

**Lumina Foundation for Education
Grantee Interim Narrative Report**

Portland State University

Grant Number: 2897

Period Covered by Report: July 1, 2007 to July 30, 2008

Project Overview

The Urban Transfer Research Network (UTRN) is a collaborative multi-institutional research project focused on underrepresented students who begin their postsecondary careers at community colleges with the goal of attaining at least the Bachelor's degree. The purpose of the research is to chart the pathways and success of the target student populations and inform institutional policy and practice as it affects student transfer success. Ultimately, the goal of the project is to increase the community college transfer rate and success rate of students attaining the Bachelor's degree.

Progress on Grant Objectives, Activities and Timeline

Year Three Deliverables

The project timeline listed the following deliverables for the third year:

- Two national meeting, with progress reports from co-PIs.
- Presentations at AIR Forum and other venues.
- Implication of findings for policy and practice.
- Refinement and expansion of quantitative analysis.
- Policy and practice advisory and review board meetings.
- Data advisory and review board meetings.
- External project evaluation.

Change in Partnership During Year 3

Arizona State University and its community college partners formally joined the UTRN project in 2006. After two changes in co-principal investigators, Dr. Shelly Potts, Director of Evaluation and Testing for ASU, was appointed in October 2007 to the lead

the Arizona component of the project. She has been responsible for bringing ASU completely up to date with the research agenda and data analyses, all within a short period of time. ASU's representation in the UTRN is now located on the main campus, rather than on the Polytechnic, or East Campus, as originally stated in the project proposal. This allows for broader analysis of transfer patterns and degree completion and more substantial participation in UTRN activities.

In Year Four, USF will move to an unfunded "affiliated institution" status. It has planned to participate in the administrator interview analysis, and possibly in the student interviews, as well. It will no longer focus efforts on the common research design shared by Portland State and ASU in the quantitative portion of the research.

Dr. Beth Pitonzo, co-principal investigator for Mt. Hood Community College, has left the institution as of July, 2008. Dr. Nancy Szofran, director of institutional planning and research, will take her place as coordinator for MHCC. It is expected, however, that with this change, the level of involvement from MHCC will be not greater than the other community colleges; therefore, the amount of funding subcontracted to it will be reduced by at least one-half.

Expansion of Research Network

Plans for expansion of the research network into the fourth and fifth year of the project are underway. Several institutions have expressed interest as a result of presentations of project findings at the AIR Forum in Seattle during May 2008. Possible expansion may include universities and community colleges in Hawaii, Alaska, Illinois, Colorado, Indiana, Texas, or Washington. The project partners have discussed formalizing the network through a UTRN website where data and policy analyses could

be posted along with papers and presentations, resources on transfer and underrepresented students, and a discussion board. A proposed organization and set of expectations for network membership will be developed during fall 2008, followed by website development and pilot testing with a limited number of members.

Communication Plan

The project website, located at www.pdx.edu/utrn/, is the primary communication vehicle for UTRN. The purpose of the site is twofold: 1) dissemination of general project information, preliminary reports and presentations; and 2) coordination of project activities including meetings, current research details and preliminary analyses. As the project progresses, the site will serve as a reflective portfolio of UTRN's work and its recommendations on improving policy and practice leading to increased baccalaureate attainment for underrepresented students. Meeting minutes are available on the site, as well as periodic research briefs communicating new findings, the latest analyses, and the next directions for research. These are available in print form or electronic version via the website. Other print media, such as a brochure and fact sheet, offer general information about UTRN, its purpose and research design. These are available for distribution at presentations, conferences and other events.

UTRN participants made several presentations at conferences throughout the year. The Portland State team presented its work to the Pacific Northwest Association for Institutional Research Conference in October 2007 and to the Oregon University System Student Success Conference in Portland in February 2008. In May 2008, Portland State and USF presented three sessions on the UTRN at the AIR Forum in Seattle, Washington.

Meeting of Project Leaders

Project leaders from Portland State, USF, and ASU met on July 28, 2007 during the Biennial Transfer and Articulation Conference in Tempe, Arizona; in Florida, January 31 through February 1, 2008; and again in Portland, July 22-23, 2008. Project evaluator Dr. Nancy Shulock joined the group in July 2007 and 2008 to discuss the progress made on each campus and the preliminary findings. Project meeting minutes are available on the UTRN website.

Advisory Committee Meetings

Data and Policy Advisory committees at Portland State met regularly during 2007-2008:

Data Committee

April 21, 2008
January 9, 2008
October 4, 2007
July 29, 2007

Joint Data and Policy Committee

May 14, 2008
January 17, 2008
October 25, 2007

Qualitative Subcommittee

April 23, 2008
April 11, 2008
March 21, 2008

Policy Subcommittee

April 28, 2008
February 28, 2008

Two new subcommittees were formed, one to discuss how data and findings emerging from the research could inform policies on the local, state, and national levels and a second to develop and implement a methodology for analyzing interviews with faculty, students and administrators. The committees included broader involvement of

students and faculty in the research. A summary of their work, and the work carried out by committees in Arizona and Florida, are included in the appendix.

Qualitative Analysis

Interviews with administrators, faculty and staff at all three partner institutions and their associated community colleges were completed during Spring Term 2008. The Portland State team began work on a codebook for analyzing the transcripts during April and May of 2008, and presented a final draft of the codes to UTRN partners during the national meeting in July. Portland State will apply the codebook to all Oregon interviews, while ASU and USF will apply the codebook, creating new codes as necessary, to interviews conducted at their sites. A timeline was established to complete coding and analysis across all the sites during fall 2008, as well as a protocol for the creation of new codes across the three sites.

During the summer meeting, network members agreed to move forward on the student interviews, planning for a winter or summer administration. They discussed Portland State's proposed protocol and a list of suggested questions from ASU, and developed a timeline. The questionnaire design and data collection and analyses protocols will follow those used in the administrator interviews to allow for comparisons between the two sets of interviews and the quantitative data analyses.

Data Collection and Analysis

During the third year of UTRN, the project focused on developing a deeper analysis of student enrollment patterns to include the number of institutions attended, number and length of interruptions in attendance, and part-time and full-time enrollment status. In addition, work began on examining attendance and course taking patterns and combining quantitative findings with policy analysis.

Addressing concerns about the initially broad cohort definition, Portland State and ASU have begun to refine the cohorts for analysis based loosely on the definitions used in recent research on community college transfer and success in the California system. Students who had “transfer potential” have been identified as those who attended community college for two or more terms, were under 20 years of age, or who had declared an intent to transfer on entrance to the community college. This resulted in the removal of approximately 5,000 students from the analysis. The characteristics of these students did not differ substantially from students who remained in the analysis.

Using this refined data-set, Portland State conducted a series of logistic regression tests to predict transfer and degree attainment for transfer students. Separate analyses were conducted for each ethnic group. Findings showed different contributors to success for different ethnic groups.

For example, earning a transfer degree was positively related to transfer for African American and Caucasian students, but not for any other group. Earning another type of associate degree (e.g. AS, AAS) was a positive predictor for Hispanic/Latino students. Only for Caucasians was gender a factor in transfer, with women transferring at greater rates than men. For almost all groups, the more credits earned at community college in the fewest number of terms, the greater the likelihood of transfer. For Asians

and Caucasians receiving need-based aid was negatively related with transfer. Younger Asian, African American and Caucasian students were more likely to transfer than older students.

For transfer students' bachelor's attainment, few predictors related to community college attendance were related to bachelor's attainment. However, consistent with the predictors of transfer, attending fewer terms at the CC was related to a higher rate of bachelor's attainment. For Hispanic/Latino students, following a structured swirl pattern (i.e., a pattern of swirling at the CC level and then consistent attendance at Portland State) led to greater bachelor's attainment as compared to students who followed a more linear pattern. For Caucasians and Hispanic/Latino students, women were more likely to earn bachelor's degrees than men.

Arizona will conduct the same logistic regression analysis during Year 4. Also, community college course taking data and attendance patterns will be integrated into the models on both campuses, to examine more closely the contributors to success for different groups.

The data-policy subcommittee is using findings from the data analysis to discuss policy implications and uncover areas in need of further analysis. One question that has emerged from this group at Portland State has been whether or not certain programs seem to lead to transfer and success for students who earn the associate of arts and sciences degree. Another area of inquiry is whether or not a minimum number of credits is advisable for students to take at the community college before transferring.

With Florida's late submission of data to the project (base data were provided to Portland State in April of 2008, and revised again in June), Portland State finally has

been able to create tables of comparable data across the three sites. These base tables allow a closer look at simple differences among sites in transfer and bachelor's attainment rates and may lead to analysis of whether or not policy differences can explain different patterns in the data. A serious limitation on this analysis is, however, that USF cannot provide course taking patterns or pathways data for its cohorts, while the other two institutions have been able to produce data sets in parallel. As an affiliated institution, USF will not be asked to submit quantitative data in common formats with Portland State and ASU. During Year 4, data comparisons will continue between Portland State and ASU, which now have complete sets of comparable cohort data, and with any other institutions that may wish to join the network in future.

Evaluation

Dr. Shulock, external project evaluator, will complete the evaluation report for 2007-2008 during September 2008 to allow for interviews with campus representatives over the summer. As usual, the project will consider recommendations from her report and incorporate them into the activities for Year Four, as appropriate. In addition to the forthcoming written report, the evaluator discussed suggestions and concerns with the co-principal investigators during the project meeting in July 2008, and periodically by phone during the year. Her input has been invaluable in aligning project goals among the research sites and in clarifying the direction that should be taken by the quantitative and policy research.

Proposed No-Cost Extension for Year 5

With ASU's late entry and subsequent changes in co-principal investigators, and with the departure of USF as a funded partner in Year 4, the project will carry forward a

modest level of funding beyond the end of the original grant period. UTRN partners propose using this carry forward as a no-cost extension into Year 5 to 1) complete the analysis of student interviews proposed for Year 4; 2) finalize nationally-relevant recommendations, as discussed in the original proposal; and 3) formally expand the network.

Sustainability

As mentioned in earlier reports, links between the Lumina research and other funded research projects, and with local or regional initiatives, have been established. The network has expanded in the Portland area to include institutions not mentioned in the grant proposal. In Arizona, the project is viewed as part of university and statewide efforts to improve transfer and transfer success; personnel working on the UTRN project are involved on relevant committees at all levels. In Oregon, communication has begun with the Oregon University System regarding a “Proof of Concept” to create a statewide data warehouse that would contain high school, community college, and university data. The Portland State UTRN team hopes to have a strong influence on the types of data that will be included, as well as the structure and accessibility of the warehouse for research.

Financial Report

The financial statements for all participating campuses and the overall project are attached. The worksheets include expenditure itemization for the amount of interest earned on the grant account at Portland State.

USF will not receive further subcontracts. The funds budgeted for USF in Year 5 will remain in the subcontract line and be used to cover the extensions into Year 5, described above. The subcontract amount for Mt Hood Community College will be

reduced by one-half to reflect reorganization of the project on that campus. ASU will carry forward funds from 2007-2008 to cover the costs of its increased efforts. At Portland State, the principal investigator will reduce her to FTE .05 to adjust for salary increases that are beyond the original budgeted salary amounts; funds for consultants Dr. Mary Kinnick and Dr. Peter Collier will be increased to reflect their efforts in the qualitative and policy analysis portions of the project. Subcontracts will continue to be provided to Portland State's community college partners, Portland Community College, Clackamas, and Chemeketa.

Details are provided in the worksheets.

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