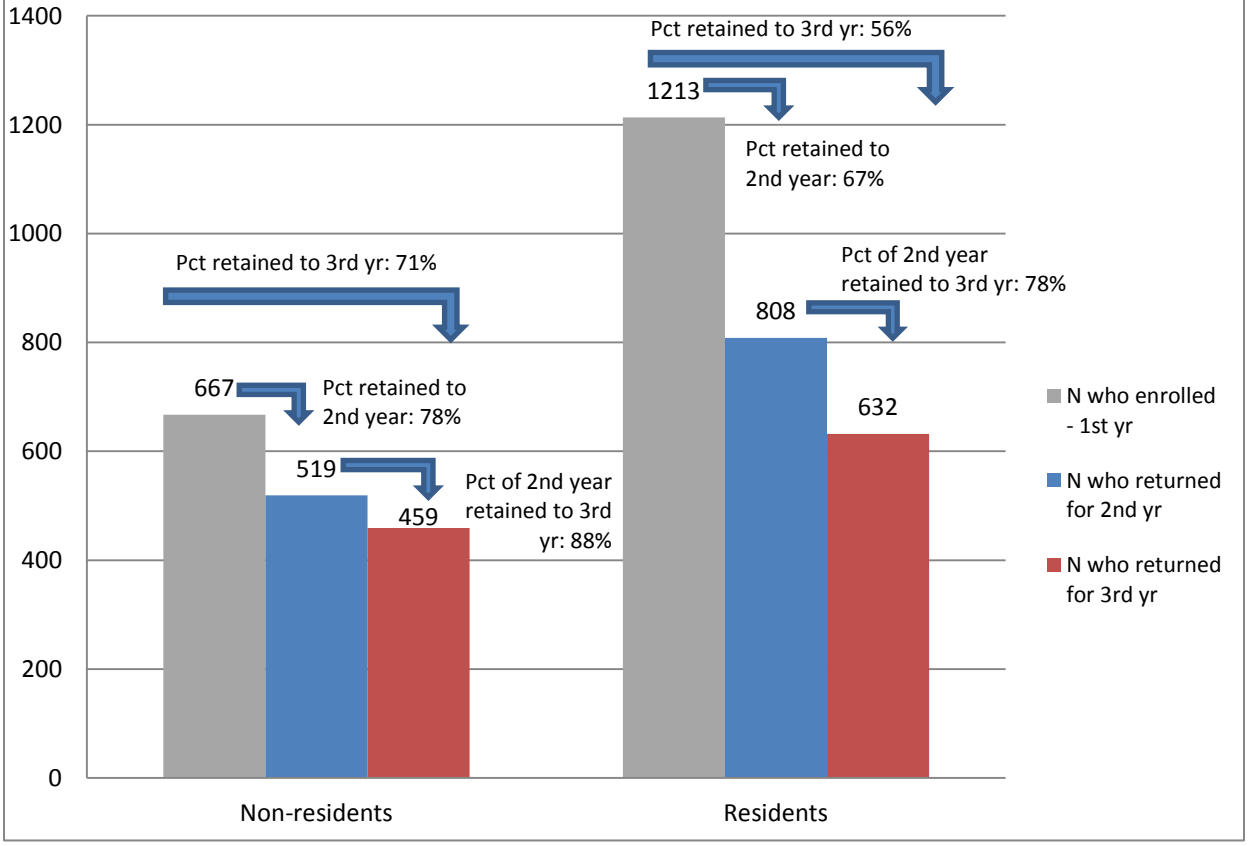
BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Multi-year scholarships and retention: A two-year follow-up

A prior report on multi-year scholarships and retention[1] after one year concluded that—after controlling for the effects of admissions index scores, scholarship award amounts, and unmet need—multi-year scholarships did not boost retention of new first-year students receiving multi-year awards compared to students receiving one-year scholarships or students not receiving scholarships. However, the study was based on the fall 2012 cohort, so previously only retention after one year could be obtained.

The purpose of this report is to follow the students who were retained after one year to see who was retained again to the fall of 2014 and whether multi-year scholarships made a difference in two-year retention rates. The current analysis is based only on those who were retained after one year as is traditionally done with follow-up analyses. Figure 1 provides an overview of the number of resident and non-resident students and contrasts three different retention rates: (1) retention from the 1st to 2nd year (the focus of the first study), (2) retention of the 2nd year group to the 3rd year (the focus of this study), and (3) retention of the 1st year students to the 3rd year (the way that retention over time is typically presented).

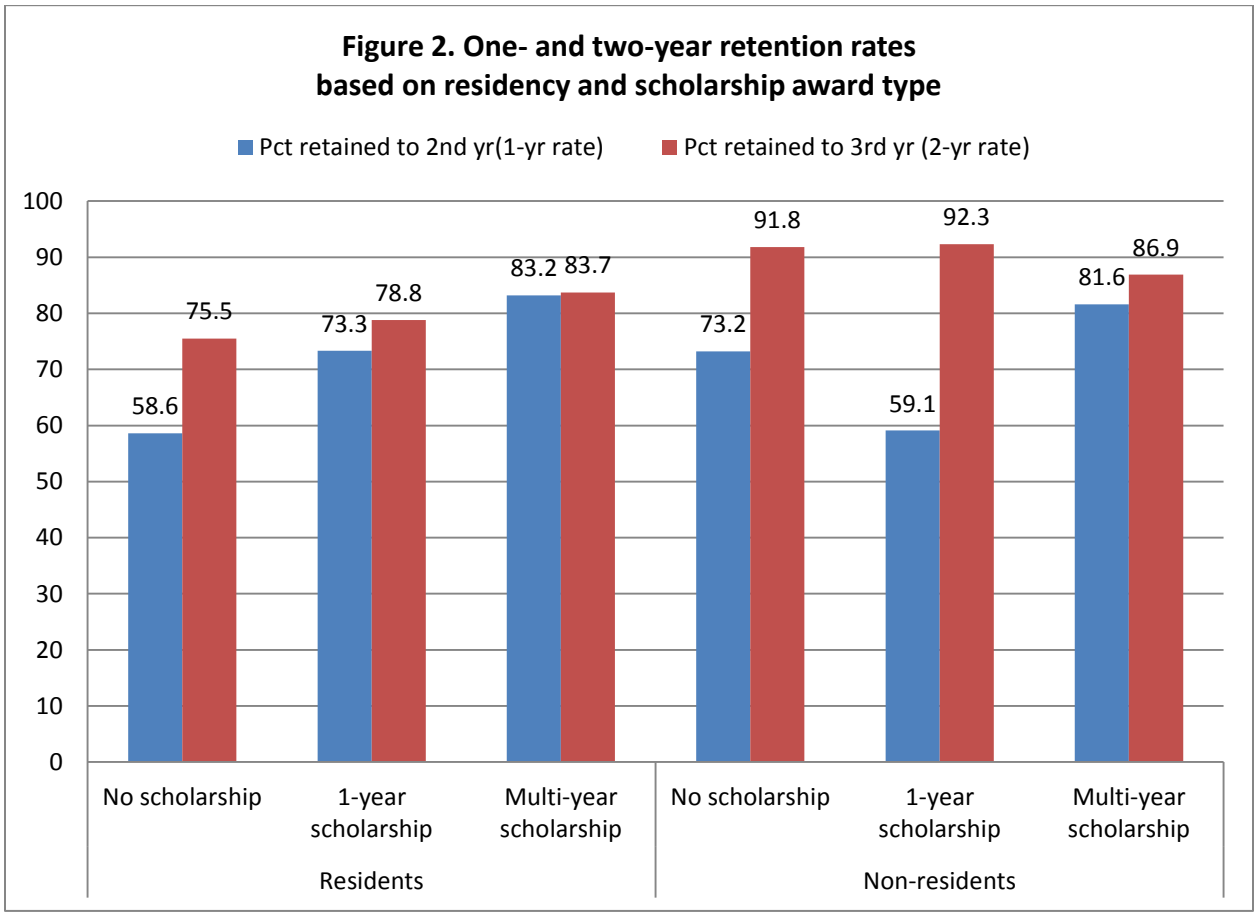
Figure 1. Numbers retained and retention rates by residency



[1] The full report can be found at http://ir.boisestate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/RR-2014-2-multiyear-scholarships-and-retention.pdf

Initially, about twice as many residents as non-residents were enrolled. However, non-residents had a higher one-year retention rate compared to residents (78% vs. 67%), so the 2-to-1 ratio of residents to non-residents fell to a ratio that was closer to 1.5-to-1 after one year. At the two-year mark, non-residents again had higher retention rates (88% vs. 78%) so the ratio of residents to non-residents fell further.

Figure 2 displays the retention rates after one and two years based on the length of the scholarship awards. Students with multiple-year scholarships had the highest one-year retention rates for both residents and non-residents. However, two-year retention rates did not show significant differences for either residents or non-residents based on scholarship length.



What predicted the two-year retention of Idaho residents when admissions index scores, scholarship dollars, and unmet need were included in the model along with the length of the scholarship award? As shown by Table 1, only admission index scores were significantly related to retention of the first year group to the second year. All other variables, including length of scholarship, were non-significant. Although the model was statistically significant, the estimated variability accounted for in the model was small so the practical significance is fairly negligible (Nagelkerke R^2=.031).

The model to predict two-year retention for non-resident students failed to reach significance, χ^2=10.9, N=519, df=6, p=.09. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that length of scholarship made a difference in encouraging non-residents to continue to enroll for a second year. However, the two-year retention rate approached 90% for non-residents, and it is difficult to reach statistical significance with so little variability in the dependent variable.

Table 1. Prediction of second year retention for Idaho residents who were retained at year one

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Odds ratio
Admissions Index Score	.019	.008	6.123	1	.013	1.019
Scholarship dollars (in $1000s)	.094	.057	2.759	1	.097	1.099
Federal unmet need (in $1000s)	.006	.015	.139	1	.709	1.006
Idaho Promise Scholarship dollars	.115	.302	.144	1	.704	1.121
Scholarship group			1.655	2	.437	
• No scholarship vs. multi-yr	.509	.402	1.601	1	.206	1.664
• 1-year scholarship vs. multi-yr	.272	.323	.711	1	.399	1.313
Constant	-.469	.693	.459	1	.498	.625

X^2=16.294, N=808, df=6, p=.012, -2Log likelihood=830.712

The effects of multi-year scholarships, therefore, were greatest in the initial year of the award. Although differences in one-year retention rates were evident based on the length of scholarship award, the differences disappeared when measures of academic preparation, award amounts, and remaining financial need were considered. Two-year retention rates were similar, even without taking into account the differences in scholarship dollars, unmet financial need, and academic preparation as measured by admissions index scores.

If multiple-year scholarships were developed to retain students over a longer period of time, it appears, based on the fall 2012 cohort, that these efforts were less than successful. If, however, the purpose was to attract the best students in the first place, then multiple-year scholarships may already have served their purpose.

Prepared by:

Marcia Belcheir, Ph.D.
Office of Institutional Research
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