



So Close, Yet So Far Away: Early vs. Late Dropouts

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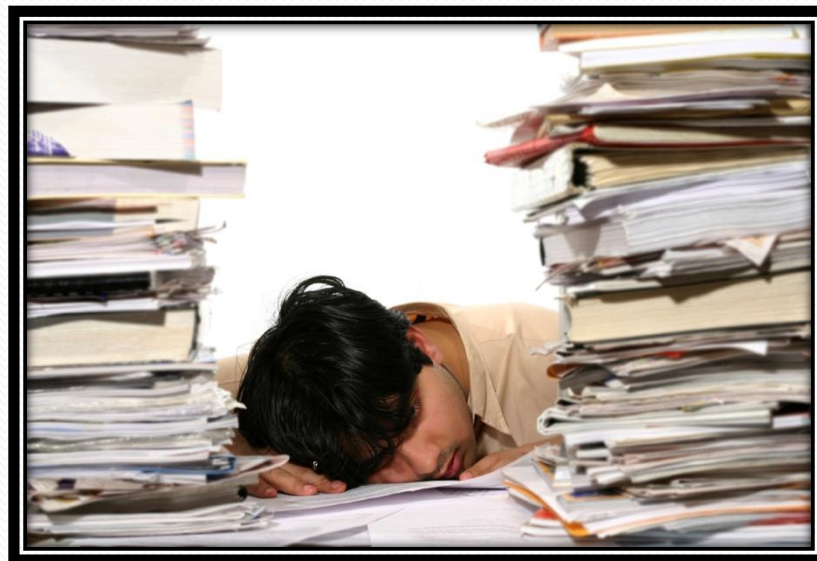
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You may be interested in this session if

- You're responsible for tracking students and their retention and progression to graduation.
- You're responsible for tracking drop-out students.
- You're interested in early vs. late dropouts.



This presentation will discuss

- Motivation for the Study
- Literature Review
- Research Questions
- Data, Variables, and Methods
- Results
- Limitations
- Possible Implications
- Questions and Comments



What Should I Learn This Session?

- AKA ... learning objectives
- Early dropouts leave for different reasons than late dropouts
- Results suggest that programming/services that focus on late dropouts is justified
- The majority of students that dropped out late did not matriculate elsewhere
- Campuses can strategically target late dropouts



Motivation for the Study

- To investigate whether early and late dropouts at a single institution differ on a range of factors.
- To compare how two dropout groups differ from degree completers.
- To reveal the destinations of late dropouts after their departure from the institution.



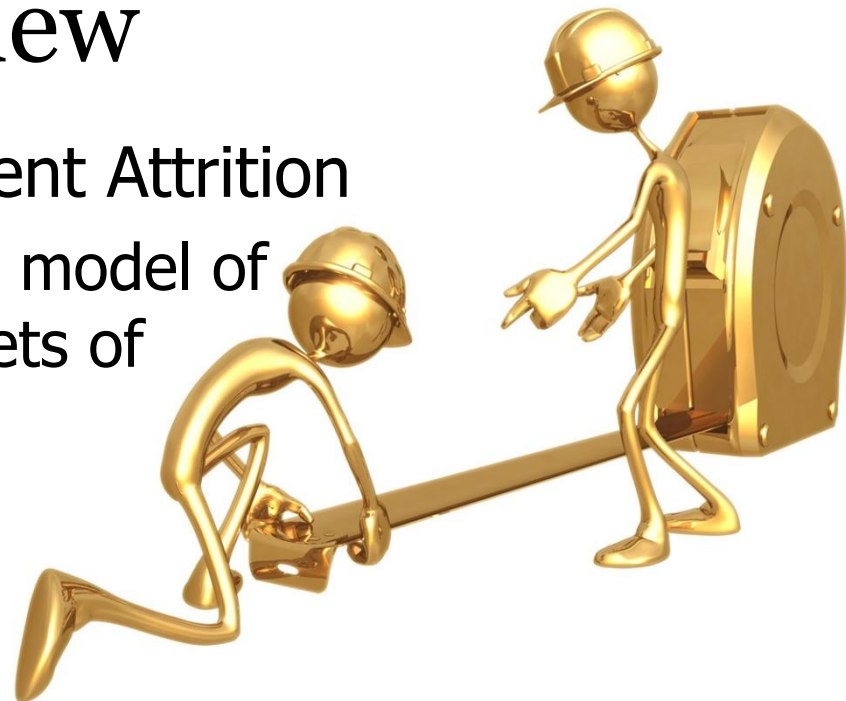
Brief Literature Review

- Tinto's Student Integration Model:
 - Students arrives at college with a variety of patterns of personal, family, and academic attributes that affect initial levels of commitment.
 - Initial commitments affect at levels of social and academic integration.
 - Results in the student's decision to persist or withdraw.



Brief Literature Review

- Bean's Model of College Student Attrition
 - The model proposes a causal model of student attrition with three sets of independent variables:
 - Background variables
 - Organizational determinants
 - Intervening variables.
 - These variables determine the level of student satisfaction with the institution, which, in turn, influence the level of institutional commitment.



Brief Literature Review

- The study will utilize the student retention theories developed by
 - Tinto (1993)
 - Bean (1980)
 - Cabrera, Nora, and Castaneda (1993)



Research Questions

1. What factors have significant impacts on early dropout relative to late dropout?
2. What factors have significant impacts on early dropout relative to six-year graduation?
3. What factors have significant impacts on late dropout relative to six-year graduation?
4. Where do late dropouts go after leaving their initial institution?



Definitions

- Early Dropout: First-time, full-time student who is not enrolled in year three and year four, does not graduate within six years, and is not enrolled in year seven or year eight.
- Late Dropout: A student who is enrolled in year three and year four or both years, does not graduate within six years, and is not enrolled in year seven or year eight.
- Graduate: A student who obtains his or her degree within six years.



RQ 1-3- Data, Variables, and Methods

- Data were obtained from a predominately White, medium-sized public university in a southeastern state.
- Three cohorts (1999, 2000, and 2001) were included in the study.
- Students with missing data were excluded, resulting in a sample size of 3,520.
- The outcome variable is persistence status with four categories: early dropout, late dropout, six-year graduation, and other.
- Multinomial and binary logistic regression were utilized.



RQ 1-3- Data, Variables, and Methods

Background

Characteristics:

Gender, Ethnicity,
Entering Age, and
Residency Status

Pre-College Academic

Preparation:

High School GPA, SAT
Math Score, SAT Verbal
Score

College Experience:

First-year Housing Status,
First-year Major Field, Fall
Semester, First-year
Course Load, and First-
year College GPA

Financial Aid:

State Merit Aid



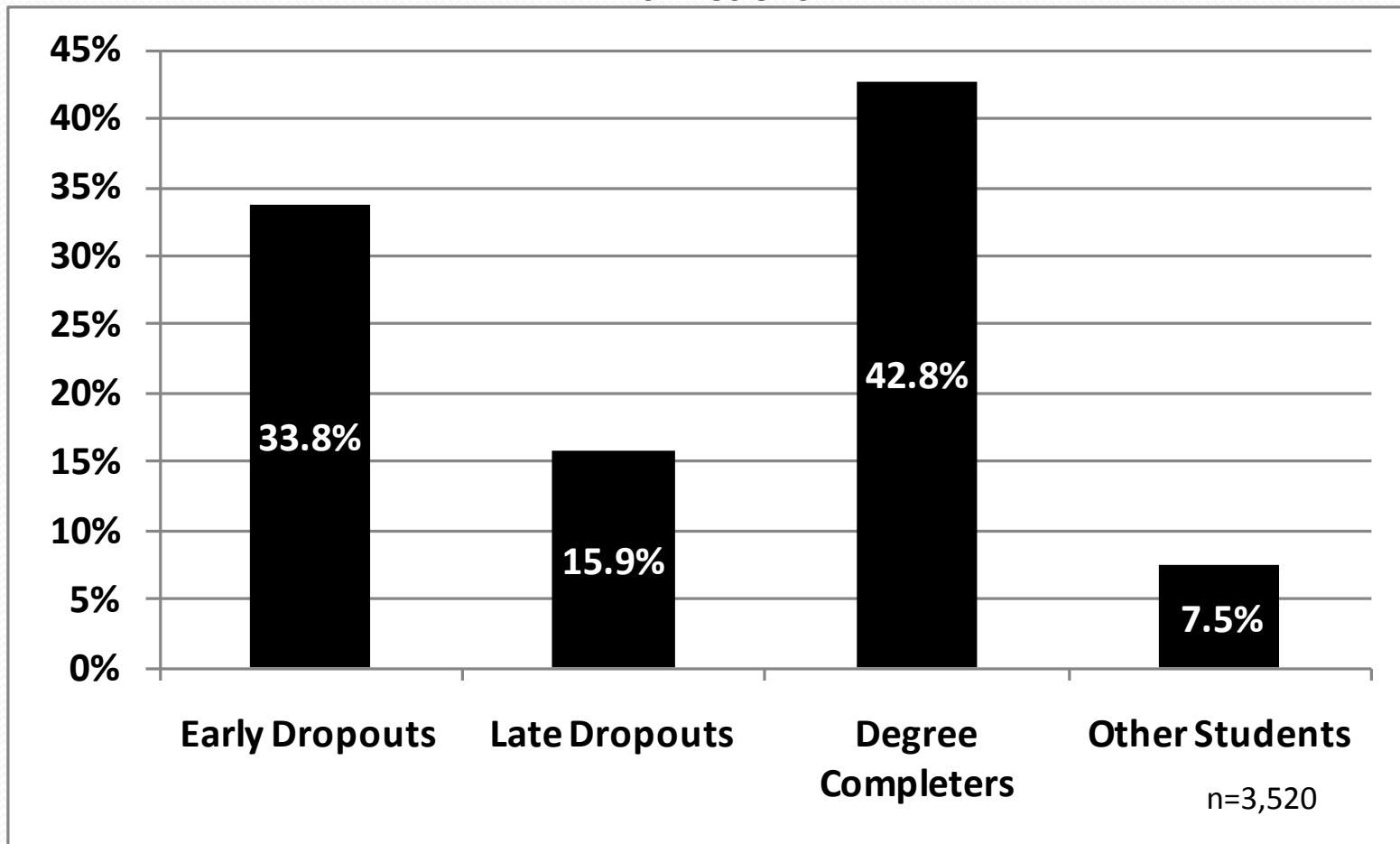
RQ 4- Data, Variables, and Methods

- Utilized a subsample (N=310) of the late dropout group.
 - Students departed from the study institution in the fifth or sixth year.
- National Student Clearinghouse
 - Data used to track dropouts' matriculation to other higher education institutions during the two years after their departure from the study institution.



Descriptive Statistics

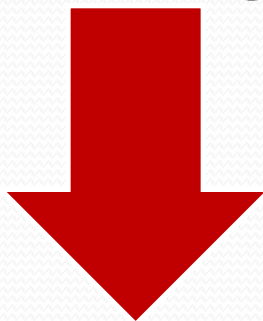
EXHIBIT 1: STATUS OF SAMPLE



Source: VSU SRA, April 2010.

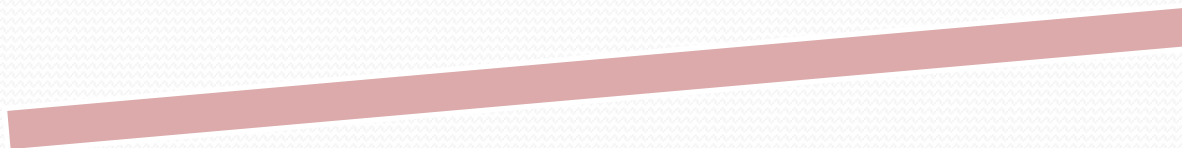


Results—RQ1-3



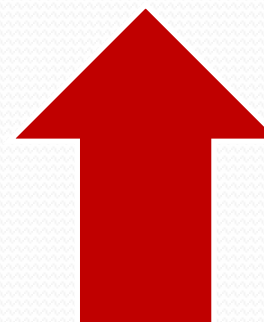
Early Dropouts

- ▶ Female Students
- ▶ Older Students
- ▶ White Students
- ▶ FY College GPA 0.00 to 2.50 Students



Late Dropouts

- ▶ Male Students
- ▶ Younger Students
- ▶ African American Students
- ▶ FY College GPA 2.51 to 3.50 Students



Results—RQ1-3

Living on campus was positively correlated with early dropouts.

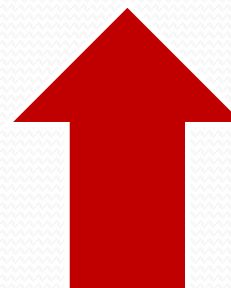


Early Dropouts

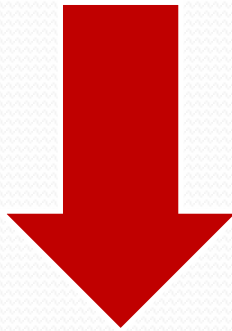
- ▶ Older Students
- ▶ White Students
- ▶ FY College GPA 0.00 to 2.50 Students
- ▶ Science Students
- ▶ Students Enrolled in Fewer Credits during 1st Term

Graduation

- ▶ Younger Students
- ▶ African American Students
- ▶ FY College GPA 3.01 to 4.00 Students
- ▶ Arts and Education Students
- ▶ Students Enrolled in More Credits during 1st Term



Results—RQ1-3



Late Dropouts

- ▶ Male Students
- ▶ FY College GPA 0.00 to 2.50 Students
- ▶ +100 on SAT Math Score
- ▶ Students Enrolled in Science or Nursing
- ▶ Students Without Merit Aid in 1st year

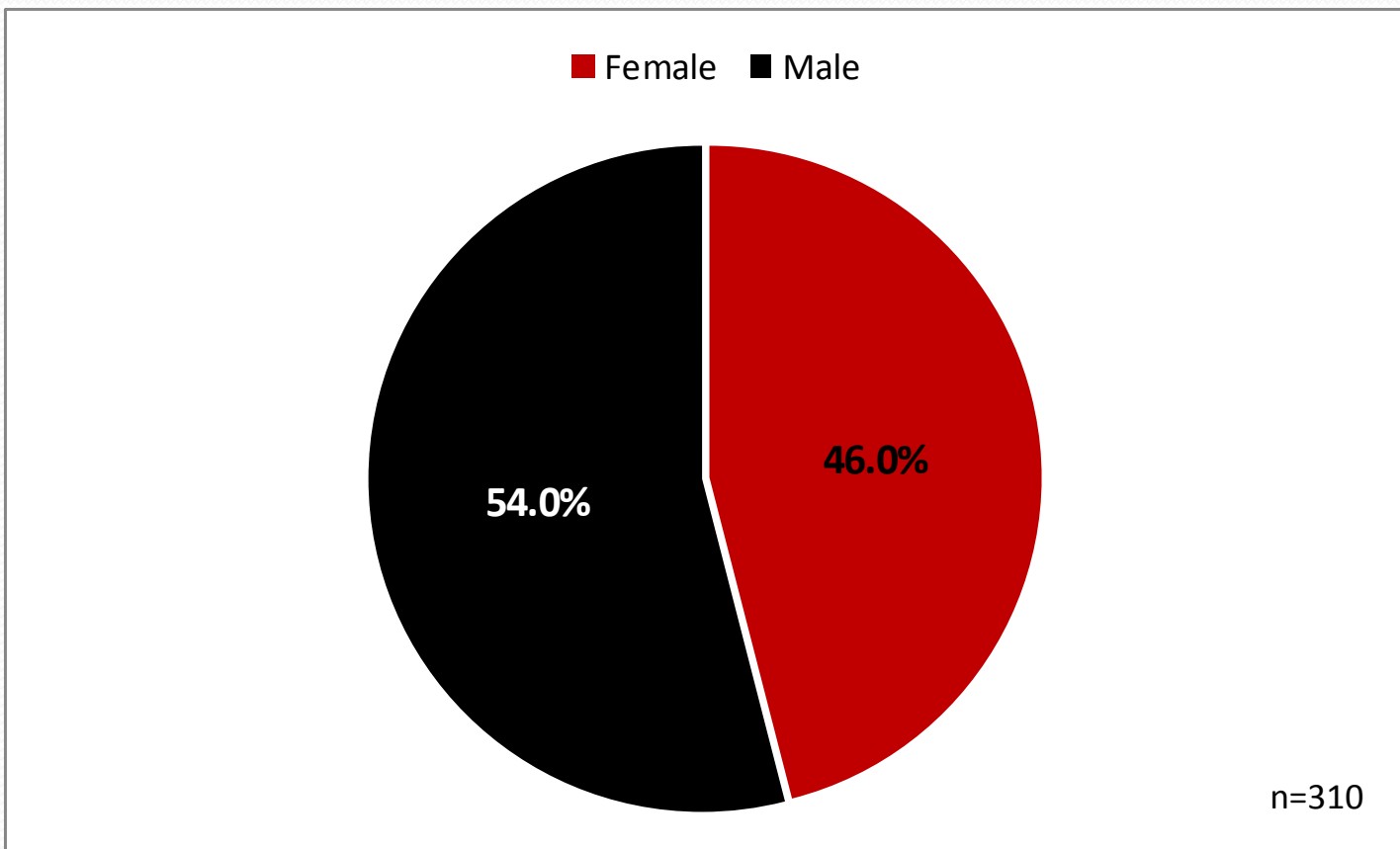
Graduation

- ▶ Female Students
- ▶ FY College GPA 3.01 to 4.00 Students
- ▶ -100 on SAT Math Score
- ▶ Students Enrolled in Arts, Business, Education, Undecided
- ▶ Students with Merit Aid in 1st year



Results—RQ4

EXHIBIT 2: LATE DROPOUTS BY GENDER

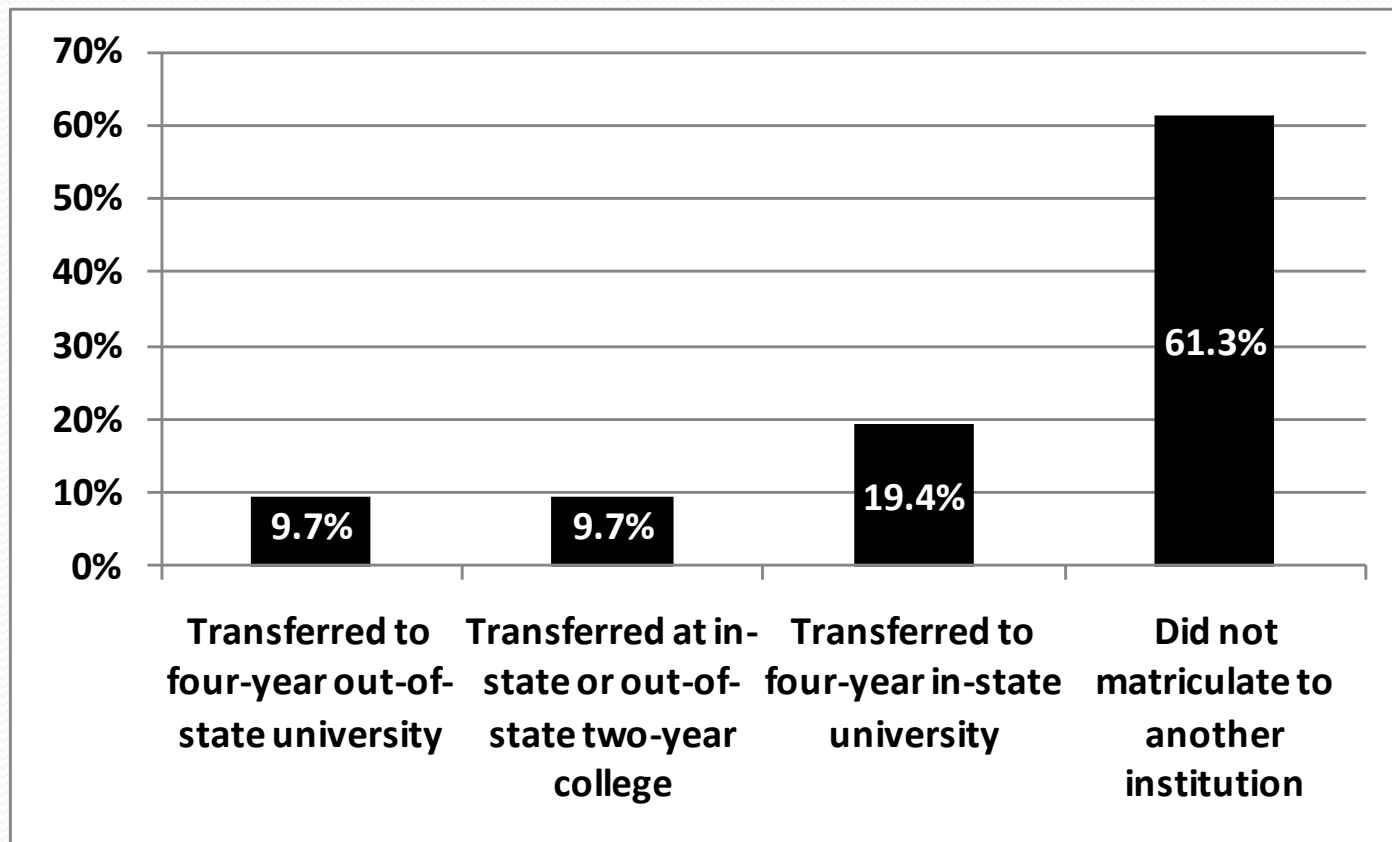


Source: VSU SRA, April 2010.



Results—RQ4

EXHIBIT 3: LATE DROPOUTS BY DESTINATION



Source: VSU SRA, April 2010.



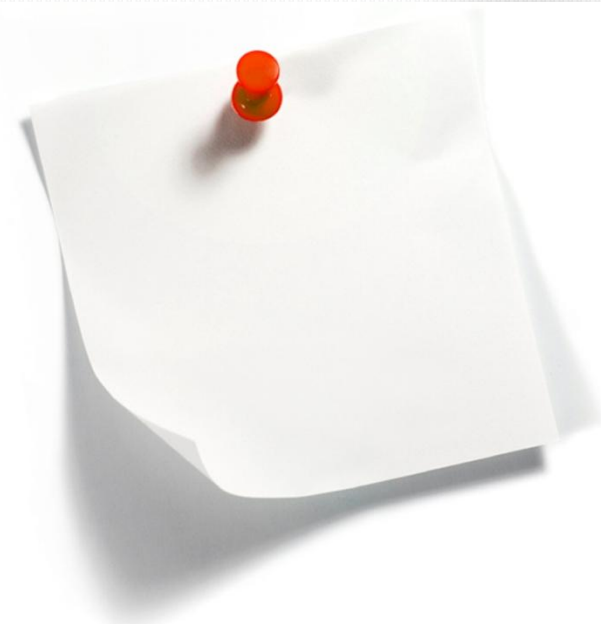
Limitations

- This study utilizes one institution; therefore, readers should use caution when generalizing to a larger population.
- However, the emphasis of this study is on late dropouts, a group of students that receives far less attention than its early leaver counterparts.



Limitations

- The subsample of 310 for research question 4 is not a random sample of all 560 late dropouts in this study.
- This subsample includes only students who dropped out in year 5 or 6; it does not include the 250 students who departed in year 3 or 4.



Discussion and Implications

1. Not all students respond to higher education in the same way.
 - Merit aid is statistically significant for the late dropout vs. graduation group, but not for the other two groups.
 - Consistent findings with research that financial aid impacts students differently at different points in their academic careers (Hu, 2000).



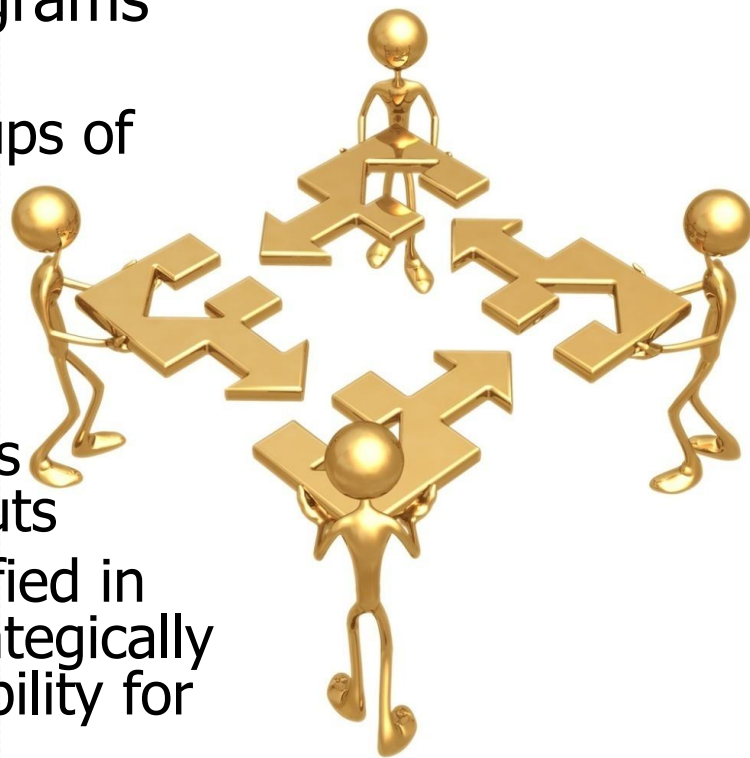
Discussion and Implications

2. Living on-campus during the first year increases the likelihood of early departure is counterintuitive to existing research (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
 - With further investigation, the results are consistent with the literature that a greater length of time spent living on-campus increases the probability for graduation.
 - It is also important to note that on-campus housing is highly desirable by students as all residence halls are ten years old or less.



Discussion and Implications

3. Institutional decision makers should use caution when creating programs and services for students
 - Need to consider different groups of dropouts.
4. We can develop a “taxonomy” of late dropouts.
 - This study reveals that the characteristics of early dropouts differ from those of late dropouts
 - Using the characteristics identified in this study, students can be strategically targeted to increase the probability for graduation.



Discussion and Implications

5. Share information about the reasons students leave with the campus
 - Including differences between early and late leavers.



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Interested in more information ...

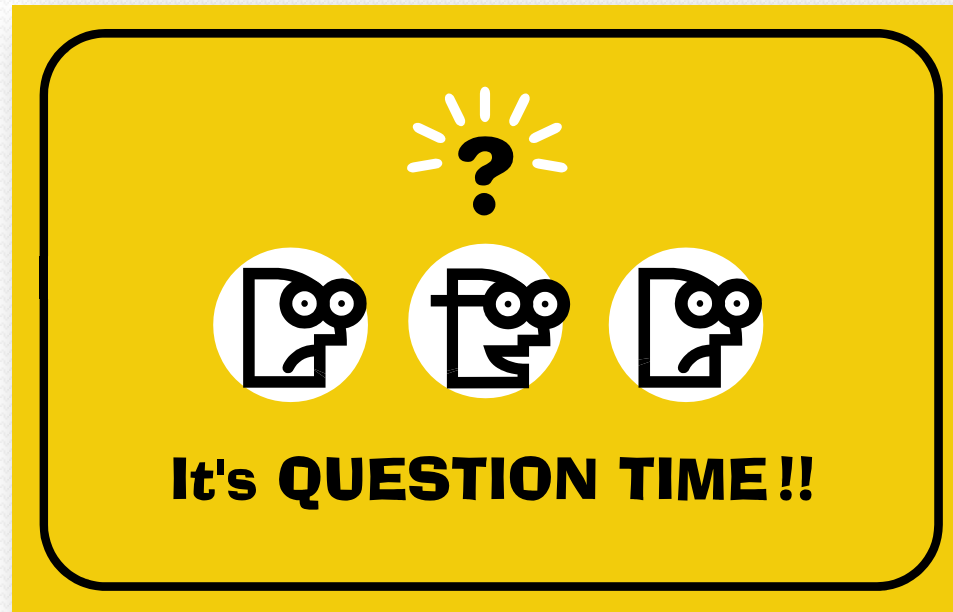
The paper is available on our website at:

<http://www.valdosta.edu/sra/presentations.shtml>



Thank You

Questions and Comments





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