

Examining the Impact of Early Exposure to Undergraduate Research on Collegiate Bridge Students



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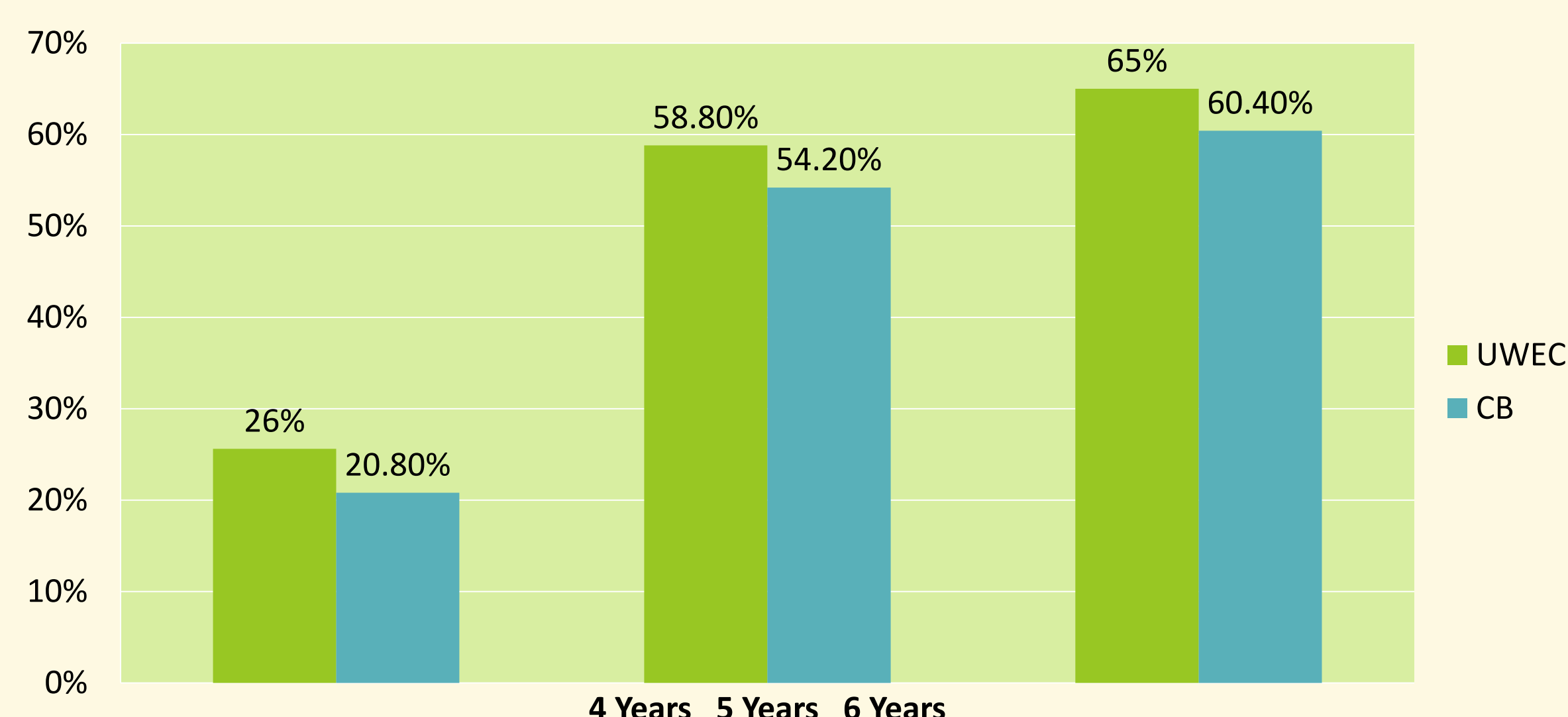
Purpose

The actual research project was conducted by the Collegiate Bridge students through a pilot session of GEN 100 curriculum that involved the integration of an undergraduate research component. Throughout the course of the GEN 100 class, the student researchers were to design, refine, and pilot the interview protocol, as well as to collect and analyze the data. The projects were focused on determining additional factors that may lead to academic success for at-risk students.

Literature Review

- According to DeBerard, Spielmans, and Julka (2004) social support was a significant independent predictor of academic achievement.
- Another current study has shown that credit-bearing transition programs positively impact retention and graduation rates (Luna & Fowler, 2011).
- 58% of first year students and 67% of senior students reported that the cost of their education was the most serious personal obstacle to continuing their UWEC education (NSSE).
- 33% of first year students and 20% of senior students reported that family members or relatives had most positively influenced their decision to stay enrolled at UWEC (NSSE).
- 3% of first year students have worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements (NSSE).

Graduation Rates 2004-2005 Cohort



Methods

- Participants were randomly selected from current and former UWEC Collegiate Bridge program students, n=24
- Average age of respondents=19.42 years
- 83.3% female, 16.7% male
- 70.8% white, 29.2% non-white
- 50% of respondents were first generation college students.
- Members of the GEN 100 class engaged in semi-structured interviews with respondents.
- The semi-structured interviews focused on a variety of topics related to the UWEC experience.
- Thematic and quantitative analyses were performed on the data.

Results: Social Factors

Of the 24 respondents:

- 100% (24) stated that family and friends play a major role in their support system.
- Over half (13) participate in extracurricular activities.
- Just under half (11) said they perceive major factors that contribute to students failing out of college include too much socializing and partying.
- Half (12) stated that their parents encouraged them to go to college so they could succeed in the future.
- Approximately one third (8) reported that they did not use alcohol or non-prescription drugs.
- Students who did report consuming alcohol or non-prescription drugs (16), the average use was slightly more than once a week.

Results: Financial Factors

Of the 24 respondents:

- Over half (13) said their financial situation did not negatively affect their collegiate experience. The remaining students were at least somewhat negatively affected by financial stress.
- Over half pay for school with financial aid (15) and/or loans (14). Others pay for school with the help of family (13) and working (10).
- Nearly a quarter (5) noted improving tuition as a recommendation for improving graduation rates.
- Half (12) reported that they have moderate to significant financial struggle

Results: Academic Factors

Of the 24 respondents:

- Three-quarters (18) have not considered dropping out of UWEC.
- Over half (13) said they were satisfied with their grades. Of those unsatisfied with their grades, many indicated that study habits and time management are key factors to not getting good grades.
- Nearly half (10) did not provide any suggestions for ways UWEC could enhance students' experiences. Other respondents suggested a variety of improvements related to advising, course offerings, parking, campus activities, and foodservice.
- Approximately four-fifths (19) reported that college has been challenging to very challenging for them.
- Slightly over half (13) reported being satisfied with their GPA.
- Overall GPA ranged from less than a 2.0 (1) to over 3.51 (2); the majority reported GPA between 2.51 and 3.0 (10).

Recommendations

- It is recommended that UWEC continue to promote and hold non-alcoholic events on the weekends as an alternative for people to participate.
- It is recommended that UWEC make a support system on campus that includes professors.
- It is recommended that UWEC better promote the resources on campus that help students with financial problems.
- It is recommended to have classes to help students understand financial aid and how to use it.
- It is recommended that UWEC offer more classes or out-of-class sessions/programs that promote better studying and time management.

Quotes

- "Social support is amazing I love my friends. My roomies are great and my best friend Hannah from high school is here to support me all the way."*
- "I get support from my friends and family. I go to both of them when I was struggling with deciding on my major and they both helped me weigh out the pros and cons of each route I was debating."*
- "I feel that you either have to be super poor or super rich to be able to afford college."*
- "I'm more worried about paying for college than studying."*
- "Although there are loans and a little financial aid I do get. It's safe to say that I will graduate in debt."*
- "Not being organized, bad study habits, and social life interfere with school work/homework."*

References

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