

FOCUS TOPICS

Workforce Preparation and Placement for Students with Disabilities

At UIC, the oversight of disabled students' concerns is handled by the Office of Disability Services (ODS). ODS is a unit within the Counseling Section of the Office of Student Affairs. Its primary focus is to assist disabled students in accessing academic programs. To that end, the Office of Disability Services concentrates its efforts on assisting students in documenting their disabilities and then assisting faculty and staff in arranging appropriate accommodations.

The Office of Disability Services refers students to the Office of Rehabilitation Services of the Illinois Department of Human Services for assistance with job placement as well as to the UIC Office of Career Services. ODS participates in a nationwide resume database (Resume Database for Persons with Disabilities) that allows students with disabilities to submit their resumes for possible positions. The Resume Database is hosted by The National Business and Disability Council which is the leading national resource on all issues related to the successful employment of persons with disabilities. The Resume Database allows persons with disabilities looking for employment who hold at least a two-year college degree to register their resume on an Internet database free of charge. Once these data are verified, the resume is posted and reviewed by a substantial number of Fortune 1000 companies. The Office of Disability Services also coaches students on how to approach future employers concerning needed accommodations and the legal requirements governing the timing of such discussions.

One of the services offered by the Office of Disability Services that is most likely to have a positive outcome on future job placement is help with obtaining internships. ODS staff use various lists of internships to find appropriate placements for students wishing this experience.

Over the past five years (Fall 1993 - Summer 1998), 137 students with documented disabilities were granted degrees from UIC. Eighty-eight students received bachelors degrees, 1 received a PharmD, 40 received masters, 6 received PhDs, and 2 were granted MDs. Reviewing the areas in which these students received degrees, it is apparent that the distribution of disabled students across degree categories differs from that of the total UIC population. At the baccalaureate-level, 16% were granted degrees by the College of Health and Human Development Sciences, 13% in Social Work, and 3% in Nursing. At the masters-level, almost a third (32.5%) of the degrees granted to disabled students were in Social Work. Disabled students are concentrated in the area of health and human services.

UIC does not track the careers of individual students. However units were asked to provide any information they had concerning the employment of graduates from their programs over the past decade. Although the data are incomplete, the reported employment outcomes were generally positive. For example, Medicine reports that of the two recent MD recipients with documented disabilities, both obtained residencies through the MATCH process. One of these new MDs achieved her first choice. As noted previously, a large number of students completed degrees in the College of Health and Human Development Sciences. Half received degrees in Occupational Therapy. All of these students passed their certification exam and all but one is employed as an occupational therapist. The one who is unemployed had to abandon employment due to increasing disability. The Jane Addams College of Social Work reported that of the sixteen individuals that received baccalaureate, masters, and PhD degrees in social work during this time period, all but one are employed. Four of the students in this group received both a BSW and an MSW from UIC. All but one of the employed degree recipients are working in the field of social work. Six are social workers in public child welfare agencies, and six are social workers in various school systems. One is employed in the UIC Department of Psychiatry. The remainder are employed by various public or private agencies or by municipalities. The one who is outside the field is a sales person for a pharmaceutical company. The School of Public Health reported that of the two students identified as

Disabled UIC social work graduates are employed in child welfare agencies, schools, municipal agencies, the pharmaceutical industry, and at UIC.

recent graduates with disabilities, both had employment in a permanent position prior to beginning the degree and returned to those positions upon completion. This concentration of disabled students in health-related or helping fields is even evident among the Liberal Arts and Sciences degree recipients. For example, a disabled student who completed a baccalaureate degree in classics has since graduated from medical school at another Illinois institution. One possible explanation for the success of disabled graduates in finding employment in professional positions in helping professions is that the employers are familiar with the issues related to disabilities and are prepared to provide accommodation.

Improving Representation in Teacher Education

Enrollment and Degree Completion

Elementary Education

Students entering UIC as freshmen or sophomores who wish to pursue a degree in elementary education must first complete a pre-elementary education curriculum in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences before applying for admission to the elementary education degree program in the College of Education. For that reason, all elementary education figures are based on the

Hispanic representation is significantly higher in elementary education at UIC than in the undergraduate student body as a whole.

college of current enrollment or in the case of graduation rates, the college of last enrollment. The figures in Table 14 show the enrollments in elementary education for fall 1990 through fall 1998. The students in the elementary education program are predominantly female (88% in 1998). There has been some increase in male enrollments in the past four years reaching 14% in fall 1997. The number of African-American students in the elementary education program has been limited, ranging from a high of 17 in 1991 to a low of 8 in 1993, with 14 African American students in 1998. In contrast, the number of Hispanics has increased from a total of 24 in 1990 to 47 in 1998. In 1998, the enrollment of African American students in elementary education was a smaller percentage of the whole (7%) than that of total undergraduate African American enrollment at UIC (10.3%). In contrast, the enrollment of Hispanics in elementary education was a substantially higher percentage (23%) than that of the total undergraduate Hispanic population in 1998 (17%).

Table 15 presents data on the distribution by race/ethnicity and gender of elementary education degree recipients from FY90 through FY98. Due to the small numbers in each category, these data do not provide a clear pattern. Cohort data which track an entering class is more meaningful. As the figures in Table 16 and Table 17 indicate, the six-year graduation rate for the 1991 and 1992 cohort of freshmen in elementary education is quite high – 30 of 34 for the 1991 cohort and 36 of 41 in the 1992 cohort. In these two cohorts, 70-80% of the Hispanic students graduated in 6 years. However, the numbers are too small to warrant generalization.

Secondary Education

The enrollments of African American and Hispanic students in secondary education degree programs show a steady increase over the decade (Table 18). African American enrollments have increased from 16 in Fall 1990 to 37 in Fall 1998. Hispanic enrollments show an even larger increase from 37 in Fall 1990 to 100 in Fall 1998. The majority of secondary education students are women but the percentages are lower than for elementary education program. Although the number of degrees granted in secondary education is relatively low, we can still see that Hispanic students in particular are receiving a respectable number of these degrees – 15% in FY 1998 (Table 19). The small numbers of African American secondary education degree recipients make the percentages uninformative.

Hispanic representation in secondary education at UIC is on a par with the undergraduate population.

In Fall 1998, fifty percent or more of the students enrolled in math and science secondary education degree programs at UIC were women. Of the 51 degrees awarded in these fields from 1991 to 1998, 38 or 74% were earned by women. Interestingly, this pattern is also evident in the numbers of teaching of math graduate degrees awarded. UIC has conferred 145 masters degrees in the teaching of math from 1991 through 1998. Of these, 69% were to women.

Programs Targeting Minority and Female Students in Teacher Education

UIC mounts a number of initiatives that seek to increase the enrollment and success of minority and female students in teacher education. These programs include recruitment activities, continued support and advice from faculty, staff, and peers, and financial support. Of particular note are the following.

- Golden Apple Scholars Program
UIC participates in the Golden Apple Scholars program sponsored by the Golden Apple Foundation. Scholars are outstanding high schools students of color who have decided to study teaching. They are heavily recruited by colleges and universities across the state. Currently, UIC has 11 Golden Apple Scholars (nine in the elementary education program and two in the secondary program). These 11 students are at different stages of their professional development and are progressing well through their programs. The Council on Teacher Education meets with them regularly and has involved them extensively in the UIC Future Teachers Club.
- Orientation Sessions
The Secondary Teacher Education Advisory Committee (STEAC) sponsors orientation sessions for potential teachers. STEAC is a university-wide committee that coordinates UIC's 11 secondary teacher education programs. Each Fall Semester, STEAC offers two orientations to UIC students who express interest in teaching in grades six through twelve. Each orientation provides an overview of the programs UIC offers, and allows prospective teachers the opportunity to hear about teaching from recent graduates, veteran teachers, and university teacher educators. The sessions are well attended (approximately 65 students at each).
- Future Teachers Club
UIC sponsors a Future Teachers' Club for all students on campus who are in teacher education programs or who are considering teacher education as their major. This past year, FTC offered several sessions that focused on "Images of Teaching Through Film." These sessions were led by University faculty who are experts in teacher preparation. This coming academic year the focus will be on "Images of Learning." FTC works in close collaboration with the African American Academic Network (AAAN) and the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Support program (LARES) plans to establish even greater links this coming academic year.
- John Beck Scholarship Program
Through the generosity of the John Beck family UIC has established a scholarship program with the City Colleges of Chicago. Recipients of the scholarship must be African American and they must be interested in studying elementary education.
- Minority Support Programs
The campus-wide minority support programs play a key role in the recruitment and retention of minority students. For example, the African American Academic Network (AAAN), and the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Support program (LARES) implemented the first annual *Minority Teacher Mentor Program*. The goal of this program is to encourage minorities to consider the teaching profession by reinforcing their interests with experiences that introduce students to educational opportunities and support systems. Students are matched with teachers in schools and familiarized with the academic culture of the teaching environment.

LARES also helps support students in the teacher education program in the following ways:

- assisting students in the application and financial assistance processes
- distributing information on special scholarship opportunities for education majors
- providing academic advising for education majors
- acquainting students with UIC graduation and ISBE requirements
- working closely with the College of Education to assess the potential impact of curriculum and certification changes on Latino students (e.g., admissions criteria)
- co-sponsoring with the College of Education special cooperative outreach efforts to recruit Latinos into the teaching profession. This past year, LARES conducted an application review workshop for College applicants. This workshop addressed writing and analytical thinking skills.

Early Outreach

UIC depends on a wide array of pre-collegiate programs to attract minority and female students to post-secondary programs, especially math and science. Descriptions of these programs appear in other sections of this report. Such preparation is necessary before specific career tracks, e.g., teacher education, can be considered by the student.

One example of early outreach programs that promote solid math preparation is a program called FAMILY MATH. UIC's Office of Math and Computer Education (OMCE) is an official national site for FAMILY MATH. The purpose of FAMILY MATH is to bring more girls, minority students, and other underrepresented groups (e.g., recent immigrants) into careers that use mathematics and science. There are about two million people around the world taking part in FAMILY MATH. As a national site, UIC provides leadership training so that schools, churches, neighborhood groups, libraries, museums, etc. can put on FAMILY MATH sessions. In addition to providing leadership training, OMCE is involved in developing new materials and curricula for these programs.

In another relevant outreach activity UIC's Early Outreach program has begun to partner with the Golden Apple Foundation to sponsor workshops to encourage students to pursue careers in education. The workshops involve former Early Outreach students who are currently Golden Apple Scholars. These Scholars speak to current Early Outreach students and serve as role models.

Best Practices

Financial support is, without a doubt, the most effective practice with respect to recruiting and retaining the targeted group of students. Scholarships, University tuition and fee waivers, grants, and assistantships are all vehicles that have been successful in recruiting and retaining students of color and women.

Since preparation is essential for entry into education programs in math and science, programs that strengthen the math and science skills of K-12 students are essential. One example of such a program is the *Regional Math/Science Center at UIC*. The goal of the Center is to increase the number of students who enter and successfully complete undergraduate degrees in mathematics, science and engineering. The RMSC has a four state region from which it draws students. Through personal, academic and career counseling, RMSC has had tremendous success in improving the participants' achievement. On a quarterly basis, RMSC collects the grades of each student. Those data show that 90% of the participating students have shown improvement in their overall grade point averages. This program in concert with other outreach programs such as the *Hispanic Math-Science Education Initiative (HMSEI)* assist in the preparation of students for entry into education degree programs in math and science.

Programs that target minority undergraduate students are also helpful. The *Chicago Alliance for Minority Participation at UIC* attempts to increase the number of minorities in Science, Engineering and Mathematics majors (including education). To achieve this goal, this program supplements courses in entry level math and science classes with workshops throughout the semester, conducts a linked math and chemistry class

which is based on cooperative learning techniques, and offers participants research opportunities in math and science.

Obstacles to Success

There are four obstacles to the recruitment and retention of minorities and women into education degree programs, especially in math and science, that are judged to be the most intractable.

- Lack of finances to pay educational costs while supporting self and/or a family
- Personal life often intervenes -- e.g., parents or children who are ill and need care and assistance
- Poor preparation for university work in specific subject areas, e.g., mathematics, science, and composition
- Specific cultures that do not support women's involvement in educational experiences beyond high school

Plans for the Future

One planned program expansion is aimed specifically at recruitment into teacher education. This coming academic year, the College of Education plans to expand the Future Teachers Club to include high school students. One Chicago high school has expressed interest in participating in such a program.

Previous retention studies by the College of Education have demonstrated the importance of organizing students in cohorts and having them move through a teacher education program as a cohort. This has proved to be a very effective retention tool.

Building on this foundation, the College of Education has decided to pilot a program of "Advisories" in Fall, 1999. An advisory is a group of about 10 teacher education majors who meet regularly with a faculty member to discuss what they're studying in their courses and in their clinical work, to support each other in their efforts, and to receive academic advising. The model has been very effective at Bank Street College in New York. Two UIC faculty members visited Bank Street this past year and were trained in the method.