Uneven Access, Missed Opportunities:  
The Impact of Running Start on the Transition to  
College & Persistence among Underrepresented Students  

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• Why Study Running Start?

• Running Start is a potential avenue for raising Latino and underrepresented student access to and persistence in higher education

• Longitudinal Data exists in Washington (!)
  – RS started in 1990—Data from 2000-2009 is utilized for this analysis
Literature on Running Start and Dual Enrollment programs has not focused on racial/ethnic disparities in access to dual enrollment programs, persistence, and the role of institutional policy (Hunt & Carroll, 2006; Bailey & Karp, 2003, 2005; Adelman, 2004; Swanson, 2008).

This study draws on the following bodies of literature:

- **Transition to College Research**—the unique role of intervention programs (Gándara & Bial, 2001; Gándara & Contreras, 2009)

- **Persistence in Higher Education** (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003) focus on Social Cognitive and Institutional Factors—our study extends this literature by including the institutional and state policy environment

- **Navigational Pathways & Persistence for Underrepresented students** (Tierney, 1992; Réndon, 1995; Réndon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora Hengstler, 1992)
Running Start Study: Framework for Investigating Student Navigational Pathways in Washington State
Framework for Understanding Running Start Students’ Navigational Pathways

- **External Environment**
  - Access, State Policy

- **Student HS/CC**

- **Individual Characteristics**
  - Race/Ethnicity, Gender

- **Running Start Experience**
  - High School Access
  - RS GPA
  - Credits Attempted
  - Credits Earned
  - CC type/location
  - Length in RS program

- **Factors Influencing Student Choice Process**
  - Community College (2-yr)
    - Direct Transfer Agreement
    - Type of AA degree (STEM)
    - Number of credits
  - Transfer
    - College/University (4 year)
      - In State
      - Out of State
    - Vocational/Technical College

- **Outcome**
  - Academic Achievement
  - Persistence
1) What patterns of enrollment into four-year institutions exist for Running Start participants across multiple community college and regional contexts in the state of Washington from 2000-2009? How might these enrollment patterns vary by race/ethnicity, gender, and achievement?

2) Does achievement among Running Start students contribute to enrollment in Four-Year IHEs and persistence beyond the first year of college for Latino and underrepresented students?
   • What additional factors impact successful persistence among Running Start Participants?

3) What are the policy implications of this research for expanding the pool of students accessing dual enrollment programs?
Hypotheses

• We hypothesized differences in Persistence by Race/Ethnicity and Geographical Context (Réndon, Jalomo & Nora 2000; Contreras, et., al., 2008)

• We expected larger gender differences favoring females given their national persistence and completion rates in higher education (King, 2000; Sax & Harper, 2005; Conger & Long, 2010; Kim, 2011)

• We expected Whites to have far higher rates of enrollment and persistence in four-year IHEs

• We expected RS to be a mediating tool for IHE access and persistence for underrepresented students
Quantitative Research Design

– Cohort Analysis

– Method: Hierarchical Logistic Regression
  • Student Background
  • Geographic Context
  • Running Start Achievement
  • Postsecondary Pathways
  • Institutional Context

– Model 1: 4YR Enrollment — Total Sample
– Model 2: Persistence — Transfer Sample
Variables

- **Student Background**
  - Race/Ethnicity (Effect Coded: White = -1)
  - Gender (Female = 1; Male = -1)
- **Geographic Context**
  - CC Location (Rural =1; Non-Rural= -1)
- **Running Start Achievement**
  - Running Start GPA (standardized)
  - Running Start Credits earned
- **Postsecondary Pathways**
  - Transferred to Community College / Four-year institution
  - Community College Credits Earned
  - STEM and DTA degree
- **Institutional variables** (for Transfer IHE)
  - Out of State 4YR (Effect Coded: CC/Tech College = -1)
  - WA 4YR Private
  - WA 4YR Public
The Sample

Percent Distribution of Student Race, N=89,811

- Asian/Pacific Islander: 9%
- Native American: 5%
- Latino: 3%
- Other/Multiracial: 3%
- White: 79%

Percent Female, N=52,932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Distribution</th>
<th>Female Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian Pacific Islander</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other/Multiracial</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=71,327
The Impact of Race/Ethnicity on the predicted probability of enrolling in a 4-yr college or university by geographic location, holding all other predictors constant.

Note: White rural and non-rural as reference; ***p<.001, for interaction between Race/Ethnicity and Location.
The Impact of Running Start college credits earned on the predicted probability of enrolling in a 4-yr college or university by GPA, holding all other predictors constant.

Note: Mean GPA = 2.80 (.943) & Mean Running Start Credits earned = 37.729 (29.87)
The Main Effects of Race/Ethnicity and Geographic Context on the predicted probability of Running Start Students persisting past first-year of college, holding all else constant.

**Findings: Model 2**

**Geographical Context**

The diagram illustrates the predicted probability of persistence for different racial/ethnic groups in rural and non-rural contexts. The bars indicate the probability for Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, Latino, Native American, and Multiracial students. The data shows significant differences in persistence rates across these groupings and contexts.
Findings Model 2: Direct Transition to College

The Impact of Race/Ethnicity on the predicted probability of persisting past first year of college by direct high school transfer, holding all other predictors constant.
Findings Model 2: DTAs the Role of Institutional Policy

The Impact of Race/Ethnicity on the predicted probability of persisting past first year of college by direct transfer agreement degree, holding all other predictors constant.
• Students who immediately transitioned to 4 year IHEs had higher persistence rates then those who started in CCs
• RS Students are likely to transfer to four-year institutions
• Academic achievement (GPA) strong predictor of persistence
• Credits earned strong predictor of persistence consistent with previous studies on “Tipping Points” and “Academic Momentum” (Adelman, 2004; Swanson, 2008; Bailey, Thomas & Karp, 2003)
• Underrepresented students benefitted from RS enrollment
• RS students are likely to persist into the 2nd year of college
• Institutional policies like DTAs matter for student transfer and persistence
• Discuss Dual enrollment or Early College Models that are the most successful for Latino and EL students (in your respective states/regions).

• How might Access to these programs with proven results be expanded to better address the unique needs of Latino students and families?
Policy Recommendations

• Dual Enrollment programs need greater access points for Latino students
• DTAs between CCs and four-year IHEs matter—expanding the existence of DTAs is critical to ensure greater transfer & completion rates
• Information on direct transfer processes for students must be transparent at both levels
• Dual enrollment programs reduce time to degree and are cost effective—state support for these efforts may be a viable option for increasing college completion
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