Performance and Retention Efforts: An Analysis of First-Generation Students at the University of Oregon, and a Proposal to Help Ease Their Collegiate Transition Experience

by

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Dr. Doneka Scott

The purpose of this thesis is to propose a comprehensive set of new and

expanded resource offerings to support first-generation students at the University of

Oregon – with the objective of mitigating current performance and retention gaps

between these student and those of continuing generation status. In this thesis, I first

analyze information general to first-generation students across the United States. In

doing so, I hoped to better understand the disadvantages of first-generation students, as

well as various strategies proven to combat these disadvantages. External research

involved a statistical research process, a literary investigation, and an examination of

the current programming of peer institutions. This external research provided me with

the foundation necessary to move forward to internal research specific to the University

of Oregon, including: student demographics, resource offerings, retention statistics,

graduation rates, and more. I conclude this thesis by utilizing this external and internal

research to offer the final proposal to the University of Oregon for new and expanded

first-generation programming.

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I. Background and Purpose

A study by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that about 58% of all current high school sophomores are potential first-generation college students – or students whose parents did not receive a four-year college degree. (Ralph, Redford, Mulvaney Hoyer 7). This first generation identity is not just a fact or a statistic; the term is representative of a history of oppression of various classes, ethnicities, genders, and other groups of individuals – with only 6.7% of people in the world have a college degree (Bloomberg 1). The lack of opportunity can arise through various factors, but institutional oppression is the outcome all the same – emphasizing that "first-generation" is intersectional in that it is both representative of disadvantages in itself, but also the product of other identity-based obstacles in society.

According to the "High Cost of Low Wages in Oregon" report by the UO Labor Education and Research Center, having a job does not guaranty individuals will transcend poverty – and those without college degrees are at an increased risk. In some larger families, this leads to high-school aged individuals seeking employment to help support the household. Early employment can be an obstacle to these students' educations as compared to the children of more affluent families. Furthermore, these students may then choose to forego college to continue wage-work in supporting their family, which contributes to the cyclical nature of poverty. As such, it is essential that institutions of higher education focus support to first-generation college students throughout their collegiate admissions, orientation, and transition processes.

To better identify avenues of support, it is important to understand who first-generation students are as individuals. Of the sophomore cohort from the U.S.D.E

study, 77% of potential first-generation students come from households earning less than $50,000 in annual income, while only 29% of their non-first-generation peers are from households in this bracket. In regards to ethnicity, 70% of all non-first-generation students identified as white, while only 49% of first-generation students chose this identity. (Ralph, Redford, Mulvaney Hoyer 6). Partially due to the nature of first-generation status, the authors found that about 21% of first-generation students anticipate that they will never complete a bachelor's degree, compared to only 7% of non-first-generation students. This becomes a lived reality for many – with 21% fewer first-generation students beginning college immediately after the completion of high school (Ralph, Redford, Mulvaney Hoyer 9).

For those first-generation students who pursue higher education, the typical experience is representative of many related obstacles. According to an additional U.S.D.E report, 55 percent of first-generation student took remedial courses in college, compared with only 27 percent of students whose parents held a bachelor's degree (Chen and Carroll 4). Furthermore, 33 percent of first-generation students had not declared a major upon enrollment, compared with only 13 percent of non-first-generation students (Chen and Carroll 5). The need for remedial courses and a lack of direction can discourage these students from eventually joining credit-intensive majors. First-generation students are less likely to take courses in "mathematics, science, computer science, social studies, humanities, history, and foreign languages." Using mathematics as an example, only "55 percent of first-generation students took at least one mathematics course in college, compared with 81 percent of students whose parents had a bachelor's degree" (Chen and Carroll 7).

Obstacles are further reflected in performance data. The average year-one GPA of first-generation students is 2.5, compared to 2.8 for non-first-generation students. In addition, first-generation students were more likely to both withdraw from and retake courses (Chen and Carroll 7). Partially as a result, "first-generation students earned an average of 18 credits in their first year, compared with 25 credits earned by students whose parents had a bachelor's degree or higher." These deficits persist, as first-generation students earned an average of 66 credits during their entire enrollment, compared with an average of 112 credits for non-first-generation students. The team emphasized "higher rates of late starts, disrupted enrollment, part-time attendance, and leaving college without a degree" as primary contributors to these discrepancies (Chen and Carroll 5).

Further complicating the experience of first-generation students are other identity factors which may negatively affect a sense of belonging. First, according to The Postsecondary National Policy Institute, English is not a first language for nearly 20% of first-generation students" - contributing to the discrepancies in remedial coursetaking. Furthermore, "the median age for first-generation students was 24, compared to the median age of 21 for students whose parents had at least a bachelor's degree." These age-related obstacles are more drastic for some, as "34% of first-generation students are over age 30, compared to 17% of students whose parents had at least a bachelor's degree" (The Postsecondary National Policy Institute). Thus, beyond factors directly related to first-generation status, a multitude of intersectional obstacles can present barriers to the success and retention of first-generation students on college campuses – making focused and extensive support for these students essential.

However, due to the fact that "first-generation" is an identity category, support targeted to first-generation students is typically limited to those who both self-identify and seek it. Consider the following examples: a prospective UO student does not self-identify as first-generation due to their parent having a two-year degree from a community college. Alternatively, an incoming student does not self-identify as first-generation because their parent attended a university across the country, but discontinued after their second term due to financial obstacles. The University of Oregon, as well as many other institutions, will categorize these students as first-generation in internal database systems – where the only qualifier is that neither parent have completed a bachelor's degree. In both cases, though, a student who would benefit from first-generation specific resources may not currently do so due to a lack of connection with the term "first-generation." Colloquial phrasing such as "first student in the family to attend college," as well as the absence of an institutionally-promoted, inclusive definition for students to identify with, might be complicating the process of connecting these students to valuable resources.

Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to provide the University of Oregon with a proposal for new programming, expanded programming, and innovative promotion tactics. By implementing this proposal, the University of Oregon will not only improve performance and retention measures of its first-generation student population, but will do so in a way that directly targets various University goals in inclusivity and diversity. Furthermore, the proposal will offer a framework for institutions across the country to bring their own research from the external to the internal in expanding and modifying their own programming. As public institutions of higher education, the University of

Oregon and so many others have both the opportunity and the responsibility to help combat institutional oppression in the United States, and increased support for first-generation students is a key step in doing so.

II. Research Question

Which resources could the University of Oregon implement, expand, and promote to more effectively combat performance and retention gaps between first-generation and non-first-generation students?

III. Hypotheses

I hypothesized that the University of Oregon likely has many core resources already in place, but needs new ways to both expand and promote them. However, being a first-generation student who has attended the University of Oregon, as well as an employee of Orientation Programs who has worked directly in supporting incoming first-generation students, I wanted to enter the research phase with an open mind.

IV. Methods

<u>Literature Review</u>

My literary investigation involved several books, scholarly articles, and field studies. I identified relevant books through resources hosted on the University of Oregon Libraries website, as well as discussion with UO faculty. For scholarly articles and field studies, I primarily searched through the ERIC Education database and Google Scholars database.

Institutional Research:

I primarily conducted research of the current resource offerings and state of affairs through the First-Year Programs and Orientation Department's of the University of Oregon and institutions across the United States. This research involved web search, phone interviews, and face-to-face interviews.

UO Data Analysis:

Data for this study come from various University of Oregon websites, the Office of Institutional Research, and the Office of Enrollment Management. I analyzed and created graphical representations of this data through Excel and SAS Institute software.

V. Literature Review

Literary Research:

With a better understanding of context, research shifted to nationally recognized best practices in supporting first-generation students. To do so, I reviewed the top ten most-cited results in the Google Scholars and ERIC databases when searching "first-generation student support." After spending time with each of these sources, I selected three which I felt covered the entire scope of content: *The First Generation Student Experience: Implications for Campus Practice, and Strategies for Improving Persistence and Success* by Jeff Davis, *Straight from the Source - What Works for First-Generation College Students* by the Pell Institute, and *Blueprint for Student Attainment: The First-Generation Study* by Julia Sorcinelli of Indiana University.

The first recommendation is the adoption of a consistent, university-wide definition of "first-generation student." Sorcinelli emphasizes that doing so can

"streamline the process of identifying first-generation students" – which, as mentioned, can be both an introspective process for a student (combatting the dilemma of self-identification), as well as an external process of categorization by the university. Furthermore, in the national quest to better support first-generation students, Sorcinelli emphasizes that adopting a universal definition can "facilitate the collection of accurate, consistent, and comparable data" (Sorcinelli 41).

The next major theme in the authors' recommendations is that first-generation students need support in the admissions process. Oftentimes, first-generation students could not receive help from parents in the admissions process "due to a lack of 'college knowledge' about how to prepare for, apply to, and pay for college. Unfortunately, many students did not receive much help from high school counselors either... Pre-college program staff were the most important sources of information and support" ("Straight from the Source" 40). This emphasizes the importance of current University of Oregon programming promoted to potential first-generation high school students across the state – particularly students who originally do not anticipate pursuing higher education.

After admission, the coordinators of undergraduate orientation programs should "plan to group first-generation students and their families together so the material can address their specific concerns" (Davis 190). The authors differ in their opinions of the ideal proportion of orientation dedicated to this programming, but each acknowledge the importance in intention. Orientation has great potential, as oftentimes universities have the chance to connect both students and their families with beneficial resources. Regardless of a parent or family member's prior knowledge of university-life or culture,

many are still key to students' support networks. Consequently, the more knowledge those family members have about the obstacles their students will face, as well as the resources available to overcome them, the better off those students will be in achieving collegiate successes. Beyond orientation, the authors note the effectiveness of summer bridge programs as supplements to the undergraduate orientation.

Along with this navigational support, it is important to assist in providing resources to ease the burden of unmet financial need. Universities can help by offering work study opportunities, as well as financial counseling in relevant matters. Specifically, "students need more guidance on how many hours to work vs. how much debt burden to assume during college to make decisions that promote persistence" ("Straight from the Source" 41). Another example of financial support is programs which offset costs – such as through the textbook lending program of the Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence at the University of Oregon. Reducing financial burden can also facilitate increased social opportunities, which demonstrates that this programming targets the three major themes of obstacles to student success: financial, academic, and social.

Shifting to academic resources, the authors emphasize the importance of specialized advising specific to first-generation needs. Beyond providing extended information on the institution, academic resources, and digital platforms, Davis believes increasing the frequency of advising is key, and acknowledges students' shared responsibility in the process: "students must be proactive in scheduling time with an academic advisor, and many students fall through the crack, meeting with an advisor once a year or not at all" (Davis 185-186). The authors also re-emphasize issues

stemming from late major declarations, and how frequency and specialization of advising can mitigate these issues. Frequent discussions with faculty advisors can help establish direction, create dialogue, and contribute to a sense of belonging.

Next, the authors agree to varying extents on the necessity of first-generation students to take a "University 101" course: credit-based courses meant to "provide students an in-depth orientation to college life, including help with study skills, test and speech anxiety, as well as career counseling and a general overview of the university structure" (Davis 187). The authors believe that these are issues which first-generation students typically receive less support from their households, as well as previous educational experiences. University 101 courses can help students with institutional navigation, as well as in contributing positively to the university community.

Beyond curriculum, as noted by Sorcinelli and Davis, fewer first-generation students are involved in extracurricular opportunities on college campuses. This is problematic, as "being fully integrated into campus life, we know, leads to higher levels of academic achievement, including higher GPAs" (Davis 193). The authors note that many universities would benefit from allocating more funds to student life organizations on their campus – although Davis notes administrative reluctance to do so. In regards to extracurricular content, it is beneficial to align post-enrollment support programs with any pre-enrollment programs. This coordination can promote the persistence of participants in the program, as well as their retention of the content ("Straight from the Source" 41). Providing students with a cohort of individuals both pre-enrollment and throughout their first year can also help develop comfort, and a subsequent sense of belonging.

To further build this sense of belonging through the combattance of any negative stigma attached to first-generation status, the authors recommend that universities implement initiatives intended to foster pride among first-generation students. Sorcinelli notes that this can be as simple as "sending admitted first-generation students a welcome letter or email that highlights the student's perseverance and hard work" and reaffirming the university's commitment to their success. Regardless of the extent of these initiatives, it is the intent that is key – as the resulting sense of belonging can combat many other obstacles as well.

The final recommendation was that universities support students beyond their initial orientation and early transition phase. "While it is critical to support incoming first-generation students, they continue to need assistance… in declaring or changing their major, setting a career direction," acquiring further stress and time management skills, and deepening the social connections they have begun to form. Furthermore, more targeted support can be crucial, as "a large percentage of first-generation students are women, non traditional age students, and minorities… It is important for faculty, program staff, and administrators to be aware of the intersection of first-generation status, gender, race, and age" (Sorcinelli 43). This again emphasizes the importance of access and institutional navigation in helping connect students to resources catered to other identities.

Overall, I appreciate that many of these recommendations address concerns discussed in the background section of this thesis. Through these three sources, as well as the exploratory phase, I acquired a foundation of knowledge which will allow me to offer a well-rounded proposal in regards to intent and philosophy of programming.

However, as I compared these recommendations to current first-generation programming nationwide, it became apparent that many universities have conducted research of their own and integrated these themes into their own practices. Thus, to propose more practical and proven content to the University of Oregon, the next step was to investigate the current practices of various universities which have proven to offer effective support to their first-generation student populations.

Institutional Research:

General Studies:

I first examined two general studies, the first being a statistical analysis published by the Center for First-generation Student Success of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. The study reports that 72% of all four-year academic institutions in the United States offer a definition of the term "first-generation" – typically during the early admissions process. 58% of these institutions use the primary qualification that neither parent have a four-year college degree. Other institutions use more nuanced definitions, discussing additional qualifying factors such as two-year degrees, vocational degrees, or skipped-generation students (grandparents with degrees).

The second study, published by Eric Bettinger of Stanford University, examined more than 13,000 college student from across the country. Bettinger discovered that individuals who take part in mentoring services are ten to fifteen-percent more likely to persist from any given academic year to the next – capped by a four percent increase in graduation rates. The study involved controls which ensured that mentorship was the

unique variable accounting for the improved retention and graduation rates. Bettinger emphasizes that "students often do not know that they need help, don't take the initiative to seek it out, or don't know what questions to ask" (Bettinger 7). Extrapolating to first-generation research, these issues are more dramatic, as these students often have even less exposure to institutions of higher education prior to enrollment.

Outside Institutions:

I examined a diverse group of universities – in regards to geography, student body size, programming, and more – that were still similar enough of institution for their programming to be relevant to the University of Oregon. Most universities do not publicly release performance or retention rates of their first-generation student populations specifically. Thus, my method of selecting the three institutions was identifying commonalities in recommendations from UO faculty and administration, as well as focusing on institutions which – through extensive literary research – were consistently identified for their successes with first-generation students. I selected the University of Washington, Northern Arizona University, and Ohio University.

Beginning with the University of Washington, an employee from UW First Year Programs directed me to a webpage which contains a complete collection of UW's first-generation-specific resources. Also located on this page was an institutionally promoted definition of the term first-generation: "individuals whose parents or guardians have not obtained a 2- or 4-year college degree. First-generation students often have little or no awareness of what educational opportunities are available and often don't understand the process for attaining a postsecondary degree" ("UW First-Generation"). Thus,

within a few minutes of interacting with the university, I was able to discover their first-generation mission, as well as gain access to a comprehensive webpage in which they promote these students' successes – neither of which would have currently been possible at the University of Oregon.

The first notable programming was a pride-based initiative. The First-Generation College Celebration, is an annual, week-long celebration in which the university strives to "demonstrate to students that many in [the] community have experienced similar pathways in higher education." Faculty and staff on all three UW campuses have the option to wear "I Am First-Generation" buttons alongside students, and the University promotes the use of "#celebratefirstgen" in social media postings ("UW First-Generation").

The next focus was academic and assimilation resources. First, the page describes "Digital Storytelling Workshops." UW Professor Dr. Jane Van Galen produces this digital series "for faculty, staff and students – meant to showcase how first-generation students navigate the social and cultural norms of higher education" ("UW First-Generation"). The page then moves to the First-Generation New Student Network, which is a student-led community for first-year and transfer students. This program extends to "networks for Veterans, LGBTQ, Disabilities, and Undocumented students" – again highlighting the intersectionality of the first-generation experience ("UW First-Generation"). Lastly, the page discusses First-Gen Fellows: a peer-to-peer mentorship program which seeks to support first-generation students "transition into college life while cultivating investment and engagement in the university community."

The listing describes a three-phase, cohort-based learning program involving: 1. Learning the Language, 2. Empowerment, and 3. Leadership ("UW First-Generation").

In addition to this on-campus programming, the University of Washington offers pre-enrollment initiatives. Although the University of Oregon facilitates offers similar initiatives, the UW Dream Project – a summer bridge program – has more widespread outreach. In general, UW's pre-enrollment initiatives target the "invisible curriculum" – or "the set of unwritten rules and best practices that college graduates pass down to their college-bound children. Whether going on college tours, navigating the application process, or picking a major or a faculty advisor," being connected to someone with experience is a privilege that can have major effects on a student's academic successes ("UW First-Generation"). According to the webpage, about 35 percent of undergraduates enrolled at the University of Washington are of first-generation status.

Shifting to Northern Arizona University, the First Year Program's website also has a page dedicated to the school's first-generation students, which features the introductory statement: "Northern Arizona University is striving to become a campus of excellence for first-generation students. There are many ways we are making this a reality. Check out the information throughout this website for information and hints for prospective or current students, as well as resources for faculty, staff, and families" – highlighting the mission of the webpage (First Generation - Welcome). NAU also features an institutionally promoted definition of first-generation student: "neither of their parents earned a bachelor's degree. First-generation students are trailblazers, forging new paths for themselves and their families" (First Generation - Welcome).

According to this same webpage, first-generation students account for almost 30% of all enrolled students – as well as 40% of the current freshmen class.

The webpage then promotes first-generation-specific initiatives and resources. First, The Successful Transition and Academic Readiness (STAR) Program is a summer bridge program targeting institutional navigation. For five weeks, incoming students live in NAU's on-campus residence halls, enroll in summer courses as a cohort, and join together in social and service events – while current first-generation students act as peer mentors and offer advice on how to successfully transition to college life (First Generation - Welcome). Shifting to post-enrollment, the page describes the Lumberjack Leaders Institute – an annual program in which first generation students complete a seven-week workshop series covering "academic success, leadership development, health & wellness, relationships, and finances" (First Generation - Welcome). NAU attempts to offset the financial obstacles of first-generation students. The University offers a textbook borrowing system – similar to that of the University of Oregon's Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence. Furthermore, the Louie's Cupboard program offers eight free food distributions per semester (First Generation - Welcome).

In addition to local programming, Northern Arizona University also encourages its first-generation students to take advantage of national resources, such as the "I'm First" blog. According to NAU's webpage, this blog is a platform for "students from around the country to tell their stories and share hints on how to be a successful college student" – and also awards submission-based scholarships (First Generation - Welcome). By compiling tools meant to promote first-generation success, NAU ensures

that students who do not connect with resources through orientation or welcome week can do so with ease when they arrive in the fall.

Lastly, in researching Ohio University, I was again directed to a first-generation-specific webpage hosted on the University website. The webpage greets viewers with the institutionally promoted definition: "At Ohio University we define first-generation students as those with no parent/guardian who has completed a bachelor's degree. First-generation students may be the very first person in their families to attend a four-year university, or they may have older siblings who have attended college" (First-Generation at Ohio). Similar to University of Washington and Northern Arizona University, Ohio University ensures that first-generation students who visit the webpage know that they are not alone – highlighting that "approximately one-third of [the] first-year class each year consists of first-generation students" (First-Generation at Ohio).

Two unique features of the webpage stood out. First, video testimonial from previous first-generation students at Ohio University is relatable, motivational, and informational for prospective and admitted students visiting the webpage. The second unique feature is dropdown menus with links to pages that address common issues of first-generation students. These features supplement the webpage's primarily promoted resource, which is the OHIO First Scholars program. This program is an all-inclusive support network coordinated by previous first-generation college graduates (First-Generation at Ohio).

OHIO First Scholars is an effective model, as it incorporates various prevalent recommendations in first-generation support. Beginning with tutoring, the program funds up to four hours per week for all first-generation students through the

University's primary tutoring center. The center also offers supplemental advising, which covers specifics such as course registration, as well as more generally academic and career path (First-Generation at Ohio). In regards to institutional navigation and involvement, the program offers two primary resources. First, all first-generation students receive email invitations to relevant and supportive events through a newsletter – with similar messaging on OHIO First Scholars' social media pages. Next, the program offers a first-year seminar that focuses on first-generation as a component of identity. The course includes discussions of students' individual and collective strengths, a history of major contributions that first-generation students have made to the campus, and lectures from both first-generation students and faculty (First-Generation at Ohio).

For a more immersive experience, students can also take part in the First-Generation Specialized Living Experience (SLE). Similar to Academic Residential Communities (ARCs) at the University of Oregon, the OHIO First Scholars webpage describes SLEs as "unique residential environments that foster growth and development through targeted programmatic and staff supported efforts." The program "offers a variety of ways to support first-gen residents as they transition from high school to college… such as networking opportunities with first-gen faculty and staff, as well as other events like workshops, social events, leadership courses, and service projects" (First-Generation at Ohio).

In addition to the resources offered through the OHIO First Scholars program, this webpage also serves as a comprehensive bank of campus resources. Below is a screenshot of the featured menus:

OHIO First Scholars and Campus Resources

+ OHIO First Scholar Components + Academic Success

+ Mentorship + Campus Involvement

+ Diversity and Inclusion

Within these menus are complete listings of the resources encompassed by each category. In mentorship, as well as diversity and inclusion, there various major and identity-specific options. The campus involvement tab helps connect students to the campus' organizations and initiatives such as volunteer opportunities, clubs, campus employment, and even intramural sports. Full listings are featured in Appendix A. This webpage ensures that first-generation students have a "one-stop" guide to campus life – reducing access-based barriers resulting from variety in resource-hosting platforms (First-Generation at Ohio). This can be a barrier at the University of Oregon, with information hosted on UOregon webpages, Orgsync, Canvas, and more.

One recurring theme within this programming was the commonalities between the OHIO First Scholars program and the University of Oregon's Pathway Oregon program: mentoring, advising, networking events, and more. It appears the major difference between the two programs is in the financial component of Pathway Oregon which – although beneficial to recipients – limits the number of students who benefit from the program's resources. In contrast, OHIO First Scholars is a freely accessible center for all first-generation students on campus.

VI. Results and Discussion

With national research as a control, research shifted to the University of Oregon. The following is a discussion based on the results of demographic, resource, and performance studies.

Demographics:

Demographic variables were of four categories: ethnicity, gender, family income, and high school performance. Results reflect the admissions responses of 19,334 current students – 4,679 of which were first-generation students. For full results of all categories, see Appendix B. Beginning with ethnicity, the two largest gaps between the student populations are in the Latino or Hispanic and White categories – with 21% and 17% gaps respectively. The 17% gap represents the discrepancy in the number of students who identify as a historically underrepresented minority. Thus, a more indirect way of targeting a greater proportion of first-generation students is to put greater emphasis on cultural resources.

The next identity category was gender. Of non-first-generation students in the data, 54% identified as female, while 46% identified as male. In the first-generation population, these percentages shift to 65% and 35% respectively – a much more significant gap. Consequentially, another indirect method of targeting first-generation students is by further promoting resources beneficial to female student success, such as the Women's Center in the Erb Memorial Union, or the Women in Business Club of the Lundquist College of Business. Acknowledging the intersectional nature of a students'

experience allows for this indirect targeting – which will be a key factor in my final proposal.

The third set of metrics related to household income. First, the Federal Pell Grant Program "provides need-based grants to low-income undergraduate and certain post baccalaureate students to promote access to postsecondary education" ("Pell Grant"). Pell Grant eligibility is a financial requisite for the University of Oregon's Pathway Oregon program – an initiative which aims to ensure academically qualified, low-income Oregonians "will have their tuition and fees paid through a combination of federal, state, and university funds" (Caley). Thus, these programs represent financial indicators in this data.

Beginning with Pell Grant eligibility, only 15% of non-first-generation students are eligible. In contrast, in the first-generation population, 54% are eligible – a major shift.. This disproportion has empirical implications, as students from low-income families have lesser access to various resources – one example being SAT and ACT resources. Although many factors influence a student's performance on these standardized tests, individuals who have studied an SAT-prep book, taken an SAT-prep course, or have parents or guardians with exposure to the test can help improve their performance. Prep-books are expensive, prep-classes take time, and parents without related background knowledge may not be able to encourage or facilitate their student's effective preparation. These resources represent privilege – and the disadvantages of lacking these privileges can extend into a collegiate career.

This leads to the final metric category, which was SAT/ACT band score – a method of standardizing scores across the two testing platforms. Although neither the

mean nor the median were calculable from the provided data, the available statistics indicate major gaps in pre-enrollment performance. 57% of non-first generation students scored a 1200 band score or greater, while only 31% of first-generation students performed met this bar. On the opposite end of the scoring spectrum, only 19% of non-first-generation students scored a 1090 band score or below, while 40% of first-generation students scored below the threshold. Although these numbers demonstrate gaps in pre-enrollment performance, it is important to note that this is not indicative of pre-enrollment potential. This is a key point in favor of a proposal for expanded first-generation programming: although many first-generation students are disadvantaged upon enrollment, with support, their potential is no different than any other admitted student.

Together, these four categories demonstrate major demographic differences – and, consequently, lived experiences. These differences do not define individuals or their potential, but provided me with valuable context and direction in creating my proposal.

Resources:

To research current resources geared towards first-generation students at the University of Oregon, I ran a search for the term "first-generation student" on the University's website and narrowed the time-range to the previous five years. From these results, I was be able to create a comprehensive list including scholarships, organizations, programs, events, and more. My method of categorization was to search for keywords within the titles of search results – with a manual search of those

webpages which had no keyword matches. Overall, of the 1,230 instances of "first-generation student" appearing on UO websites, 298 led to unique links. Identifying unique links was a rolling process in which I gave the "unique" categorization to webpages which were not redundant in content compared to those already analyzed. A chart representing these categories, as well as a listing of key UO resources, is available in Appendix C. Overall, the investigation was promising. Through autobiographical testimonies, resource pages, student studies, and more, this websearch demonstrated that UO is committed to first-generation students' success prior to admittance, during enrollment, and post-graduation.

Comparing current UO resources to the research of nationally recognized best practices and practices of successful peer institutions, the majority of themes are already present. However, in most cases, there is potential for beneficial expansion and changes in promotion. To begin, the University of Oregon does not offer an institutionally promoted definition of first-generation status to its students – nor does a first-gen webpage currently exist to host it. Furthermore, although the "So You're The First" informational session is offered during undergraduate orientations, the session suffers from poor attendance – and this is the only addendum to the programming specifically for first-generation students. Examining Academic Residential Communities, First-Year Seminars, although they exist on campus, they do not have offerings geared towards first-generation students specifically ("University of Oregon"). Thus, despite extensive offerings with some successes, there is room for growth.

Furthermore, whereas first-generation-specific resources can be generally promoted to the first-generation population, there must be specialized – and perhaps

individualized – methods of promoting relevant non-first-generation specific resources to first-generation students. Through innovations in access and promotion, the University can circumvent the dilemma of supporting students who do not actively self-identify as a first-generation student, but would benefit from first-generation specific resources – the dilemma of self-identification.

Statistical Differences:

Having the context of current resource offerings, analysis of statistical gaps helped reveal the extent of the obstacles still to overcome for the university. This performance data includes all students who responded to the admissions question regarding parents education level. This question was added to the admissions application during the 2009 cycle – limiting the number of relevant cohorts. To ensure proper controls, the query limited results to domestic cohorts of first-time, full-time freshmen matriculating from high-school. Thus, the data does not include transfer students, late admits, and other forms of non-traditional students. The data is first divided between first-generation students and non-first-generation students. Three separate filters then further divided first-generation students – creating categories for students who are Pell-Grant eligible, who are Pathway Oregon recipients, or who identify as an underrepresented minority (UR). UR categorization reflects selection of American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander in the ethnicity inquiry of the admissions process.

There are two noteworthy nuances in this data. First, the implementation of a minimum GPA requirement for Pathway Oregon recipients during the Fall 2013 cycle, as well as widespread expansion of resource programming during the Fall of 2015 (Caley). As a result, external factors may disproportionately affect the fluctuations in year-to-year statistics of Pathway Oregon recipients – though, this is not an inherently negative phenomenon, as these factors represent positive momentum in first-generation support. Second, the categories are not mutually exclusive. Thus, a student who is Pell-Grant eligible, a Pathway Oregon recipient, and identifies as a UR is included in all three subgroupings. With these limitations in mind, I begin my analysis by dividing the statistical comparisons into four sections: 1. Retention and Graduation Rates 2. Term-by-Term Attrition 3. GPA Comparisons and 4. Academic Disqualifications. Complete results for all sections are available in Appendix D.

1. Retention and Graduation Rates

Beginning with retention rates, the deficit of first-generation students as compared to non-first-generation students is 6.51% by fall term of the second year, 8.13% by fall term of the third year, and a 9.22% by fall term of the fourth year. These measurements reflect fall term enrollment numbers. This measurement point, along with differences in academic performance, are mitigators of a direct correlation between four-year retention and corresponding graduation rates. To close the fourth-year gap of 9.22%, the University of Oregon would need to experience about 90 more first-generation students remaining enrolled. The current slope of the trend lines, though – which is indicative of the the rate at which these retention gaps change over time – are

not decreasing in steepness. Thus, despite great efforts by the university, current trends do not indicate that these gaps will narrow with current programming. This does not mean that the retention of first-generation students has not increased over time – in general, it has. Rather, the comparative rates appear to change in a similar magnitude to one another, likely due to effective support tactics general to the student body as a whole.

Data of the sub-groupings of first-generation students provides valuable insights as well. Examining the underrepresented minority (UR) category, in all but two cases, these cohorts had the lowest retention and graduation rates. Furthermore, because the three sub-groupings are not mutually exclusive, the statistics may be deceptive in regards to magnitude of difference for students who identify as UR, but are not Pathway Oregon recipients. Unfortunately, there are factors that will negatively affect some individuals which the University of Oregon cannot directly combat – such as Eugene, Oregon being a predominantly white city. For students coming from more diverse areas of the country, the demographics of Eugene can create discomfort. Thus, while continuing to strive for diversity on campus, it is important to acknowledge these limitations.

Shifting to financial categories, first-generation students with pell-eligibility – representative of a lower-income household – typically exhibit lower retention and graduation rates than first-generation students who are not eligible. For a comprehensive model in supporting low-income students, the Pathway Oregon program can be crucial. Since the implementation of the GPA requirements in 2013, Pathway Oregon recipients have exhibited retention and graduation rates comparable to non-first-

generation students. In fact, throughout the examined cohorts, the average statistical gaps between first-generation, Pathway Oregon recipients and non-first-generation students were less than half that of the same comparative statistics with Pell-Grant eligible, first-generation students who were not Pathway Oregon recipients. Furthermore, due to Pell-eligibility being a requirement for Pathway Oregon students, the non-mutually exclusive data inflates the measurements of the Pell-eligible category – visually mitigating the more dramatic, realistic gap.

2.   *Term-by-Term Attrition*

The next set of data represented term-by-term attrition of all represented cohorts – a measurement allowing for a more precise look at chronological trends of disenrollment. My objective with this data set was to identify themes that could lead to more effective timing of support offerings. There are a few notable observations in the data, beginning with the 8.4% average attrition rate during fall term of year two – more than double that of any other term. This is the first term in which students can be academically disqualified – with three straight terms of academic probation being the requisite – which accounts for a small portion of this increase. However, students who drop-out, stop-out, or transfer create the majority of the difference. For some students, the summer after year one may be the first time that they are able to spend an extended amount of time at home. If a student does not experience a sense of belonging during that first year, there may be little pull to return.

The University of Oregon has a goal of 90% retention, and according to the Office of Institutional Research, the retention of first-year, full-time students was 86.9%

for the 2012-2016 cohorts. This data indicates that the 8.4% attrition rate for fall term, year two represents 329 students – which is nearly half (47.6%) of the difference between the University's future retention goal and recent realities. The 86.9% retention number is higher when accounting for all students (transfer students, non-traditional students). However, the focus of my proposal is first-time, full-time students – and these numbers emphasize that methods targeting students' return for fall term, year two will be critical. Fall terms remain an obstacle beyond the second year, with year three and year four experiencing attrition rates of 3.8% and 2.6% respectively.

Lastly, it is important to note the 3.8% attrition rate during spring term of year four. This may be the time when students realize that graduating in four years is not possible for them – causing spring term of year four to lose purpose. As a student currently in my fifth year of undergraduate education, I can attest that knowing that a majority of one's own first-year cohort is graduating without them can be demoralizing. These departing individuals can also represent a significant portion of a students' support system. These factors – along with others, such as finances – can lead to a student deciding against a fifth year, and higher attrition rates.

3.   GPA Comparisons

Next, I reviewed GPA data for all relevant cohorts – and compiled a dataset with chronological divisions. It is again important to note that the data is not mutually-exclusive, and that the number of observations within each category varied. Examining the GPA data, results did not directly correlate with retention and graduation data. Similar to retention, there were clear gaps in the average GPA of first-generation and

non-first-generation students – with a year-four cumulative of 3.17 and 3.05 respectively. However, this gap was much smaller in corresponding high school GPAs at 3.57 and 3.59 respectively.

This contrast helps emphasize the importance of familiarity and a sense of belonging to academic success. Some first-generation students' parents and families – although never receiving a bachelor's degree – did receive a high school diploma. Furthermore, some high school students enroll with a cohort of peers they have known for an extended period – helping establish comfort and community. For students of public schools, the price of a high school education is also dramatically lower than that of a college education, which may include the benefit of living at home. Thus, both social and financial factors can help explain the difference between the high school GPAs and first-term college GPAs of first-generation and non-first-generation students at the University of Oregon – when the averages fall to 3.06 and 2.85 respectively.

The second major observation involves Pathway Oregon recipients – specifically how the dramatic improvements seen in first-generation student retention did not proportionately translate to improvements in GPA. By the beginning of year four, the average cumulative GPA of first-generation students was 3.05, and only 3.08 for Pathway Oregon recipients. If higher GPA and related academic successes are not primary contributors to the increased retention of Pathway Oregon recipients, perhaps it is the program's facilitation of access and belonging-based support. Pathway Oregon creates the framework of a community for students before they even arrive on campus, and this tangible support may be more influential than any test score in a student's decision to remain enrolled.

4.   Academic Disqualifications

The final dataset reflected academic disqualifications by students' academic year. Returning to the University's goal of 90% retention, when accounting for the true retention rate of all students, first-generation students who are academically disqualified currently account for about 23.6% of the gap between this objective and current realities. Non-first-generation students who have been academically disqualified account for only 11.6% of this gap, despite accounting for over four times the student body.

Shifting to Pathway Oregon students, since the implementation of the GPA requirement, related statistics have begun to improve beyond their average. However, it is unclear as to the extent that this improvement represents improved support, or the predictably improved performance of cohorts with stronger average high school GPAs. Even with these improvements – 5.5% and 4.9% disqualification statistics for the most recent cohorts – the rates are still double those of non-first-generation students, which further supports GPA findings in that the improved retention of Pathway Oregon students goes beyond academic support. Although retention has improved without major gains in academic performance, academic disqualifications are still problematic – and Pathway Oregon should continue to innovate its efforts in academic support.

VII. Proposal and Implementation

With a better understanding of relevant national statistics, supporting theory, best practices, and first-generation demographics and performance measures at the

University of Oregon, I have created the following proposal to improve the University's support of its first-generation students.

<u>Phase One:</u>

The University of Oregon should adopt the following definition of "first-generation students":

> "First-generation students are all individuals whose parents did not complete a four-year college degree. At the University of Oregon, we recognize that these individuals may have minimum exposure to institutions of higher education. If you identify as a first-generation student, know that the University of Oregon is committed to supporting you both personally and academically – and is confident that you will achieve great successes during your time on campus, and beyond."

Through the institutional promotion of this definition, students will have a clear messaging as to the qualifiers of first-generation status – including some students who otherwise may have never associated with the identity. If promoted effectively (through methods discussed below), the University of Oregon can increase the use of resources advertised to first-generation students.

<u>Phase Two:</u>

Promote current resources:

Webpage: Each peer institution discussed in this investigation had a webpage dedicated to supporting first-generation students. These webpages help support themes

of access and belonging. The University of Oregon first-gen webpage should offer the institutionally promoted definition, as well as highlight important first-generation statistics specific to the UO campus. The page should highlight not only UO resources specific to first-generation students, but just as Ohio University, also link to the web or Orgsync pages of other key resources as well: the Career Center, Student Recreation Center, Women's Center, and more.

In addition, the university should create a "First-Generation Guide" for the webpage. This manual would help answer those questions typically considered to be in the "unspoken curriculum." A team of current first-generation students should create this guide – potentially on a volunteer basis by current employees of Orientation and First-Year Programs. With comprehensive resource listings, as well as this first-generation manual, new students will have immediate access to support they may need throughout college, as well as answers to questions and dilemmas that they have not yet encountered. By promoting this webpage to first-generation students during the admissions, orientation, and transition phases, students will be better suited to handle the obstacles that they may encounter during their time on campus – which could be the difference in retention for some students.

Orientation: Each year, there are various orientation dates advertised to incoming students who are members of the Robert D. Clark Honors College. These sessions offer unique a curriculum that address the specific needs of CHC students. I propose advertising two similar orientation sessions for first-generation students offering similar expanded programming. Information on first-generation and other identity statuses

gathered during the admissions process allows for effective promotion of the opportunity.

To clarify, this is not an entire orientation session strictly for first-generation students. Rather, additional or modified programming is simply integrated into the general orientation sessions for all students – with a certain number of spots reserved in that session for first-generation students. A few initial suggestions as to structure are as follows: an optional 'Day Three' of orientation in which first-generation students spend an additional day on campus for networking activities, additional tours, involvement facilitation, and more. Students able to attend the third-day of orientation would join a new "First-Gen Flock" – an addendum to their standard "Flock" or small experience. This third day would offer an early opportunity to address the unspoken curriculum in a non-invasive and non-isolating manner.

If this opt-in style session is not possible, I recommend an opt-out style workshop for all first-generation students throughout all orientation dates. This idea stems from current mandatory Pathway Oregon meetings for all recipients on Day Two of orientation. In this workshop, Pathway recipients learn the details of the program and the resources available to them. I believe that many first-generation students would benefit from a similar workshop focused on the information and resources the University hopes that all first-generation students know before leaving orientation. Day Two is typically a self-guided day of interest sessions, with academic advising as the only mandatory activity – leaving ample time for this session. This session would replace the current "So You're the First?" optional interest workshop.

Academic Residential Community (ARC): According to the University of Oregon Housing website, ARCs are live-in communities offered to "students with shared academic interests, creative passions, or majors, [giving them] an opportunity to live together in a residential learning environment that interweaves in- and out-of-class engagement with faculty, advisors, tutors, and peer mentors." A first-generation ARC could help in connecting students to relevant resources, individuals, and organizations. However, precaution is necessary: these students may already feel isolated by their first-generation status, which is why opt-in status and supportive messaging for this potential community is crucial. To aid in this process, I recommend that the Resident Advisor also be a first-generation student – and ideally, after the first year, a former member of the ARC.

Phase Three:

   New resources and programming:

First-Generation Seminar: This would be similar to Ohio University's seminar, which discusses the first-generation identity through contexts of cultural capital, privilege, hidden curriculum, imposter syndrome, self-efficacy, financial literacy, and border living. By addressing what it means to be a first-generation student on the UO campus, in America, and in the world, some students might begin to shift from a state of discomfort or isolation to one of pride and optimism. The first-generation identity is one that applicable individuals can claim at any moment in college, or even in life – which is why I propose enrollment in the seminar not be restricted to first-year students.

Ideally, a team of GEs or faculty of first-generation status would lead the seminar. To facilitate community, the seminar should focus on small-group discussion and activity. As a sort of trial run, First-Year Programs may consider offering a first-generation FIG (first-year interest group) – cohorts which "take three courses together during fall term: two lecture courses and a 1-credit College Connections course, which are all connected by an overarching theme" ("University of Oregon"). It is in these Connections sessions in which students can discuss themes of first-generation status in relation to the two lecture-based courses.

Underutilized Resources Booklet: Created by a team from first-year programs through interviews and research within each academic department, this booklet would serve as a comprehensive list of resources considered to be "underutilized" or under-promoted. In conducting research for this thesis, I have discovered a variety of resources sponsored by my academic department to which I had never before been introduced. With a focused team, this booklet has the potential to benefit all students on campus, rather than just first-generation students. The connection would be placement: the *Underutilized Resources Booklet* should be linked within the "First-Generation Guide" embedded in the discussed first-generation webpage.

Newsletter: Frequency in promotion is key. Over the past three years, my teammates and I in orientation program have altered the way in which we recruit members to apply for the Student Orientation Staff. Through increased messaging frequency and a more personalized approach, we have been able to more than double our annual application numbers. I propose that UO use similar strategies in the creation and promotion of a

first-generation newsletter. This newsletter would be sent to all students meeting the UO's sponsored definition of first-generation, and be done on an opt-out basis: students would have to click on an "unsubscribe" link in the bottom of the newsletter to opt-out of the messaging. This newsletter would highlight campus opportunities deemed to be of great benefit to a first-generation student. Data collected at orientation may be further utilized to personalize these newsletters based on interests, hobbies, and aspirations.

Operator: Similar in some ways to a phone-operator, my final recommendation is a type of liaison for directing campus-related questions. This could be one individual, or a team of individuals, who – rather than having in-depth knowledge of every aspect of campus life – would have a broad enough scope of familiarity to be able to direct any question asked of them. For example, a new student may hope to sign up for an advising appointment, but does not know who to call or where to go. Alternatively, a student might want to register for an intramural sport, but again, is unclear of the process. These students are seeking very different information, however, either would be able to text or call this "operator" telephone number, ask their specific question, and be directed to the appropriate office or individual.

The idea of an operator is a result of my experience answering students questions through Orientation Program's Google Hangouts line. This is a text-messages based helpline which is promoted throughout summer orientation sessions meant for any students attending that session to ask any questions they may have about the content, schedule, next steps, and more. This has been very effective in facilitating the flow of information. However, an unintended consequence of the textline is that – because the phone-number does not change every session, or even every summer – students will

continue to use the textline after their orientation date throughout the remainder of the summer and after enrollment. This week alone we have received multiple texts from previous admits asking about aspects of campus life such as mailing letters from the campus bookstore, dropping a class, and setting up an appointment with the career center.

Because no individuals are specifically assigned to the Hangout number unless there is an orientation session taking place, responses to inquiries may not arrive for several days – if at all. This relates to a statement Vice President Roger Thompson made to me emphasizing it is not just content which is so important, but also getting that content to students when they need it and are ready for it. In fact, Dr. Thompson himself had independently formed a very similar proposal to this operator, which we discussed during our interview in the exploratory phase of this thesis.

Implementation

Phase One			
Programming	*Timeline*	*Actors*	*Action*
Definition	Immediately	Director Team of Orientation Programs	Feature the institutionally promoted definition on relevant materials.

Phase Two			
Programming	*Timeline*	*Actors*	*Action*
Webpage	July 1, 2018	Director Team of Communications	Create a comprehensive webpage featuring resource listings.

| Orientation | May 1, 2019 | Director Team of Orientation Programs | Design addendum in time for 2019 orientation registration. |
| ARC | June 1, 2019 | University Housing Faculty | Design ARC in time for 2019 new student course registration. |

Phase Three			
Programming	*Timeline*	*Actors*	*Action*
Seminar	July 1, 2019	First Year Programs Faculty	Design ARC in time for 2019 new student course registration.
Booklet	July 1, 2019	Director Team of Orientation Programs	Create booklet and feature on the first-generation website.
Newsletter	Sep. 1, 2019	Director Team of Communications	Design template for weekly newsletter and commence distribution.
Operator	Sep. 1, 2019	Director Team of Communications	Hire faculty or team and commence operation of the textline.

VII. Conclusion

If implemented, this proposal will assist in the University of Oregon's process of supporting its first-generation students. The three phases of this proposal utilize nationally recognized best practices, currently effective strategies at the University of Oregon, as well as general marketing and access-based theory. The components of this proposal will work towards combating financial, social, and academic obstacles in a way that is both interconnected and user-friendly. Although it is the students' responsibility to achieve the successes of which they are capable, this proposal would

facilitate access and connection in away that would improve performance and retention – working towards University goals.

The purpose of this thesis was to offer the University of Oregon a proposal to improve its support of first-generation students, and do so in a way that was adoptable – at least in intent – by institutions across the country. As a first-generation student myself, but also a Pathway Oregon recipient, I had a unique set of challenges – but also a comprehensive support program to help me overcome those challenges. I believe that all first-generation students should have this level of support. Through an in-depth search on University of Oregon's website, a review of current resource offerings, and interviews with faculty and administration, I gained necessary context to the university's current first-generation efforts. Performance and demographic data then revealed underlying challenges and trends, while also providing a foundation to the philosophy of my proposal. National research – both statistical and institutional – helped identify the extent of first-generation students' disadvantages, as well as potential avenues to help support them. With this research, as well as my own personal experiences as a first-generation student at the University of Oregon, I believe I have offered a proposal which can help improve the first-generation transition experience.

Although I believe that this proposal can have significant effects, there is still far more research that we can – and should – perform. First, as a society, we must find ways to combat the obstacles that first-generation students face prior to undergraduate enrollment. By better supporting first-generation students at an early stage, they will be better prepared for successes in college and beyond. This research should involve surveying, data collection, and general testimony to reveal specific contributors to the

phenomenon of "belonging." As Vice President Thompson emphasized in our conversation, investigating the reasons why students disenroll or do not succeed does not necessarily reveal why other student remain enrolled and do succeed. This shift in paradigm can lead to societal emphasis on promoting these students' success, rather than preventing their failure.

Furthermore, at the University of Oregon, investigating methods of creating an in-depth system to track resource usage would be beneficial. Through its implementation, the University could identify who is utilizing first-generation programming, why they are using the programming, how they discovered the programming, and the extent to which the experience made an impact. The University should standardize this tracking system across academic, social, and financial resources to account for the interconnectedness of these themes in a students' experience – as well as to better understand how these resources can be paired together. If created effectively, the result could eventually be a system which numerically "tracks belonging" by better understanding each student, their specific needs, and the extent to which those needs are currently being met through that students' involvements and resource usage. This metric, although inherently imprecise, would allow for a more targeted approach to improving each individual's transition experience.

Limitations:

In addition to the limitations discussed in the internal data section, it is important to note that various observations, nuances, or shortcomings were identified through my own personal experience as a first-generation student and employee at the University of

Oregon. Although this presents the potential for biases, I believe that the contextual

background and research provides substantial justification for the proposal.

VIII. Appendices

<u>Appendix A</u>

OHIO First Scholars and Campus Resources

OHIO First Scholar Components

Supplemental Academic Advising
Tutoring
Communication
Mentoring Program
Seminar Course
Specialized Living Experience
We Are First

Academic Success

Supplemental Academic Advising
Tutoring
Supplemental Instruction
Student Writing Center
Study Skills
Study Skills Coaching
Allen Student Advising Center

Mentorship

OHIO First Scholars Advocates
LGBT Mentorship Program
Women's Mentoring Program
College of Business Mentor Program

Campus Involvement

Volunteering Opportunities
Student Organizations
Employment Opportunities
Campus Involvement Center
Intramural Sports
Club Sports

Diversity and Inclusion

Office of Diversity and Inclusion
LGBT Center
Multicultural Center
Women's Center
International Student and Faculty Services
Student Accessibility Services

Appendix B

Tables from UO Demographic Study:

Federally Defined Race / Ethnicity	Non First-Gen	First-Gen
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	1%
Asian	7%	6%
Black or African American	2%	4%
Hispanic or Latino	10%	31%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	0%
Two or More Races	9%	11%
White	62%	45%
Race and Ethnicity Unknown	2%	1%
Nonresident Alien	8%	0%

*Note: Each statistic represents the percentage of each student population – rather than percentage of the student body overall – who selected the listed ethnicity.

Gender	Non First-Gen	First-Gen
Female	54%	65%
Male	46%	35%

Pell-Grant Eligibility (Financial Indicator)	Non First-Gen	First-Gen
Yes	15%	54%
No	85%	46%

PathwayOregon (In-State Financial Indicator)	Non First-Gen	First-Gen
Pathway Offered	23%	64%
No Pathway Offered	77%	36%

SAT/ACT Band	Non First-Gen	First-Gen
1300+	28%	10%
1200-1290	29%	21%
1100-1190	24%	30%
1000-1090	13%	23%
<1000	6%	17%

Misc.
9.8%

Events
3.3%

Faculty
4.9%

Programmatic
11.5%

Statistics
26.2%

Scholarship
14.8%

Biographical
29.5%
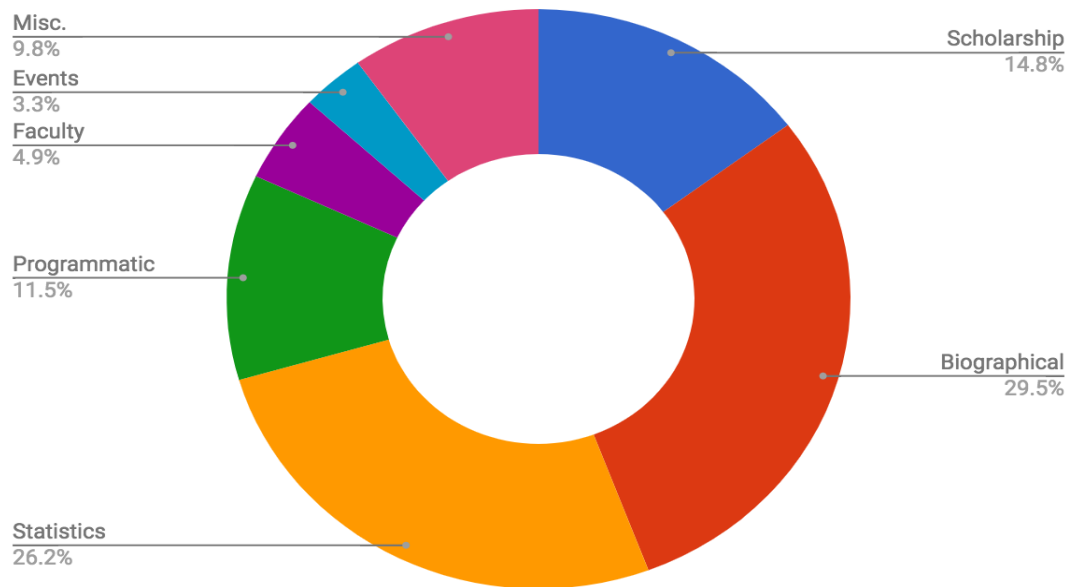
- The New Student Fall Retreat (NSFR): A retreat to welcome new first-year and transfer students from diverse backgrounds. According to the UO Events Calendar, the New Student Fall Retreat is a growth experience facilitated by staff from the Center For Multicultural Academic Excellence (CMAE) and coordinators from the Student Leadership Team (SLTs) – along with various campus partners. Students perform exercises that "foster community building, provide useful academic information, support leadership and identity development, and highlight a range of campus and community resources relevant to navigating the UO."

- The Intercultural Mentoring Program Advancing Community Ties (IMPACT): IMPACT is a peer-to-peer mentoring program for first-generation

college students and/or students from underrepresented communities. Coordinators and mentors work together to ensure these students' experience at the University of Oregon is more "comfortable, accepting, and culturally responsive" through a series of educational programming, as well as social and networking events.

- Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence (CMAE): A University of Oregon multicultural center open to all students. On their website, the CMAE emphasizes that they strive "to promote student retention and persistence for historically underrepresented and underserved populations. [They] develop and implement programs and services that support retention, academic excellence, and success at the UO and beyond. [The program] reaffirms our commitment to all students, including undocumented and tuition equity students." The coordinators' vision in doing so is to "build and empower an inclusive and diverse community of scholars who exemplify academic excellence and inspire positive change."

The CMAE operates primarily by connecting students to resources specific to their identities, individuals relevant to their goals, and tools designed to assist in the fulfillment of their dreams. Beyond connecting students to campus resources and fostering a community of pride and acceptance, the CMAE has commenced a few initiatives of their own. A CMAE sponsored Writing 121 course is "limited to only 18 students, [and] taught by highly experienced instructors in a diverse, culturally supportive environment."

Furthermore, the CMAE has a Textbook Lending Program designed to help low-income and first-generation students from underrepresented backgrounds offset expenses. Other amenities – such as free printing, supplemental advising, and community events – demonstrate that the Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence strives to offer a comprehensive support system.

- PathwayOregon - A scholarship-based program, PathwayOregon provides an array of support services to in-state, first-generation students on campus – with 62% of current recipients being of first-generation status. In addition to financial support, Pathway Oregon offers a variety of academic and social resources. Beginning at orientation, there is a specially designed session specifically for Pathway Oregon students to learn more about their scholarship award, discuss relevant resources, and network with other Pathway Oregon recipients. Once enrolled, these initiatives become available. New Pathway students are matched with an upperclassman from the program who will act as a campus life advisor in various capacities. In regards to academics, Pathway Oregon offers its recipients exclusive advising with its faculty, promotes various academic milestones, and provides tutoring in various subjects. Throughout the year, Pathway Oregon also hosts thematic workshops covering diverse topics such as study abroad, further scholarship applications, and career opportunities.

- Nontraditional Student Union (NSU) - Operates with the goal of enhancing the educational and interpersonal experiences of nontraditional

students while supporting and promoting their degree attainment. In discussing classifications of non-traditional students, the NSU website emphasizes first-generation status. Beyond connecting students' to unique and important resources across campus, such as childcare, NSU generally strives to represent "the nontraditional student voice on campus" and provide a common place for their support. Community-building is a focus of the union, which they further promote through their newsletter to NSU members – as well as through the celebration of Nontraditional Student Week from November 4th through November 9th.

Appendix D

2009 Retention % by Year in School
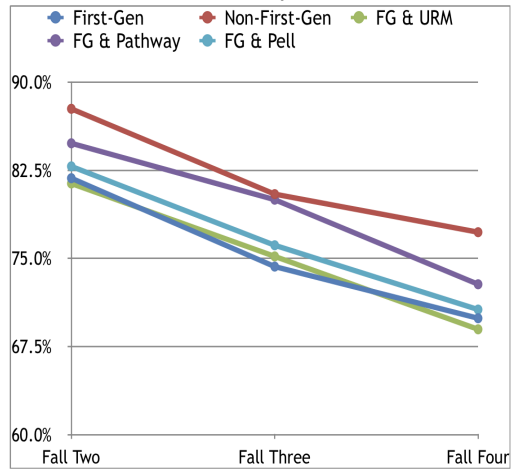
2009 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort
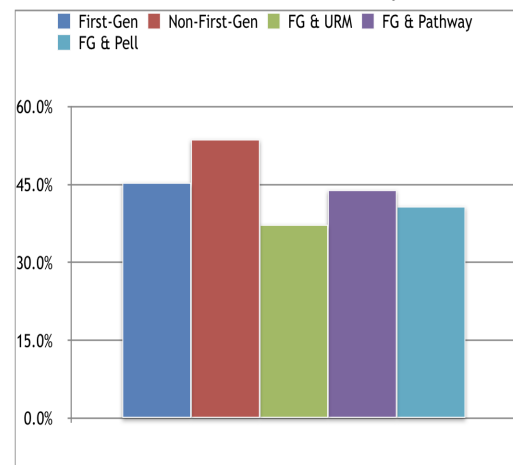
2010 Retention % by Year in School
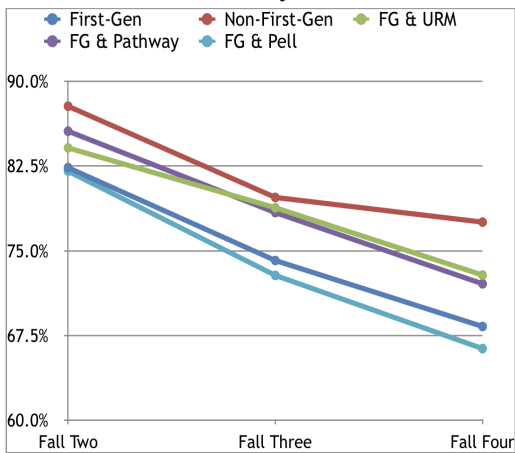
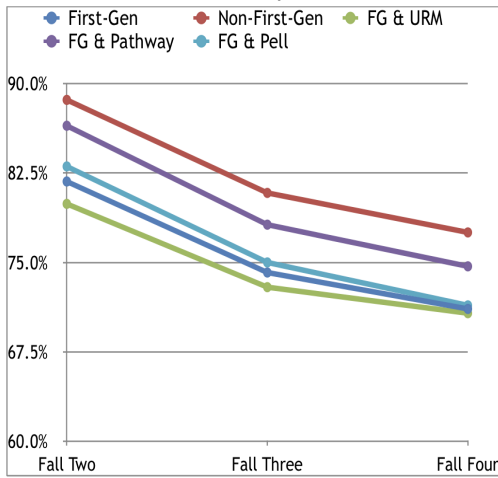**2010 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort**
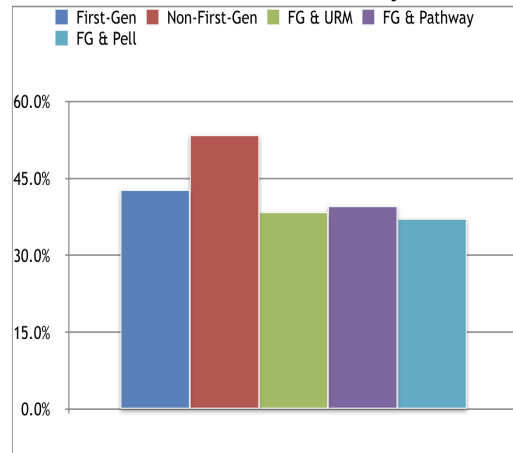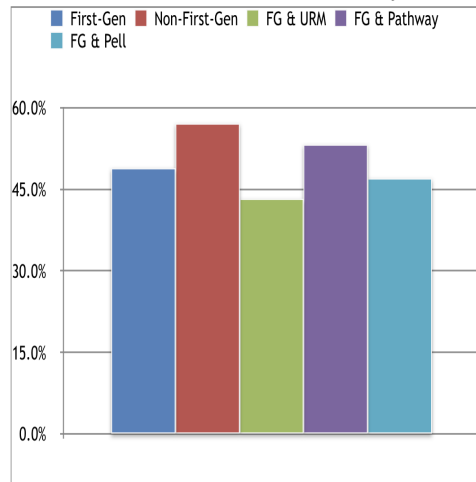
2011 Retention Data by Year in School
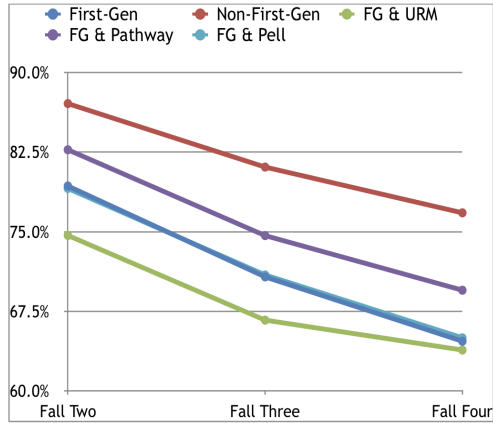
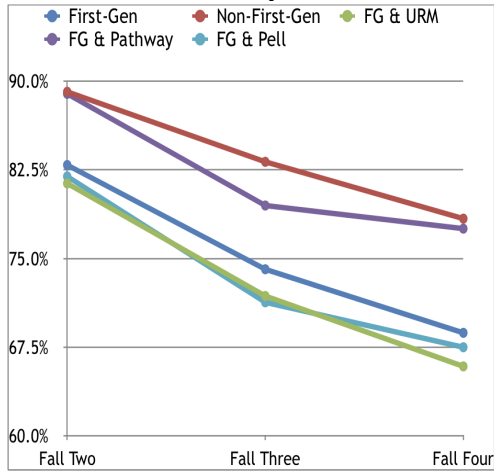## 2011 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort
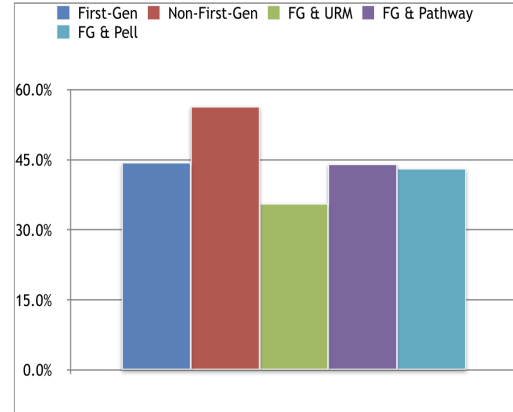
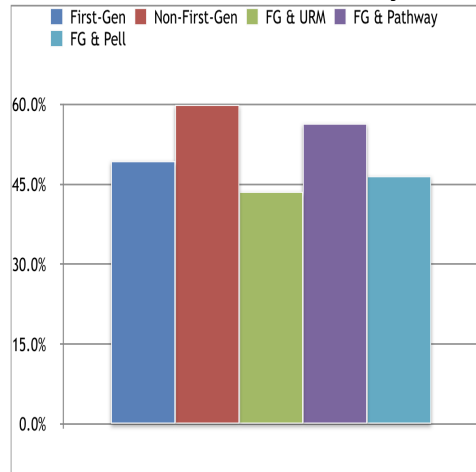## 2012 Retention % by Year in School

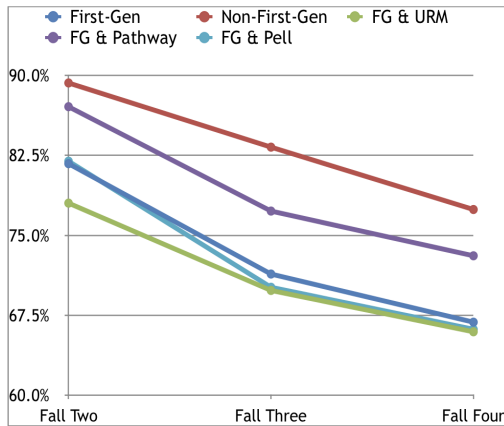## 2012 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort

2013 Retention % by Year in School

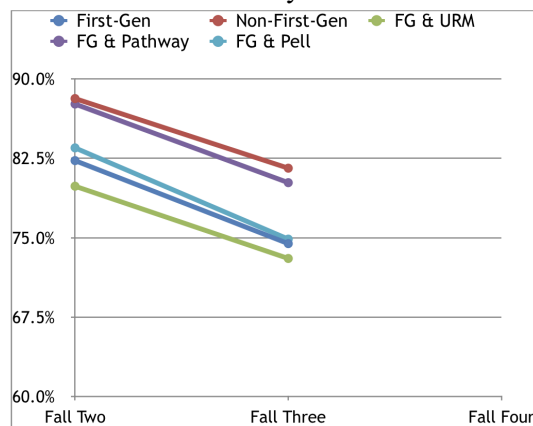## 2013 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort

2014 Retention % by Year in School

2014 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort

(Inapplicable)

2015 Retention % by Year in School

2015 4-Year Graduation Rates by Cohort

(Inapplicable)

Average Term-by-Term Attrition for all Relevant Cohorts Since 2009	
Winter - Year One	3.0%
Spring - Year One	2.2%
Fall - Year Two	**8.4%**
Winter - Year Two	2.5%
Spring - Year Two	1.1%
Fall - Year Three	3.8%
Winter - Year Three	1.5%
Spring - Year Three	0.4%
Fall - Year Four	2.6%
Winter - Year Four	2.6%
Spring - Year Four	3.8%

GPA Statistics					
	High school	Term One	Cum. Y2	Cum. Y3	Cum. Y4
Non-First-Generation	3.59	3.06	3.14	3.16	3.17
First-Generation	3.57	2.85	2.99	3.04	3.05
First-Gen & Pathway	3.64	2.89	3.01	3.05	3.08
First-Gen & Pell-Eligible	3.57	2.81	2.97	3.01	3.02

Average Academic Disqualifications by Cohort's Fourth Year			
Non-First-Generation	First-Generation	First-Gen & Pathway	First-Gen & Pell
2.6%	5.3%	6.0%	5.9%

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