

# Race, Retention and Respective Environments: An Examination of the Choice to Stop Out of Higher Education Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

- What conditions make students more or less likely to stop out of college?
- Econometric analysis and case studies of three predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and one historically Black college and university (HBCU)
- Black students that attend a school with an increasingly white student body are not more likely to stop out, despite the potential of experiencing racism as a minority student
- Attending a school with a higher percentage of white students reduces the likelihood of a student stopping out

## METHODOLOGY

- A probit model of the decision to stop out was used for the econometric regressions
  - Assumes students will stop out when they get a higher utility from doing so, rather than from staying enrolled

$U^*$  = utility for stopping out of college  
Given inputs  $X$  with  $m$  variables:

$$U^* = \beta_0 + \beta_1\chi_1 + \beta_2\chi_2 + \dots + \beta_m\chi_m + e$$

If  $\beta_1$  is positive, students are more likely to stop out of college when  $X_1$  takes a higher value

Given observation  $i$ , the likelihood to stop out of college is determined by the following:

### Likely to stop out:

If  $Y_i = 1$  the likelihood to stop out =  $\Pr(Y=1) = \Pr(U^* > 0)$

### Unlikely to stop out:

If  $Y_i = 0$  the likelihood to stop out =  $\Pr(Y=0) = \Pr(U^* < 0)$

## SOURCES OF DATA

- Data was primarily drawn from Baccalaureate and Beyond (B&B), with supplementary data on the racial demographics of student bodies from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

## RESULTS

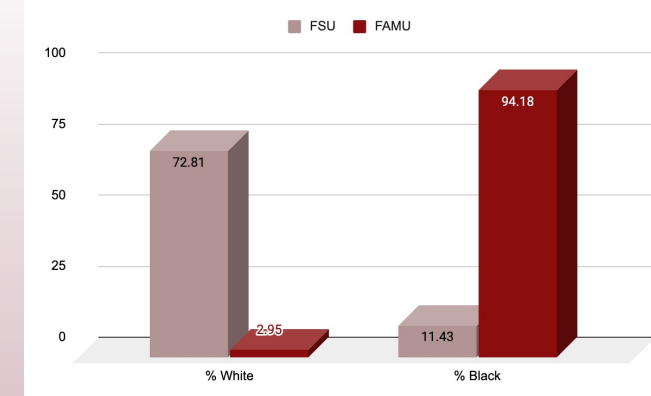
stopout	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P> z
blackpctwhite	.0485504	.1607176	0.30	0.763
borrow	5.28e-06	7.82e-07	6.75	0.000
worth	-.0537366	.0335769	-1.60	0.110
totneed	-.0000147	1.44e-06	-10.19	0.000
remneed	.0000127	2.70e-06	4.72	0.000
rablack	.0398677	0.0951483	0.42	0.675
pctwhite	-.2475295	.0768581	-3.22	0.001
_cons	-.6325876	.0654821	-9.66	0.000

Figure 2: Probit regression results

- Being Black and attending a school with a larger percent of white students does not have a statistically significant effect on students stopping out
- Students who attend schools with a larger percentage of white students (*pctwhite*) are less likely to stop out
- Students who borrow a greater cumulative amount from all sources for undergraduate education (*borrow*) and those who have a greater amount of remaining need after all financial aid (*remneed*) are more likely to stop out of college
- Students who need more financial aid (*totneed*) are less likely to stop out of college

## CASE STUDIES

### Case Study #1: Florida State University (FSU) vs. Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU)



- Board of Governors gave FSU (a PWI) an institutional performance score of 85 and allocated \$41.3 million dollars of performance-based funding to the school in 2020. FAMU (an HBCU) received the lowest institutional rating of all schools in the State University System with a score of 73 and the state allocated only \$13.3 million in performance-based funding
- Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) Program and the Black Student Union are two programs at FSU which can increase person-environment fit for Black students on campus

### Case Study #2: University of Missouri at Columbia

- 6.06% of students are Black, 84.14% are white
- 2015 campus sparked institutional change
  - Some issues on campus: racial slurs, white students filling the area outside the Black Culture Center with cotton balls (alluding to slavery), and the Chancellor issuing a statement that racism did not exist at the school
- Led to creation of Concerned Student 1950--demanded the President be fired, increase in faculty and staff of color, greater focus on retention of marginalized students, an increase in mental health and counseling resources, and an increase in resources for social justice center

### Case Study #3: Union College

- In 1979, only 39 Black students were enrolled at Union
- The first protests to condemn open acts of racism occurred in 1970
- Academic Opportunity Program (AOP) supports students of diverse racial identities with a special focus on retention
- Bronner House was established to raise awareness of diverse cultures and ethnic groups on the campus where 82.37% of students are white

## CONCLUSION

- Black students who attend increasingly white schools are not more likely to stop out, but factors of financial aid can indicate if a student is more or less likely to stop out at a statistically significant level
- Case studies reveal large discrepancies in institutional funding between PWIs and HBCUs, as well as the existence of programs at many PWIs that particularly focus on the retention and support of students of color
- Limitations: there is a small number of Black students at PWIs in the sample, and student experience is unquantifiable (which is why the case studies seek to supplement this research to gain a better understanding of student experience)
- Overall, higher education policymakers should make sure all schools are equipped with the funds and means to promote the success of a diverse group of students