts individuals from all backgrounds.

35. In order to fit in at my college, I often feel the need to alter my personal characteristics (e.g., the way I am dressed or how I speak).

37. I feel awkward around campus community members who are from groups I've not encountered before.

40. In the past 12 months while on campus, I have feared for my physical safety because of my: (Selected responses to "Race" and "Ethnicity" under this question).

Most of the above items had response scales ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree' (6-point Likert scale), or 'Never' to 'Frequently' (4-point Likert scale). These items were analyzed by subjecting them to a *t*-test for independent groups, with African-Americans and Hispanic students being compared to all others in the sample. If the probability that the difference between mean ratings between each subgroup and the overall sample was found to be less than .05 (i.e., less than 5% chance that this difference occurred by chance), it would be determined to be significant. Significant differences indicating a negative perception on the part of African-American or Hispanic students could be classified as potential barriers to success.

For African-American respondents on the SCCS, most items indicated no differences from other students on all items except *#12- I feel accepted as an individual by the instructors at my college.* The mean for African-Americans was 5.28 on a 6-point scale, and the mean for the remaining students was 5.55. It is important to keep in mind that although this indicates a significant difference, the means indicate responses between 'Moderately Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' for this item. It would not be accurate to characterize the African-American responses on the SCCS as indicating that they feel unaccepted by instructors, they just tended to have more moderate agreement with the statement. This probably should be explored more before considering it a barrier.

Hispanic respondents on the SCCS, did have considerably more significant differences on these items. However, none of these differences indicated a negative perception, they were all positive. The following items indicated significantly positive perceptions for Hispanic students:

14. I feel accepted as an individual by the staff at my college.

20. In the past 12 months while at your college, how many times have you felt that you have been treated disrespectfully?

21. While at my college, I feel individuals respect my: (Both "Race" and "Ethnicity" under this question were significant).

22. My college is a welcoming environment for individuals who: (Selected responses to "Are from various racial or ethnic backgrounds" under this question).

34. My college is committed to creating an environment that respects and accepts individuals from all backgrounds.

40. In the past 12 months while on campus, I have feared for my physical safety because of my: (Responses to "Race" and "Ethnicity" under this question indicated significantly lower fear levels).

In summary, there were not an inordinate number of barriers for African-American or Hispanic students at Norco College. African-American respondents to the CCSSE indicated potential barriers to success through less written papers/reports for enrolled classes (Behavioral); disproportionately higher hours per week devoted to child care (Outside Responsibilities); and slightly lower indications of feeling accepted by instructors than non-black counterparts (Environmental). Hispanic students indicated no barriers in any of the areas assessed. They did indicate significantly more positive perceptions in several areas on the climate survey.