

# College Completion

Students Getting Through College Successfully

Vasti Torres, Indiana University

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**Project on Academic Success**



**INDIANA UNIVERSITY**  
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# Setting the Context for the Conversation

- Restore America's Leadership in Higher Education
  - 5<sup>th</sup> in percentage of 25 – 64 year olds with a degree (40%)
  - 12<sup>th</sup> in percentage of 25 – 34 year olds with a degree (40%)
  - To be at the top we must have at least 55% with a college degree.
- Other non-profit groups have made it their goal to meet this challenge
  - Lumina Foundation – 60% by 2025
  - College Board – 55 % by 2025

# Who is being counted and why are they not completing?

- Student variables explain a large portion of any institutions graduation rate.
- The federal graduation rate only counts first-time, full-time students. It does not count transfer students or part-time students.
- Most policy makers pay close attention to the margins and little attention to the large number of students in the middle.
  - Merit aid for high achieving students
  - Funding for developmental education for low achieving students

# Research that can inform the conversation

- National Survey of Student Retention Practices
  - Actionable Institutional Practices/Policies
    - Retention coordination with authority to make programmatic decisions
    - Orientation
    - Academic Advising
    - Early Warning
    - Student – Faculty Interaction
    - Research and Assessment
  - Strongest effect on retention
    - Authority of the retention coordinator to enact programmatic changes to improve retention
    - Extensiveness of structures to improve retention of students of color

# Research that can inform the conversation

- Mobile Working Student Collaborative
  - For many students working is not for luxury items, but for necessities.
    - Dependable transportation is a necessity because of the lack of public transportation
    - Cost of attending (books, fees, etc.)
  - Catch-22: financial aid policies discourage part-time course taking.
  - Working 30 hours a week or more and attending full-time affects student success.

# General Recommendations

- Provide more need-based grant aid and simplify the financial aid process.
- Re-consider restrictions on grant aid for part-time attendance.
- Keep tuition cost affordable.
- Provide higher education opportunities for those in adult education programs.
- Consider an alternative graduation rate formula that does not penalize institutions serving the majority of college students.

# Alternatives to traditional graduation rates

- To hold institutions accountable consider asking if the graduation rate is above or expected values.
- To set an expected graduation rate consider:
  - Institutional type
  - SAT score for students at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile at the institution.
  - Percentage of students receiving federal grant aid (need based)
  - Percentage of minority students
  - Percentage of students 25 years and older

# Contact Us

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Vasti Torres, Ph.D.  
Project on Academic Success  
Eigenmann Hall, Suite 630  
1900 E. Tenth Street  
Bloomington, IN 47406-7512  
(812) 855-0707  
<http://pas.indiana.edu/>



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engaging in practice- and policy-oriented research on academic success with emphasis on factors influencing persistence in and access to higher education