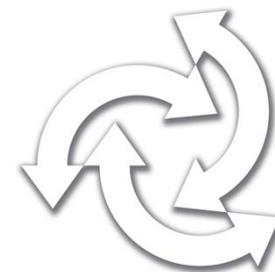


Improving College Student Success: Lessons Learned from Research and a Retention Czar

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USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy,
and Practice
University of Southern California

College Board Western Regional Forum
February 25, 2011
San Francisco, California



OVERVIEW

USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice

- Founded in 2007
- Dedicated to research and action that advances the societal benefit of enrollment policies and practices in higher education
- In 2010, the center became part of the USC Rossier School of Education, one of the world's premier schools committed to strengthening society through excellence in education

OVERVIEW

ON THE WEB:

WWW.USC.EDU/CERPP

The screenshot shows the website for the USC Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice. At the top, there is a red header with the USC logo and the text "University of Southern California". Below this is a dark blue banner with the center's name and a photograph of a classical building. A navigation menu includes "Overview", "Goals", "Staff", "Board Members", and "Contact". The date "February 17, 2011" is displayed in the top right.

The main content area features a large banner for "THE CASE FOR CHANGE IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS" in partnership with "THE EDUCATION CONSERVANCY", dated "January 26 to January 28, 2011". To the right of the banner is a sidebar with a "Podcast Series" section containing links for "Enroll. Citation Clearinghouse", "Research" (CERPP Sponsored), "Presentations" (CERPP Other), "Publications", and "Conferences and Symposia".

Below the banner are three columns of content:

- ENROLLMENT NEWS:** Includes articles such as "Debate over Obama's 2012 Budget and What it Means for Higher Education", "Texas Governor Challenges Institutions to Offer a Four-Year Degree for under \$10,000", "Recruiting in China Pays Off for U.S. Colleges", "CERPP Seeking a Postdoctoral Research Associate (req#006445)", "CERPP Releases 'Enrollment Management, Inc.: External Influences on Our Practice'", and "Breaking the 'Cruel Cycle of Selectivity' in Admissions by Jerry Lucido". A link for "Enrollment News Archives" is provided.
- CENTER CALENDAR:** Lists upcoming events: "February 24-27, 2011" (National Association of Secondary School Principals National Conference in San Francisco, CA), "February 25-26, 2011" (College Board Western Regional Forum in San Francisco, CA), and "September 22-24, 2011" (The Making of an Admissions Dean at the NACAC National Conference in New Orleans, LA).
- PROFILE OF THE WEEK:** Features a profile for Michael Barron, Assistant Provost for Enrollment Services and Director of Admissions at the University of Iowa. A "more..." link is available.

On the right side, there is a "WEEKLY POLL QUESTION" section with the question: "Is Gov. Perry's goal of offering a \$10,000 four-year degree realistic?". It includes radio button options for "Absolutely", "Probably", "Probably not", and "Absolutely not", along with "View Results" and "Share" buttons.

At the bottom of the page, there is a section for "USC's support for the Center for Enrollment Research, Policy, and Practice" and "Messages from Scholars and Practitioners". Below this are logos for "CERPP's Partners": NACAC, ASHE, CollegeBoard, and ACT. A "Follow Us On twitter" button is also present.

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S CONTEXT

- We know that college is important
 - In 2006, bachelor's degree holders earned 28% more than associate degree holders and 50% more than those with a high school diploma
 - Eight in ten job openings in the U.S. over the next decade will require postsecondary education or training
 - Expectations of employers and colleges are converging
 - There are social benefits associated with educational attainment
- We know that President Obama has set the goal of making the U.S. the nation with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020
- We know that Secretary Duncan believes schools should be held responsible for student outcomes

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S CONTEXT

- We know not enough students are enrolling college
 - Over 30% of students who complete high school do not immediately enroll in a postsecondary institution
 - 48% of 18- to 24-year olds have no college education whatsoever
 - Gaps in the college enrollment rate continue to persist by race/ethnicity, family income, and parental education
- We know not enough students are completing college
 - First-to-second-year retention has increased in publics and is at the same level as at privates
 - Graduation rates for both public and private postsecondary institutions have declined in recent decades
 - Gap in five-year graduation rates between public and private institutions increased by nearly 4% from 1989-2009 (now 44% for publics and 57.6% for privates)
 - Less than one-third of the U.S. population has completed a bachelor's degree
 - The bachelor's degree attainment gap between white and non-white students has widened in the last three decades

WHY DOES RETENTION MATTER?

- National attainment goals/needs depend on successful student outcomes
- College dropouts annually cost taxpayers billions of dollars
- Retention increasingly at the heart of accountability efforts
- Economic troubles will pressure families to carefully weigh the costs of higher education in proportion to its outcomes

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The limits of current theories and research on student persistence provide the backdrop.

- How and to what extent do institutions organize themselves to promote student persistence?
- What policies and practices do institutions enact to try to enhance student persistence?
- Research was jointly conducted with the Project on Academic Success at Indiana University
 - Don Hossler
 - Mary Ziskin
 - Afet Dadashova
- Research was funded by the College Board

FOCAL POINTS OF OUR INQUIRY

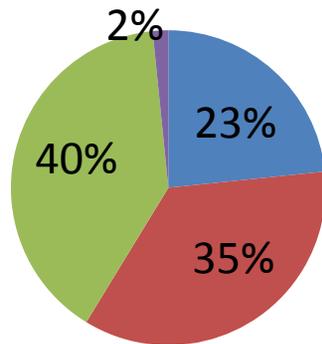
- Understanding the role of campus policies and practices
- Identifying actionable practices and policies
- Providing useful benchmarks of normative and effective policies and practices

SURVEY OF RETENTION PRACTICES

2009:
Survey of
4-year
institutions
nationwide

- Web-based administration
 - 1484 institutions surveyed
 - Response rate of 30% (ca. 441 responding institutions)
- Findings focus on:
 - Coordination of Retention Efforts
 - Actionable Institutional Policies/Practices
 - Orientation
 - Academic Advising
 - Early Warning
 - Faculty-Student Interaction
 - Research and Assessment

INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS



■ Research ■ Masters
■ Baccalaureate ■ Other

- Mean SAT (Critical Reading & Math) scores:
 - 978 (25th percentile)
 - 1196 (75th percentile)

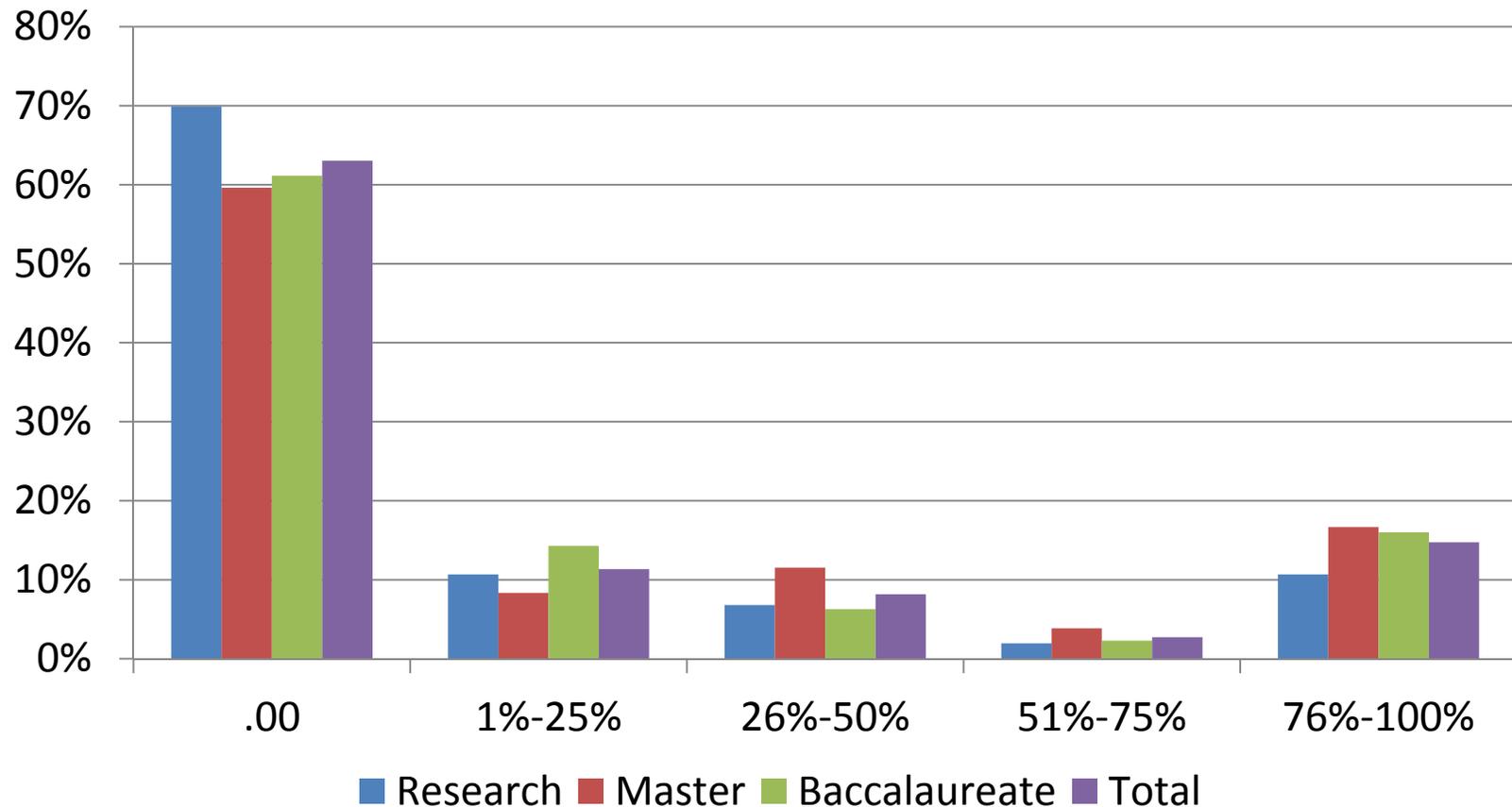
- Mean scores on select variables
 - Fall-to-fall retention rate for first time 1st year students 75.73% (national mean =72.65%)
 - 40% of the institutions have a requirement for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking students to live on campus
- Median revenue figures
 - Instructional expenses per FTE \$5,802
 - Tuition and fee revenues \$4,846/per FTE
 - Total revenue \$49,588,399

COORDINATING RETENTION EFFORTS

- 75% reported having a retention coordinator
 - Based on two definitions
 - “An administrator charged with coordinating efforts”
 - “An administrator acting as a central resource”
 - Most reported that the position entails both functions
 - Mean FTE reported for the position was .35
- 62% reported having a retention committee
- 27% reported coordinating retention program to “a great extent”

COORDINATING RETENTION EFFORTS

Percentage of FTE Devoted to the Retention Coordinator Role



ORIENTATION

- 65% reported that more than three quarters of first-year students participated in entire orientation program
 - 76% reported that more than half participated in entire orientation program
- 40% reported that their general orientation programs for entering first-year students last two days or less

EARLY WARNING POLICIES

- 60% reported they collect **mid-term grade** information for first-year students
- 58% reported they ask faculty to complete **Early Alert** forms for first-year students
- 45% reported they regularly flag specific courses with high percentages of **Ds, Fs, or Withdrawals**
- 39% reported they offer voluntary weekly sessions to deepen student learning in courses with traditionally high D, F, & W rates

FACULTY INTERACTION POLICIES

- 56% report that more than half of 100-level classes were taught by full-time faculty
- 54% report average class size for courses primarily taken by 1st year students is between **1-30 students**

However...

- 70% report that incentives for full-time faculty to teach first-year classes were **non-existent or small**

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Advising Practices

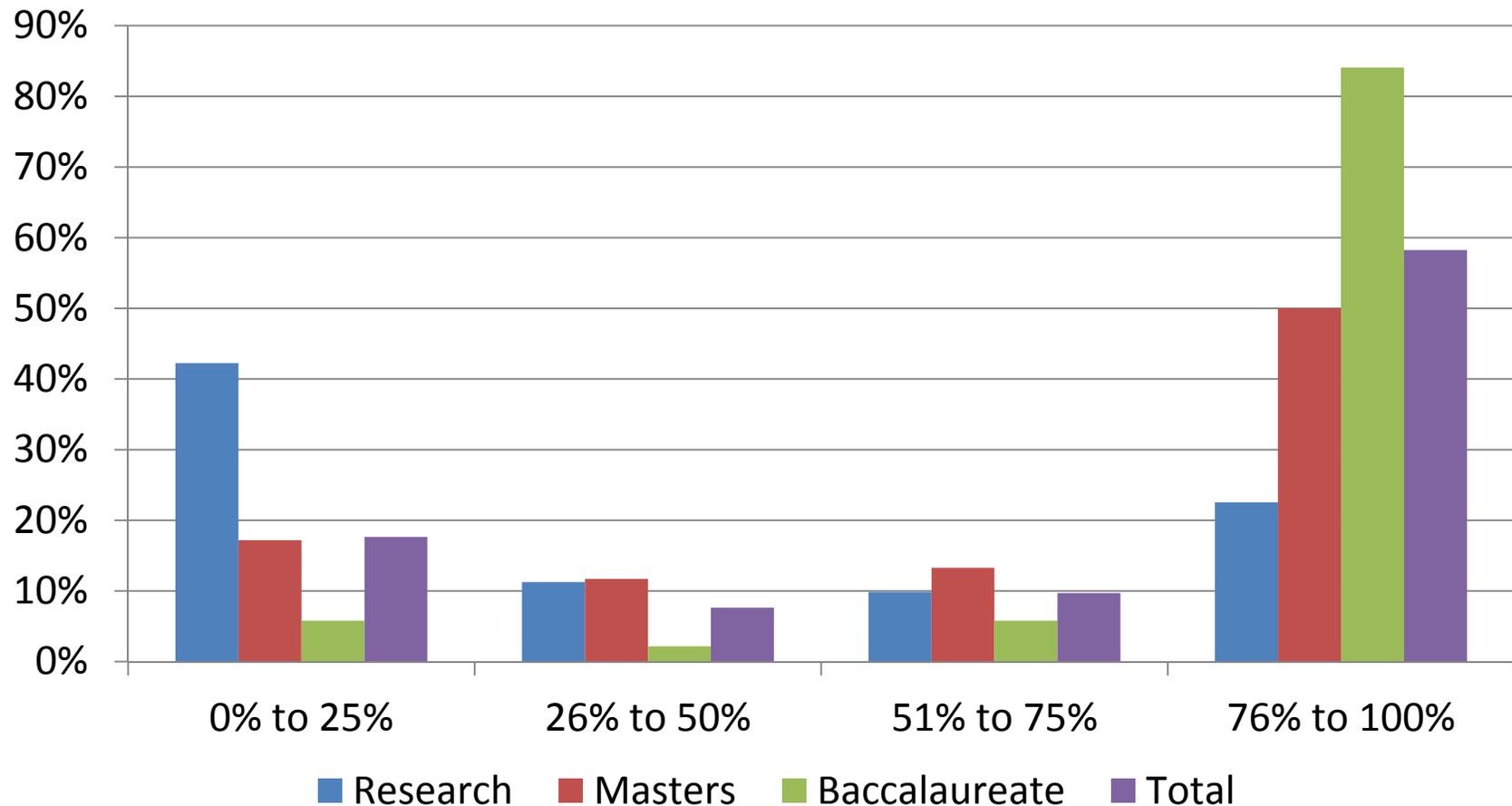
- 69% require first-year students to meet with an academic advisor at least once per term
- 78% report that full-time faculty act as academic advisors to undergraduates

Advising Roles

- 52% estimate that more than three-quarters of their first-year students were **advised by full-time faculty**
- 28% estimate that more than three-quarters of first-year students were **advised by professional advisors**

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Proportion of First-Year Students Advised by Full-Time Faculty (2007-2008)



SUMMARY OF DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

- Institutions are, in fact, organizing for retention. However...intensity of these efforts may not be equal to the task.
 - Institutions are organizing:
 - Creating student retention plans
 - Establishing student retention committees
 - Vesting responsibility in central coordinators
 - Employing several policy levers
 - Evidence of weak commitments:
 - Lack of FTE, resources, and programming authority for central coordinators
 - Lack of early warning system follow through
 - Inadequate assessment of retention programs

THANK YOU

QUESTIONS

Presentation will be available at:
<http://www.usc.edu/cerpp>

Click on: CERPP Presentations

