

Invisible Inclusion: Building a Case for Change in Support of Students with Socioeconomic Challenge

Strategic Planning Session

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.®

TODAY

Case Study: University of Tennessee, Knoxville 30 mins

Small Group Breakout 30 mins

High-Level Takeaways 15 mins

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT A GLANCE

- State Flagship and Land Grant
- Undergraduate Enrollment: 22,000
 - Underrepresented Minorities: 13%
 - Pell-eligible Students: 30%
 - Tennessee In-State: 87%
- Retention Rate: 87%
- Graduation Rate: 70%

BUILDING A CASE FOR CHANGE

- Understanding the challenge
- Going beyond the numbers – role of qualitative data
- Using strategic planning to make the case for change

UT'S CHALLENGE

Vol Vision 2020, the University's strategic plan, outlines aggressive goals for six-year graduation improvement.

Graduation Rates by Cohort Year
Fall 2002 to 2012

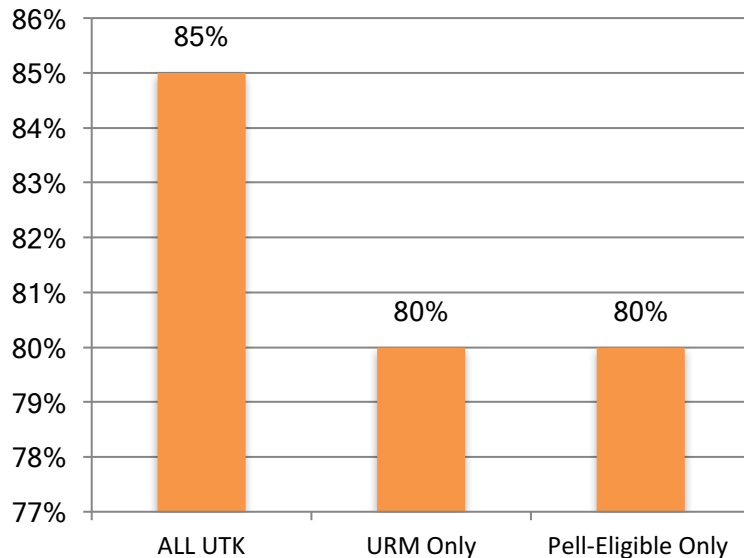
■ % Cohort Graduated in 4 Years ■ % Cohort Graduated in 5 Years ■ % Cohort Graduated in 6 Years



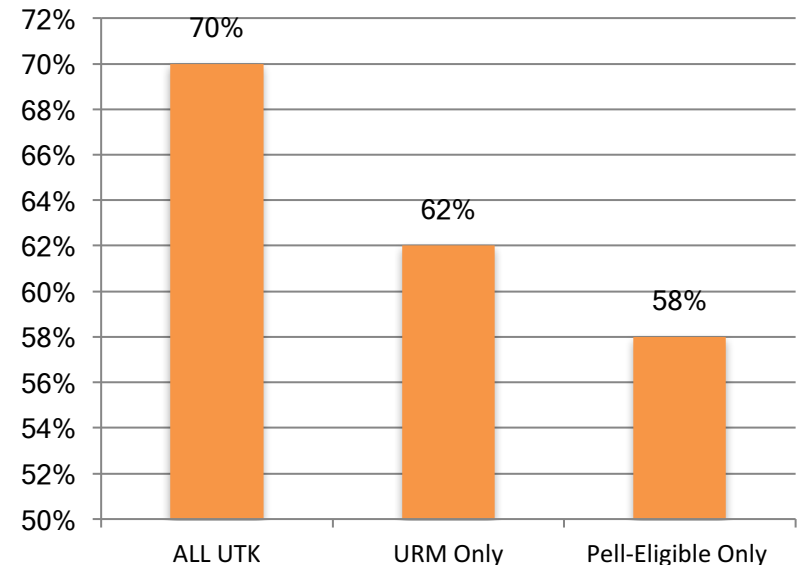
UT'S CHALLENGE

Vol Vision 2020 also includes an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, including reducing graduation gaps for underrepresented minority and low-income (Pell-eligible students).

First-to-Second Year Retention, Fall 2015



Six-Year Graduation Rates, Fall 2015

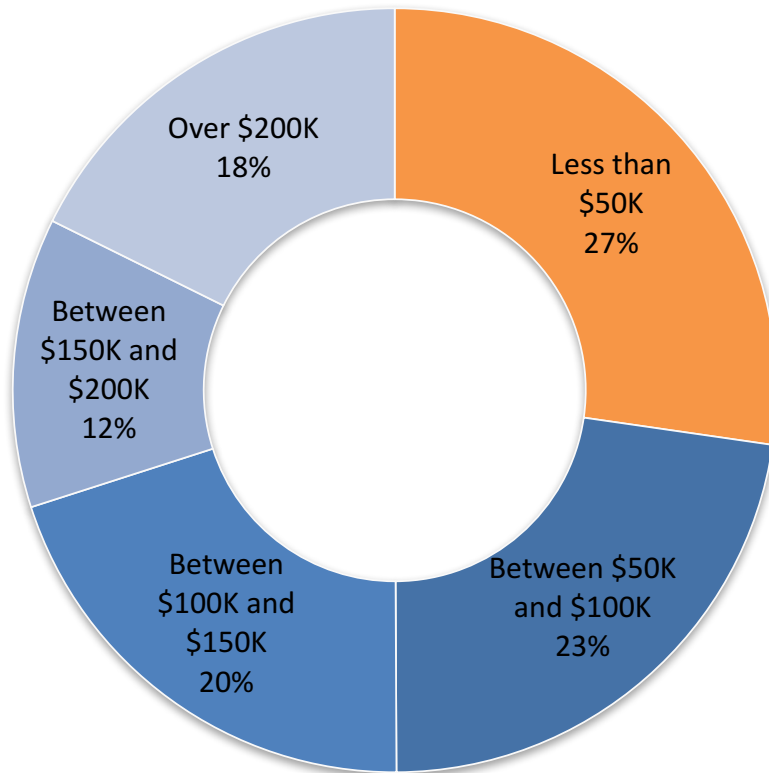


We found that while retention gaps were comparable, the gap for Pell-eligible students exceed that of underrepresented minorities in six-year graduation.

UT'S CHALLENGE

A further review revealed that a large percentage of the UTK undergraduate population fell in the lowest income category.

All Undergraduates by AGI Grouping
2015



Additional Data on
All Undergraduates

30%

Pell Eligible

25%

First Generation

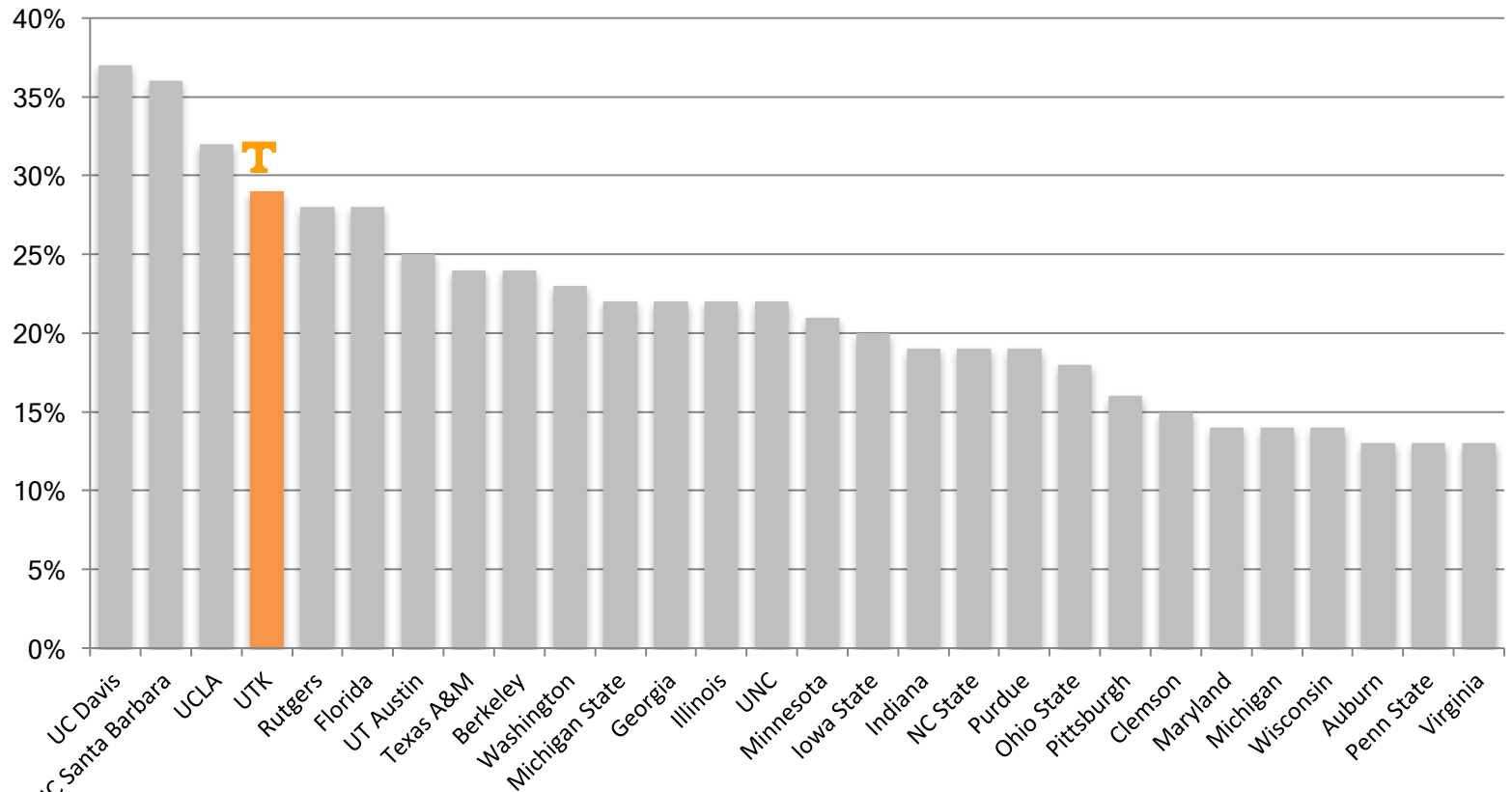
13%

Underrepresented Minorities

UT'S CHALLENGE

When compared to a peer set of leading public research universities, UTK was the fourth highest in students receiving Pell Grant assistance.

Percentage of Undergraduate Students Receiving Pell Grants, 2014
UTK vs. Peers



Source: IPEDS

THE STAYER STUDY

In Fall 2016, we conducted a “stayer study” to ask students poised for graduation the drivers for persistence.

Stayers Study

- Students who had senior standing (90+ hours)
- 6,091 received survey
- 749 usable responses; 12% response rate

	All	Pell 43%	Non-Pell 57%
Female	65%	67%	64%
Male	35%	33%	36%
In State	90%	89%	90%
Out of State	10%	12%	10%
White	74%	70%	78%
Underrepresented Minorities	10%	15%	7%
Other (Includes Unknown)	16%	15%	15%

THE STAYER STUDY

The stayer study helped to identify students who contemplated leaving or left the university, but continued to persist to graduation.

- Nine items with three options for each:
 - Never made me want to leave
 - Made me consider leaving but was resolved
 - Led me to sit out for at least one semester
- Stayers: Selected “never made me want to leave” for all nine items
- Contemplators: Selected “made me consider leaving but was resolved” for at least one item AND Did NOT select “led me to sit out for at least one semester” for any item
- Returners: Selected “led me to sit out for at least one semester” for at least one item

THE STAYER STUDY

Pell-eligible students were much more likely than non-Pell student to contemplate leaving.

	All	Pell	Non-Pell
Stayers	36%	30%	41%
Contemplators	54%	59%	50%
Returners	10%	11%	9%

THE STAYER STUDY

The study confirmed the extent to which Pell-eligible students were more likely to contemplate leaving for financial reasons.

Financial Reasons	Pell	Non-Pell
Trouble paying bills	39%	21%
Lost HOPE scholarship	14%	15%
Lost other financial aid	24%	13%

THE STAYER STUDY

The study found that Pell students were more likely to contemplate leaving for academic reasons than non-Pell students. However, both groups were comparable on fit reasons.

Academic Reasons	Pell	Non-Pell
Difficulty adjusting to academic demands	33%	22%
Faculty did not support me	24%	17%

Fit Reasons	Pell	Non-Pell
Felt like I didn't fit in	26%	23%
Homesick	14%	12%
Wanted to be closer to home	10%	8%

THE STAYER STUDY

The stayer study also determined that Pell students were more likely to have on-campus jobs and higher usage of student counseling and academic coaching than non-Pell students.

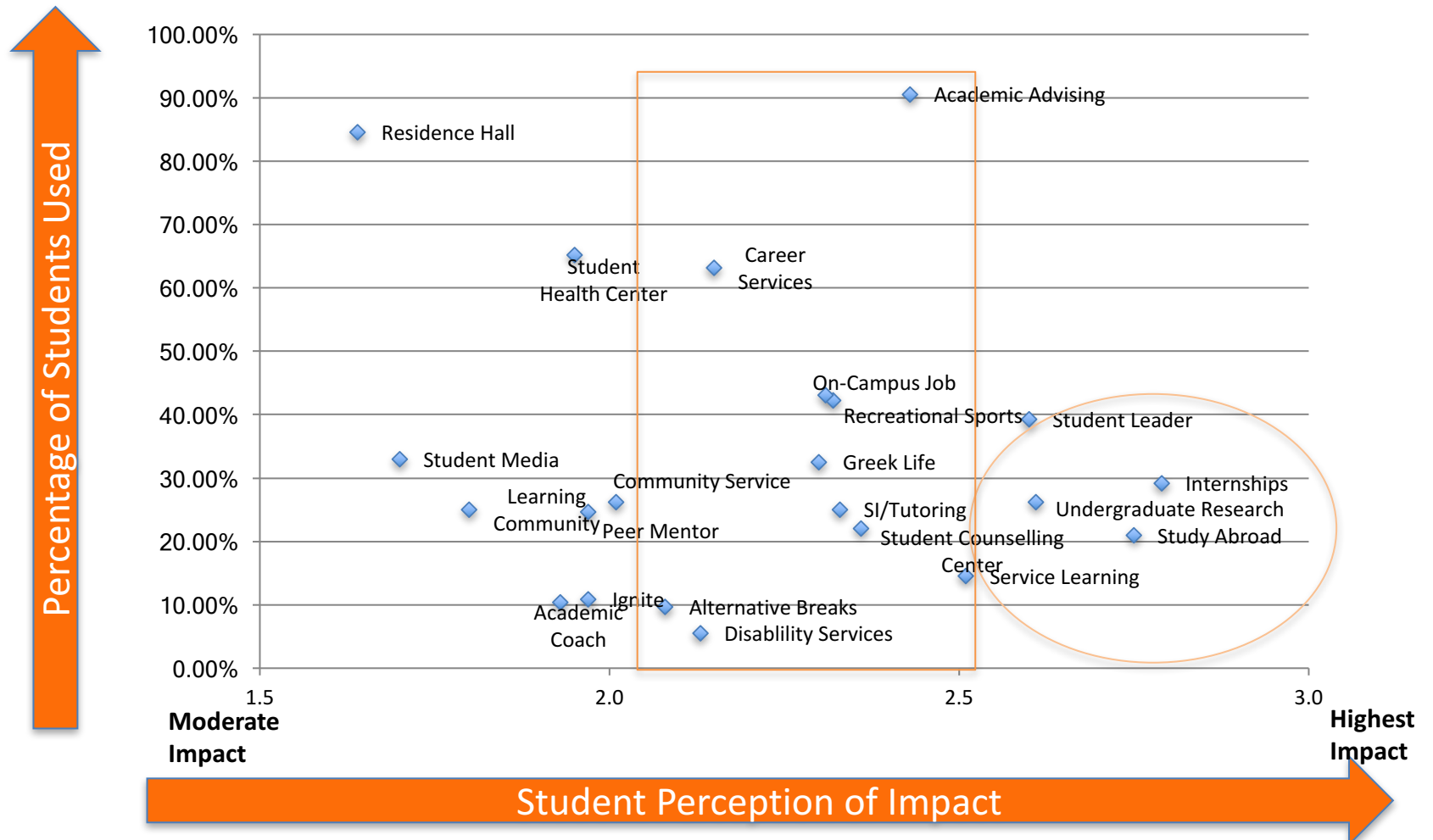
Program and Service Usage

- Provided list of 22 programs and services
- Asked students to select those used and their perception of impact

	Pell	Non-Pell
On-Campus Job	38%	30%
Student Counseling Center	21%	13%
Academic Coach	12%	7%

THE STAYER STUDY

The following shows usage and ratings patterns for programs included in the survey:



THE STAYER STUDY

Qualitative analysis showed that Pell-eligible students were more likely to attribute success to mentors rather than family.

Open-Ended Responses

- Students were asked to share their “secrets to success”
- Researchers categorized responses

	Pell	Non-Pell
Grit/determination/etc.	43%	44%
Friends/clubs/Greek life, etc.	34%	33%
Mentors	26%	23%
Family	12%	16%
University Programs	9%	8%
Finances	4%	7%
University Services	4%	4%

THE STAYER STUDY

Qualitative responses also provided insight into the stories of Pell students.

Personal Reasons

- *“Witnessing firsthand how much life sucks for people that don't get a college degree”*
- *“The thought of one day being somebody.”*
- *“A bit of hard work and a whole lot of Jesus.”*

Friends and Organizations

- *“Involvement! Only participating in class work would not have cut it. I found it very important to join clubs, take advantage of study abroad, and give back to the community I have called home for 4 years.”*
- *Loved ones, Friends, Faculty, Peers, aaaand coffee...”*

THE STAYER STUDY

Qualitative responses (cont.).

Mentors

- *“I had an amazing academic advisor. She was wonderful. That has really helped. Also my courses have had lots of hands on opportunities that allowed me to be in a classroom, and it just showed me that this is what I want to do with my life.”*
- *“Having a mentor in undergrad research that knows me and is helpful towards furthering my goals.”*

Family

- *My mom and grandma-strong support system*
- *I feel obligated to get my degree because my parents want it for me and I believe my parents have good intentions. I trust them even though I may branch away from my degree completely.*

THE STAYER STUDY

Qualitative responses (cont.).

Programs and Services

- *“Having a job, an internship, and job fairs UT offers.”*
- *“Support from Disability Services enabled me to be able to graduate from UT successfully.”*
- *“I found a close-knit community through the multicultural student life center where it was easy to meet people and connections and bonds.”*

Finances

- *“I was able to be independent and make my bills on my own otherwise I would have needed to drop out.”*
- *“My full time job with OIT that I obtained from hard work.”*
- *“Having to pay my student loans anyway even if I don't get my degree”*

MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE

- Strategic Plan
 - Graduation and retention goals part of Vol Vision 2020
 - Added metrics around the URM and Pell graduation gap as part of diversity and inclusion
 - Colleges and Divisions need to align their strategic plans to the Vol Vision
- Communication: Colleges, Academic Affairs, Advisors, Student Life
 - Stayer Study findings
 - “Majors, Money, Math, Mentors” to promote awareness of low-income students and academic persistence issues
- Action Plan: Retention of Financial Aid (Currently Underway)
 - Incorporates Stayer Study findings – focus on retention of financial aid, usage of work study, and coordination of academic advising and financial aid counseling

GROUP QUESTIONS

- How does your institution work to understand the needs of low-income students?
- How do you use this information in strategic planning? How are low-income students addressed in your diversity and inclusion plan?
- What are your group's big ideas to help gain institutional support for these students?