Student Engagement: Successful Outcomes for Students with Dependent Children

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Presenters

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• Highly Qualified Certification in Pre-K through 8th grades in TN and NC
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Project Directors

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About ETSU

Enrollment 14,000

Serves Upper East Tennessee and Surrounding States

11 Academic colleges

125 Degree Programs
The Tennessee Board of Regents Grant
Providing Support to Students with Dependents to Increase Student Engagement, Retention, and Success
## Project Design

### Gather Data

- Literature Review
- Review of ETSU website to assess availability of information for students with dependents
- On-line survey with responses from 168 students with dependents
- Focus Groups
- Parent Interviews of students who use or had used Little Bucs Student Child Care
- Fiscal information and return on investment

### Analyze Data

- Quantitative analysis of survey
- Qualitative analysis of Focus Groups and Parent Interviews
- Analysis of fiscal information in process

### Implement New Supports

- Evening care
- Incentive payment
Literature Review
Miller and colleagues (2011) describe this specific population of non-traditional students as being different from traditional students in many ways.

• Age range
• First generation college students
• More likely to have lower incomes
• More likely to hold full-time employment
Miller et al. (2011) also reported that 71 percent of students with dependent children are women and many are students of color.
McDermott (2013) noted that a letter from the U.S. Department of Education sent to higher educational institutions...

- “Just 2% of women who have a child before age 18 earn a college degree by age 30” (Students section, para. 2).
D. K. Estes (2011) reported parents listed many benefits of being a student in spite of the many challenges they encounter daily.
Annie, a twenty-four-year-old African American single mother of a three-year-old boy said, “I want him to look at me and be proud, be inspired to go to school himself” (Estes 2011 p. 210).
Molly, a twenty-one year old African American single mother of a two year old, noted “I will know more stuff to help her out in the long run” (Estes, 2011, p. 210).
Lilith, a twenty year old Caucasian, sophomore, single mother, of a newborn said, “After I had my son going to college now is all about learning as much as I can to do the best for the children I am going to care for” (Estes, 2011, p.210).
Colleges and universities are encountering an increase in undergraduate students who are parents with dependent children (Miller, Gault, & Thorman, 2011).
53% of parents will leave college without a degree vs. 31% of non parents

40% of student parents work fulltime jobs

Parent students maintain higher GPA than non parents in the same age group

50% spend 30 hours per week on care-giving for dependents

Low income college students with dependents are 25% less likely to obtain a degree than low income college students
Many studies document the positive impact of maternal level of education on the development and education of their children (Burchinal, et.al. 2002)
ETSU Study/Survey Results
Marital Status

- Married: 61.88% (99)
- Single: 22.50% (36)
- Divorced: 15.63% (25)

160 Responses
Are You Employed?

- Full Time: 70
- Part Time: 20
Bachelor Degree Students

**Age of Student**

- 18-25: 19%
- 26-30: 23%
- 31-35: 25%
- 36-40: 16%
- 40+: 17%

**Hours Completed**

- <30: 43%
- 30-60: 31%
- 60-75: 14%
- >75: 11%

160 Responses
Degree Being Pursued

- Bachelor: 64%
- Masters: 18%
- Doctoral: 15%
- Associate/Certificate: 3%
Year of Initial Enrollment for Bachelor Degree Students

- 45% Before 2000
- 23% 2000 to 2004
- 21% 2005 to 2009
- 11% 2010 or after

Data gathered in Fall of 2014
Responses from 103 students
# Type of Care Utilized

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Care Utilized</th>
<th>Spouse/Partner</th>
<th>Relative care outside of home</th>
<th>Family Child Care Home (non relative)</th>
<th>Center based Child Care Off Campus</th>
<th>Campus Child Care</th>
<th>Public School</th>
<th>After School program</th>
<th>Babysitters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infants and Toddlers</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Elementary</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation to Pursue Higher Education

- Future employment: 90.00%
- Role model for children: 40.00%
- Love of learning: 60.00%
- Personal interest in the subject: 40.00%
- Doing something for myself: 40.00%
- Get out of the house: 20.00%
- Other (please specify): 20.00%
Issues in Balancing

- Studying and domestic responsibilities
- School and employment responsibilities
- Studying and personal social or leisure activities
- Maintaining healthy sleep and eating habits

- Not an Issue/barrier
- Occasional issue/barrier
- Frequent issue/barrier
- Major issue/barrier
Student Perception

- Lack of confidence
- Lack of motivation
- Feeling isolated
- Lack of academic skills

Bars represent:
- Not an Issue
- Occasional Issue
- Frequent Issue
- Major Issue

Percentages indicate the perception level of each issue.
Impact of Issues and/or Barriers on Higher Education Experience

Frequency of Response

- Took Fewer classes per semester: 40%
- Increased motivation to persist in degree completion: 35%
- Took a break in pursuit of degree: 30%
- Under performance: 25%
- Less motivation to persist: 20%
- Accelerated performance in academics: 15%
- Took more classes per semester: 10%
Focus Groups
Focus Group Analysis

- Affordability: 34%
- Balancing School and Parenting: 32%
- Campus based activities and supports: 12%
- Parenting as a Student: 22%
Affordability

“I take out max loans and I even got a warning from financial aid...”

“I looked into it (campus childcare) - way out of my budget”

“Accessing affordable child care has been difficult now. If I don’t get an education, it is going to be even more difficult...”

“...I’d say finances and time management there’s not enough hours in the day.”

“I definitely could not have finished my Bachelor degree without it (childcare) and now it is too expensive.”

“...cause they get grants and that helps with the price, but still...”
Campus Based Activities and Support

“...she (professor) came to the service, she called me, she let other people in my cohort know. The entire department sent me a card, a gift card...”

“As long as I keep communication open, my supervisors and my professors are very encouraging...”

“...the food pantry was an option for me...”

“...I had to apply for assistance for the YMCA afterschool program, and they did help me...”

“...I am in a relationship with a man who has kids too, so he helps a lot...”
Balancing School and Parenting

“...my husband died last year...I have three children...”

“I guess it was challenging (being a parent) because I had more to think about, but I knew it would be worth it not just for us but for her.”

“I had to manage my time better. Before I had her, I had free time for naps, lunch with friends. But having her I had to use my time wisely, between classes I used to do homework or studied.”

“I know when I filled out the application to go back I just held my breath (deep breath in) and clicked that submit button...”

“More responsibility and I do not have a desire to party.....Last thing on my mind. The main reason that I have continued my education is because of my daughter and I want to push...”
Benefits of Parenting

“I have to put extra effort in.”

“Just knowing when I finish it will be better for both of us.”

“Motivation, showing him that learning is important, education is important.”

“I have a real life case study at home...I can see in her development...”

“Learning about stage (sic) of learning, motivation for me to be excited and finish school.”
Next Steps

- Complete Fiscal Analysis
- Gather information about impact of new and expanded services implemented at ETSU
- Continue to seek new ideas from other institutions
- Questions and Answers
References


