



By the Numbers

Focus on the Facts

Office of Institutional
Research
University of Wisconsin—La Crosse

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On the Shoulders of Giants: The EqS Excellence Perspective

Where Access refers to entrance into the University and Retention refers to progress toward and attainment of degrees, Excellence shifts the focus toward measuring how well the University is helping students not just attain their degree but experience and participate in additional educational experiences that add depth and value to their classroom experiences.

The EqS team at UW-L began exploring the Excellence perspective by examining student GPA, participation in University and program-based Honors programs, and participation in international opportunities provided through the University. Additionally, the team explored data available from the Spring 2003, 2004 and 2006 administrations of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to capture student experiences that are too difficult to quantify through the use of central data systems. After reviewing data from both the central student data warehouse and the NSSE respondents, the team decided on 5 equity measures, each disaggregated by race/ethnicity:

- The composition of students enrolled in Fall 2006 who have officially declared either the University or a

department-level Honors emphasis;

- The composition of students enrolled in Fall 2006 who achieved Dean's List;
- The composition of students enrolled in Fall 2006 who earned a term GPA of 3.0 or greater, between 2.0 and 3.0, and 2.0 and below;
- The composition of NSSE respondents from Spring 2003, 2004, & 2006 who reported that they completed a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op, clinical experience, completed an independent study or self-designed major, and/or worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of the classroom; and
- The composition of students enrolled in Fall 2006 who had completed an international education experience at any point up to and including that term.

Findings

Honors. UW-L offers a University Honors program, as well as departmental based honors programs. Overall participation in formal Honors programs, both at the university and departmental levels, is low (1.8% of undergraduate students);

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The EqS Evidence Team Needs YOU!

Input and reaction to the data collected and presented as part of the Equity Scorecard is necessary to the success of the project. Please come learn more about the project and dialogue with others about what this data means for UW-L:

EXCELLENCE Perspective Open Forums:

- Monday, March 26, 12 noon to 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, March 27, 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

INSTITUTIONAL RECEPTIVITY Perspective Open Forums:

Monday, April 16

- 12 noon to 1 p.m.
- 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Please feel free to attend either forum for each perspective!

All forums in 337 Cartwright.

Editor's Note

This issue is one of a series of issues on the Equity Scorecard Pilot project. You can find earlier issues discussing the pilot project within UW System, describing the Equity Scorecard framework and perspectives,

and detailing the results of the first & second preliminary reports on the Access & Retention perspectives on the Provost's website (<http://www.uwlax.edu/Provost/universitydata/numbers.htm>).

The EqS team has now moved on to the final perspective: Institutional Receptivity.

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For more information on the Equity Scorecard at UW-L, please visit:

<http://www.uwlax.edu/campusclimate/htm/EquityScorecard.html>

For more information on the development of the Equity Scorecard process, please visit the Center for Urban Education at USC:

<http://www.usc.edu/CUE>

On the Shoulders of Giants: EqS Excellence (cont.)

participation for students of color is even lower. For both the University and departmental programs, low levels of participation could result from a lack of awareness about honors programs.

Dean's List. Even when controlling for ACT scores all student of color groups are under equity for Dean's list. This inequity continues across all GPA ranges. Students of color with equally high ACT scores are under-represented at higher GPA ranges and over-represented at lower GPA ranges.

Enriching Educational Experiences. There are several more or less optional academic opportunities that students can participate in to enhance or enrich their educational experience at UW-L. Many departments and programs on campus encourage students to complete field work, independent study courses, and/or undergraduate research projects in conjunction with faculty. In general, UW-L students participate in enriching educational experiences at equal or higher rates than students attending similar institutions, in part, perhaps, because UW-L emphasizes such activities more and offers more opportunities. The data in the report show that students of color are usually at or above equity in terms of participation in enhanced educational opportunities.

International education has been the focus of significant promotion at UW-L for the past several years. Generally, most student of color groups appear to participate in international education at or above equity, however, Asian students are under equity on this measure. However, additional data from the NSSE shows that Asian, Native American, and African American students are more likely to have additional family care responsibilities, which may preclude them from taking advantage of international opportunities.

Summary

The data related to the Excellence perspective challenges institutional preconceptions. While UW-L students of color are under-represented in University Honors and other GPA-based distinctions, they appear to participate at or above equity in what may be more substantive or career-progressing academically enriching programs. It may be that the University could explore using criteria other than GPA for recognition of high achieving students.

- Students of color who are equally well prepared for college, as measured by ACT scores, do not earn the same GPA's as Caucasian students.
- Students of color are underrepresented in both University and departmental Honors programs.
- All students of color, except Asian/Pacific Islander students, work with a faculty member on a research project more frequently than Caucasian students.
- Native American and African American students are more likely to complete an independent study than Caucasian students.
- Native American students are more likely to complete an internship, practicum, or clinical-type experience than Caucasian students.
- All students of color, except Asian/Pacific Islander students are at least as likely to complete an international education experience as Caucasian students.

- Carmen Wilson & Teri Thill, authors for the Excellence perspective