

Extender Student Survey
Fall 2008
2004 Cohort

Southeastern Louisiana University
Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

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Executive Summary

In the Fall of 2008 the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment conducted a survey of students who are taking longer than four years to complete a baccalaureate degree at Southeastern Louisiana University. The intent of the survey is to gather information on “Extender Students” (students who take more than four years to graduate) and why it is taking them longer to graduate.

The telephone survey included 225 students in the Fall 2004 cohort who were enrolled as an undergraduate at Southeastern in Fall 2008. The survey covered four general areas of questioning: student satisfaction with various services provided by the University, reasons why it was taking longer, whether it was a problem to take more than four years to complete their degree, how extender students spent their time, and demographic information not readily available in the Student Record System.

Some of the highlights of the Extender Student Survey are:

- Overall, extender students are satisfied with the services provided by the University such as library resources, friendliness of faculty and staff, and technology resources. The area extender students appeared least satisfied with was “Availability of courses needed for graduation” and they were most satisfied with the Library resources.
- Of the thirty-five possible reasons presented to the participants, “You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because some of them are/were not offered during the semesters you needed them” was the reason most cited (71.4%) as a reason for not graduating in four years. Other reasons that received a high percentage were “You changed majors”, “You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because of scheduling conflicts”, and “You had to drop courses because you were dissatisfied with the teacher”.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) of the participants stated that taking more than four years to graduate was a “Not at all a Problem”, and eight percent (8%) stated it was a “Major Problem”.
- Extender students, in a typical week, spend a large portion of their time working for pay. Other activities engaged in during the week are time spent interacting with and caring for their family, classes/labs, and studying/homework. Many respondents also indicated that they spent much of their week socializing with friends.

Introduction

An issue that has always been of concern on college campuses nationwide is graduation rates. Traditionally, federal and state legislatures, along with the general public, view the baccalaureate degree as a four-year degree. State mandates and accountability measures are causing this issue to be an even greater concern; if students are not graduating within four years it is then perceived that the university must not be meeting the needs of the students and/or has problems. The IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey allows reporting of students who graduate up to six years after starting. However, six years is considered to be 150% of the normal time required to complete a baccalaureate degree.

One of the realities of increasing the time-to-degree is the financial burden to both students (or their parents) and the state. The state of Texas estimated in 1996 that the cost to students (or their parents) for a degree, completed in four years, is \$41,636, while the cost jumps to \$60,264 if the degree takes six years. Similarly, the cost to the state jumps from \$24,948 to \$31,752 per student (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1996).

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment conducted an Extender Student Survey in the Fall of 2008. The phone survey included 688 students from the Fall 2004 cohort who had not graduated yet and were enrolled in Fall 2008. This report details the results of the Extender Student Survey.

Method

Participants

The population for this survey were the 688 Fall 2004 cohort students who had not yet graduated and were enrolled in Fall 2008. About a quarter (24.7%, n=170) of the students had a bad phone number, and 28.% (n=195) could not be contacted. Of the 322 contacted, 30.1% (n=97) refused to complete the survey. Two hundred and twenty-five completed the survey for a response rate of 70.0%.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the demographics between the survey participants and the cohort.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants and the Cohort

| | Participants | Cohort |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Number | 245 | 2,137 |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 56.3% | 58.5% |
| Male | 43.7% | 41.6% |
| Race | | |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 0.8% | 1.0% |
| Black, Non-Hispanic | 13.5% | 14.4% |
| Hispanic | 1.2% | 1.4% |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0.0% | 0.5% |
| White, Non-Hispanic | 83.7% | 80.1% |
| Not Reported | 0.8% | 2.7% |
| Age When First Started | | |
| Under 25 | 97.1% | 98.4% |
| 25 or Older | 2.9% | 1.6% |

| Table 1 Cont. | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| | Participants | Cohort |
| ACT Composite | | |
| 17 or Below | 10.2% | 11.7% |
| 18-19 | 18.0% | 18.2% |
| 20-23 | 51.8% | 50.3% |
| 24 or Higher | 20.0% | 19.8% |
| Campus Housing First Semester | | |
| On-campus | 27.8% | 26.3% |
| Off-campus | 72.2% | 73.7% |
| TOPS | | |
| Received TOPS | 52.7% | 46.6% |
| Did Not Receive TOPS | 47.3% | 53.4% |

Procedure

The survey was conducted by the Southeastern Center for Social Science Research. It was administered by phone, using trained and experienced student interviewers. The survey was conducted Monday-Thursday evenings from 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Some phone calls were attempted during the day; however very few interviews were completed during this time, because the students in the sample could not be reached.

Instrument

The survey contained four sections. The first section addressed the level of student satisfaction with the university in areas such as friendliness of faculty and staff and sense of community. The second section gave a list of thirty-five possible reasons why a student might take longer than four years to graduate and asked participants to rate whether it was a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all. This section included items such as having to drop courses because of dissatisfaction with the teachers and taking classes unrelated to the major because of general interest. The third section asked participants how much time they spend on activities such as working, attending classes/labs, studying/homework, and commuting in a typical week. The final section asked for demographic information that is not collected as a part of the application or registration process, such as the number of children a student has and how far they have to travel to campus. The entire survey can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Who are Extender Students?

The last portion of the survey asked participants for demographic information that is not readily available as part of the student record system. Answers to these questions help give a better understanding as to what type of student will take more than four years to graduate.

Approximately 76% of the respondents have never been married, and 76.7% did not have children under the age of 18. Slightly more than a third of the respondents travel more than 30 miles (one way) to Southeastern's main campus, while only 2.9% live on campus. Almost three-quarters of the respondents work off campus. An additional 4.9% work both on and off campus, and 5.7% work on campus. Of those who worked, over thirty percent (34.1%) spend more than 30 hours a week working, with an additional 31.7% spending 21-30 hours a week working. The majority of extender students (62.9%) receive financial aid. Most of the financial aid is in the form of loans and Pell grants, with 77.3% of financial aid recipients receiving a loan and 52.6% receiving a Pell Grant. Also, 36.4% receive a scholarship, 14.9% receive a grant other than a Pell, and 33.1% receive tuition and fee waivers. Slightly over thirty percent (31.7%) of the respondents are first-generation college students, which according to Terenzini et al (1996) is a student who has no parent with any college or university experience.

Table 2
Characteristic of Fall 2008 Extender Students

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Sample Size | 245 |
| Marital Status | |
| Never Married | 76.3% |
| Married | 13.1% |
| Previously Married | 3.2% |
| Children (under 18) | |
| None | 76.7% |
| One | 11.8% |
| Two | 3.7% |
| Three or More | 0.4% |

| Table 2 cont. | |
|--|-------|
| Characteristics of Fall 2008 Extender Students | |
| Distance Traveled (one way) to Southeastern's Main Campus | |
| Live on Campus | 2.9% |
| Less than 5 miles | 24.5% |
| Between 5 and 10 miles | 8.6% |
| Between 11 and 20 miles | 6.5% |
| Between 21 and 30 miles | 13.9% |
| More than 30 miles | 36.3% |
| Where Students Work | |
| Did not work | 9.0% |
| Work on campus | 5.7% |
| Work off campus | 73.1% |
| Work both on and off campus | 4.9% |
| Financial Aid | |
| Received Financial Aid | 62.9% |
| Received Scholarship | 36.4% |
| Receive Loan | 77.3% |
| Received Pell Grant | 52.6% |
| Received Grant other than Pell Grant | 14.9% |
| Received Tuition and Fee Waivers | 33.1% |
| Highest Level of Parental Education | |
| No high school diploma | 1.3% |
| High school diploma/GED | 31.3% |
| Some college | 18.1% |
| Associate Degree | 9.7% |
| Bachelor's Degree | 23.3% |
| Graduate or Professional Degree | 15.9% |
| Unknown or refused | 0.4% |

Student Satisfaction

Participants were asked how satisfied they were with fourteen different aspects of the University on a 5-point scale, with 1 being Very Dissatisfied and 5 being Very Satisfied. Overall, the participants expressed satisfaction with University's performance in the various areas presented. Participants expressed the most satisfaction with Library Resources (mean = 4.44) and the least satisfaction with the Availability of Courses Needed for Graduation (mean = 3.53). Table 3 presents the frequencies and means for each of the satisfaction items.

Table 3
Frequencies and Means for Satisfaction Items

| Item | 1 - Very Dissatisfied | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 - Very Satisfied | Mean |
|---|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------------------|------|
| Condition of buildings | 0.8% | 8.6% | 31.4% | 39.2% | 16.7% | 3.65 |
| Library resources | 1.2% | 0.8% | 9.0% | 29.0% | 57.1% | 4.44 |
| Academic advising | 4.1% | 9.4% | 20.0% | 30.6% | 33.1% | 3.82 |
| Students' voice in campus policies | 2.9% | 11.4% | 26.1% | 35.5% | 21.2% | 3.63 |
| Technology resources for student use | 1.2% | 3.7% | 15.9% | 33.9% | 42.4% | 4.16 |
| Diversity of the campus community | 0.4% | 2.0% | 18.0% | 33.1% | 43.3% | 4.21 |
| Friendliness of faculty and staff | 0.4% | 2.4% | 12.2% | 41.2% | 40.4% | 4.23 |
| Campus response to crime | 2.9% | 4.5% | 20.8% | 29.4% | 38.8% | 4.00 |
| Availability of courses needed for graduation | 4.5% | 13.9% | 26.9% | 29.4% | 22.4% | 3.53 |
| Clarity of rules governing student conduct | 1.2% | 4.1% | 14.3% | 27.3% | 50.2% | 4.25 |
| Amount of information received on academic policies | 2.4% | 7.8% | 20.8% | 35.9% | 30.2% | 3.86 |
| Sense of community | 1.6% | 4.9% | 20.8% | 35.5% | 34.3% | 3.99 |
| Opportunities available for personal improvement | 0.4% | 4.9% | 15.5% | 40.0% | 35.9% | 4.10 |
| Resources available to help deal with personal problems | 4.9% | 4.5% | 31.0% | 24.9% | 31.4% | 3.76 |

Reasons Why Students Take More Than Four Years to Graduate

In the second section, students were asked to indicate whether each of 34 possible reasons was a Major Reason, a Minor Reason or Not a Reason in their taking more than four years to graduate. There are two simple ways to look at this data, and the results vary depending on the approach used. One method is to rank the items in terms of the highest percentages of participants indicating that it was a Major Reason in taking more than four years to graduate. If this approach is used, then the item “You changed majors” is the highest ranked item, with over 42% of the respondents indicating it was a Major Reason. Along the same lines, the item “You did not intend to get a degree when you started at Southeastern” was the lowest ranked item, with only 2% of the respondents indicating this as a Major Reason.

However, if you rank the items in terms of the highest percentages of participants indicating it was a reason (major or minor), a different set of results emerges. In this approach, the item “You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because some of them are/were not offered during the semesters you needed them” emerges as the highest ranked item, with 71% of the respondents indicating that this was a reason.

Items that were ranked as the top four reasons, despite the approach used, were “You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because some of them are/were not offered during the semesters you needed them.” (Major Reason=40.8%, a Reason=71.4%), “You changed majors” (Major Reason=42.4%, a Reason=66.5%), “You had trouble completing all your major field courses because of scheduling conflicts” (Major Reason=33.1%, a Reason=67.0%), and “You had to drop courses because you were dissatisfied with the teachers.” (Major Reason=29.4%, a Reason=66.5%).

Table 4 provides the percentage of endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason and Not a Reason for each item.

Table 4
Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason

| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because some of them are/were not offered during the semesters you needed them. | 40.8% | 30.6% | 24.1% |
| You changed majors. | 42.4% | 24.1% | 28.6% |
| You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because of scheduling conflicts. | 33.1% | 33.9% | 28.6% |

| Table 4 cont. | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason | | | |
| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
| You had to drop courses because you were dissatisfied with the teachers. | 29.4% | 37.1% | 28.6% |
| You took classes which were unrelated to your major because you were interested in them. | 16.3% | 41.6% | 37.1% |
| You had to commute which took time away from studying or work. | 19.6% | 33.5% | 41.2% |
| You did not know what to major in when you started at Southeastern. | 24.9% | 28.2% | 42.0% |
| You did not spend enough time studying. | 16.3% | 32.7% | 46.1% |
| Work did not allow you to take more than 12 hours per semester on a regular basis. | 19.2% | 28.2% | 47.8% |
| It took you more than one semester to complete developmental courses. | 15.1% | 29.9% | 51.0% |
| Family responsibilities did not allow you to take more than 12 hours per semester on a regular basis. | 19.6% | 23.7% | 52.2% |
| You had to drop courses because you were not academically ready to take them. | 9.0% | 33.5% | 52.7% |
| You had trouble registering for general education courses, for example, math, science, history, English, because sections were closed. | 12.2% | 29.0% | 54.7% |
| You changed catalogs. | 10.6% | 27.8% | 56.3% |
| You could not contact faculty when you needed to. | 12.2% | 23.7% | 58.4% |
| You had problems with your financial aid. | 15.5% | 20.8% | 58.8% |
| You were not challenged academically in your classes. | 7.8% | 27.8% | 59.2% |
| You decided not to take classes for one or more semesters. | 17.1% | 18.4% | 60.0% |
| You frequently skipped class. | 6.9% | 24.1% | 64.1% |
| You had trouble getting your GPA up to the level required for graduation. | 7.8% | 22.0% | 65.3% |
| When you started at Southeastern, you did not have the study skills you needed. | 4.1% | 23.7% | 66.9% |

| Table 4 cont. | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Percentage of Endorsement for Major Reason, Minor Reason, and Not a Reason | | | |
| | Major Reason | Minor Reason | Not a Reason |
| You were misinformed concerning the graduation requirements for your degree program. | 7.3% | 20.4% | 67.3% |
| You had problems with your math proficiency. | 11.0% | 16.7% | 67.3% |
| You spent too much time on extracurricular activities. | 3.3% | 21.2% | 69.8% |
| You are completing a double major. | 10.6% | 13.1% | 71.4% |
| You did not have the personal support of your family. | 6.9% | 15.1% | 73.1% |
| You lost credits because you transferred to Southeastern. | 9.8% | 11.8% | 73.5% |
| You were suspended or dismissed for one or more semesters. | 9.4% | 11.8% | 74.3% |
| You were misinformed about your General Education requirements. | 4.9% | 15.5% | 74.7% |
| You had problems with your English proficiency. | 4.5% | 14.3% | 76.3% |
| You have a disability. | 6.1% | 11.4% | 77.6% |
| You did not intend to get a degree when you started at Southeastern. | 2.0% | 11.4% | 81.6% |
| You had religious obligations that caused you to take time off. | 5.3% | 9.0% | 80.8% |
| You had military obligations that caused you to take time off. | 6.9% | 6.1% | 82.0% |
| You had governmental obligations, such as Peace Corps, that caused you to take time off. | 3.7% | 9.0% | 82.4% |

Is Taking More than Four Years to Graduate a Problem?

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how much of a problem it is for them to take more than four years to graduate, with 1 meaning “Not at all a Problem” and 5 meaning a “Major Problem”. Less than 10% (7.8%) indicated taking more than four years to graduate rated a 5, a Major Problem. Eleven percent (11%) rated it a 4, 26% rated it a 3, and 18% rated it a 2. Thirty-one percent (31%) rated it a 1, Not at all a Problem.

How Students Spend Their Time

Respondents were asked to indicate how much time they spend on various activities in a typical week. Almost 25% of the respondents indicated they spend more than 20 hours a week working, with 25% indicating they spend more than 30 hours a week working. Almost 60% spend 11-20

hours a week in classes or labs. The majority of students (64%) indicated they only spent 1-10 hours a week studying.

Respondents also spend much of their week interacting with their families, with 43% indicating they spend more than 20 hours a week in this activity. The majority of students (68%) spent 1-10 hours a week commuting, with an additional 7% spending 11-20 hours commuting. Table 5 provides the participants' responses to how they spend their time.

Table 5
How Students Spend Their Time in a Typical Week

| | None | 1-10 Hours | 11-20 Hours | 21-30 Hours | More than 30 Hours |
|---|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Classes/Labs | 0.4% | 24.5% | 58.4% | 6.5% | 2.9% |
| Working for pay | 12.2% | 8.2% | 22.9% | 24.9% | 25.3% |
| Studying/Homework | 0.8% | 64.1% | 22.4% | 4.1% | 1.6% |
| Commuting | 15.9% | 68.2% | 6.5% | 1.2% | 0.8% |
| Volunteer Work | 57.1% | 32.2% | 2.0% | 1.2% | 0.0% |
| Socializing with friends | 4.1% | 61.6% | 19.6% | 3.3% | 4.1% |
| Clubs or other groups | 53.5% | 32.2% | 4.5% | 1.2% | 1.2% |
| Watching TV | 11.4% | 67.3% | 10.6% | 1.6% | 2.0% |
| Exercising/Sports | 18.8% | 65.7% | 6.1% | 1.2% | 0.8% |
| Interacting with and caring for your family | 3.3% | 46.9% | 17.1% | 9.8% | 16.3% |

References

- Terenzini, P.T., Springer, L. Yaeger, P.M., Pascarella, E.T., & Nora, A. (1996). First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. Research in Higher Education, 37(1), 1-22.
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (1996). Ten strategies and their financial implications for reducing time-to-degree in Texas Universities. Austin, TX.

Appendix A
Extender Student Survey

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from Southeastern Louisiana University. May I please speak with _____. We are conducting a survey for the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment here at Southeastern. We need to get opinions from students who started school in Fall 2004. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to not answer any question, and you may quit at any time. Your opinion is very important to us, and your answers will be completely confidential. This survey will only take a few minutes of your time.

My supervisor may call once our interview is completed to insure that I am conducting it properly.

Satisfaction

On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means Very Dissatisfied and 5 means Very Satisfied, please indicate how satisfied you are with the following aspects of Southeastern.

1. Condition of buildings
2. Students' voice in campus policies
3. Library resources
4. Academic advising
5. Technology resources for student use
6. Diversity of the campus community
7. Friendliness of faculty and staff
8. Campus response to crime
9. Availability of courses needed for graduation
10. Clarity of rules governing student conduct
11. Amount of information received on academic policies
12. Sense of community
13. Opportunities available for personal improvement
14. Resources available to help deal with personal problems

Reasons

There are many reasons why a student might take longer than four years to graduate. For each of the following reasons, please tell me whether it was a major reason, a minor reason or not a reason for you to take longer than four years to graduate.

(1=Major Reason, 2=Minor Reason, 3=Not a Reason)

1. It took you more than one semester to complete developmental courses.
2. You had trouble registering for general education courses, for example, math, science, history, English, because sections were closed.
3. You had trouble completing all of your major field courses because of scheduling conflicts.

4. You had trouble completing all of you major field courses because some of them are/were not offered during the semesters you needed them.
5. You were suspended or dismissed for one or more semesters.
6. You decided not to take classes for one or more semesters.
7. Family responsibilities did not allow you to take more than 12 hours per semester on a regular basis.
8. Work did not allow you to take more than 12 hours per semester on a regular basis.
9. You had to drop courses because you were dissatisfied with the teachers.
10. You had to drop courses because you were not academically ready to take them.
11. You had trouble getting your GPA up to the level required for graduation.
12. You changed majors.
13. You lost credits because you transferred to Southeastern.
14. You are completing a double major.
15. You were misinformed concerning the graduation requirements for your degree program.
16. You did not know what to major in when you started at Southeastern.
17. You did not intend to get a degree when you started at Southeastern.
18. You did not spend enough time studying.
19. You took classes which were unrelated to your major because you were interested in them.
20. You had problems with your financial aid.
21. You frequently skipped class.
22. You did not have the personal support of your family.
23. You were misinformed about your General Education requirements.
24. You have a disability.
25. You had problems with your math proficiency.
26. You had problems with your English proficiency.
27. You had military obligations that caused you to take time off.
28. You had religious obligations that caused you to take time off.
29. You had governmental obligations, such as Peace Corps, that caused you to take time off.
30. You changed catalogs.
31. You could not contact faculty when you needed to.
32. You spent too much time on extracurricular activities.
33. You were not challenged academically in your classes.
34. When you started at Southeastern, you did not have the study skills you needed to succeed.
35. You had to commute which took time away from studying or work.

Time

1. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means not at all a problem and 5 means a major problem, how much of a problem is it for you to take more than 4 years to graduate?
2. For each of the following activities, please tell me how much time you spend on them in a typical week. Do you spend no hours, 1-10 hours, 11-20 hours, 21-30 hours, or more than 30 hours?

(None=1, 1-10=2, 11-20=3, 21-30=4, more than 30=5)

- A. Classes/Labs
- B. Working for pay
- C. Studying/Homework
- D. Commuting
- E. Volunteer work
- F. Socializing with friends
- G. Clubs or other groups
- H. Watching TV
- I. Exercising/Sports
- J. Interacting with and caring for your family

Demographics

Southeastern is looking for ways to help students graduate more quickly. The following information may help us better meet the needs of students like yourself.

1. What is your marital status?
 - 1-Never Married
 - 2-Married
 - 3-Previously Married
 - 4-Separated
 - 5-Widowed
 - 6-Refused
2. How many children under the age of 18 do you have?
 - 1-None
 - 2-One
 - 3-Two
 - 4-Three
 - 5-Four or more

3. How far do you have to travel (one way) to Southeastern's main campus?
 - 1-Live on campus
 - 2-Less than 5 miles
 - 3-Between 5 and 10 miles
 - 4-Between 11 and 20 miles
 - 5-Between 21 and 30 miles
 - 6-More than 30 miles

4. Do you work on or off campus?
 - 1-Did not work **(Skip to Question 6)**
 - 2-Work on campus
 - 3-Work off campus
 - 4-Work both on and off campus

5. How many hours did you work a week?
 - 1-No more than ten hours
 - 2-Eleven to twenty hours
 - 3-Twenty-one to thirty hours
 - 4-More than thirty hours

6. Do you receive any financial aid?
 - 1-No **(Skip to Question 9)**
 - 2-Yes

7. For each of the following types of Financial Aid, please tell me whether or not you receive it.
(1=No, 2=Yes)
 - A. Scholarship
 - B. Loan
 - C. Pell Grant
 - D. Grant other than Pell Grant
 - E. Tuition and Fee Waivers

8. On average, how much financial aid do you receive per semester?

9. What was your Mother's highest level of education?
 - 1-No high school diploma
 - 2-High school diploma/GED
 - 3-Some college
 - 4-Associate Degree
 - 5-Bachelor's Degree
 - 6-Graduate or Professional Degree
 - 7-Unknown or refused

10. What was your Father's highest level of education?

- 1-No high school diploma
- 2-High school diploma/GED
- 3-Some college
- 4-Associate Degree
- 5-Bachelor's Degree
- 6-Graduate or Professional Degree
- 7-Unknown or refused

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact: Dr. Michelle Hall in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (985)549-2077.