

Martin Russell Unit 1 Research Proposal

A Research Proposal to Accelerate College Completion at Texas Public Universities

The Problem

How do we increase the number of students completing their baccalaureate degrees at Texas public universities in four years or less?

College students attending Texas public universities are taking too long to complete their four-year degree plans. In most Texas public universities less than half of all students complete their baccalaureate within four years. The State of Texas has implemented some measures to alleviate this problem in 2015, those measures have not shown the results needed to resolve this problem. The failure to graduate in a timely manner has a negative impact on the State of Texas in the following ways:

- There are a finite number of classrooms and professors within the state, every student who fails to graduate on time is using resources that should be dedicated to the incoming class of freshmen.
- The majority of students attending Texas universities are receiving some type of financial assistance, typically student loans guaranteed by the state or the federal government. Students who do not graduate on time only contribute to the growing problem of student loan debt in the state.
- Texas needs college graduates! These students need to earn their college degree, join the workforce, and start contributing to the Texas economy.

Null Hypothesis

- Measures already put in place have increased the number of public university students completing their baccalaureate degrees on time by 2% over the last year.

Alternate Hypothesis

- The increase in on-time completion rates for baccalaureate degrees is less than 2%.

The Solution

I propose two behavior modifiers be put in place at all state universities:

- Students who complete their degrees on time should be rewarded with a 10% rebate on their college tuition.
- Students who do not complete their baccalaureate degrees within a four year time frame will be sanctioned with a 10% increase in their tuition rate.

Methodology

All state universities will impose the rebate/sanction behavior modifiers at the same time, students should be informed of the changes one semester prior to the behavior modifiers being implemented (this is the same notice students are given before any tuition increase).

State universities will need to be prepared for an increase in enrollment for many classes once the changes are announced and should be prepared to offer additional courses to meet student demand.

Measurements

Success will be measured by an increase in the percentage of students completing their baccalaureate programs on time. Some community colleges (Collin College, McLennan County Community College) have already implemented the rebate/sanction model and have seen up to a 10% increase for their on-time graduation rates (at the associate degree level). My expectation is a 5% to 10% increase in on-time graduation rates at all state universities.

Secondary Measurements

Implementation of the new fee and financial incentive could also impact other measures of student performance such as:

- An increase in the student drop-out rate.
- An increase in academic performance (students failing fewer classes).

Contingency Plans

If we do not see an increase in the on-time graduation rates of at least 5% by the end of the second year of implementation, colleges will remove the fees and rebates.