

PERSISTENCE IN FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

STACY HENSON
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS

- How do we define first-generation?
- 34% of an average freshman class are first-generation students (Leightweis, 2014)
- 28% of first-generation students leave college during the first year (Choy, 2001)
- 22% fail to graduate (Lightweis, 2014)

BARRIERS

- Lack of parental knowledge about college and the college process.
- Lack of resources, including financial.
- Lack of academic preparedness.
- High likelihood of taking remedial coursework in college.
- Little exposure to higher education prior to attending.

RURAL STUDENTS

- A rural community is defined as having 2,500 or fewer residents (National Center for Educational Statistics (2003)).
- 20% of all PK-12 schools in the United States are rural (National Center for Educational Statistics (2003))
- 1 in 5 students is from a rural community (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010).
- Only 17% earn a bachelor's degree
- Lack of college preparedness

BARRIERS

- Rural PK-12 schools have access to fewer resources.
 - Fewer teachers
 - Fewer AP and less rigorous coursework
 - Technology barriers
 - Less money per student
 - Often one counselor for PK-12, leading to reduced access to information about college and the college process, including the application process, scholarships, and financial aid information.
 - Lack of a college going culture.

BARRIERS

- College location is often far from home.
- Enter college with an academic disadvantage.
- Low integration and involvement on campus
 - Feelings of being overwhelmed with the size of the campus and classes.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT

- “it takes four students who leave prior to their sophomore year to produce as much tuition revenue as one student who stays for four years” (Leppel, 2002, p. 433).
- Provide assistance to high school counselors about ways to prepare students for college.
- Future Research
 - Looking at the impact of high school advising on retention of rural students.

REFERENCES

- Alliance for Excellent Education (2010). Current challenges and opportunities in preparing rural high school students for success in college and careers: what federal policymakers need to know. Washington D.C.
- Choy, S. (2001). Students whose parents did not go to college: postsecondary access, persistence, and attainment (NCES 2001-126). Retrieved from: Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics:
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001126.pdf>
- Leppel, K. (2002). Similarities and differences in the college persistence of men and women. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(4), 433-450.

REFERENCES

- Lightweis, S. (2014). The challenges, persistence, and success of white, working-class, first-generation college students. *College Student Journal*, 461-467.
- National Center for Educational Statistics. (2003, January 30). Retrieved from National Center for Educational Statistics: Number of public school students by 2003 rural-urban continuum:
<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/RuralED/TablesHTML/1bealedistricts.asp>