Prospective Students with Felony Convictions: Admissions Policies Research and Assessment

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About Me

• Coordinator, Code of Conduct  
  ▫ Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, IL

• M.A., 2012  
  ▫ Wright State University, Dayton, OH

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  ▫ Capital University, Bexley, OH
Agenda

• Literature Review: Student-Ex-Offender Issues
• Research Study – Design & Results
• Study Implications
• Assessing Your Policies
  ▫ Goals
  ▫ Methods
  ▫ Evaluation
Poll

- Questions on admissions applications?
- Review process for criminal history?
- Conduct systematic assessment?
- No questions/process?
Trends in Policies

• Center for Community Alternatives + AACRAO (2010)
  ▫ 273 Institutions Total
  ▫ 66% collect criminal history information
  ▫ Most have special admissions processes
  ▫ Minority have written policies and staff training
  ▫ Wide variety of convictions are viewed negatively
  ▫ Majority provide special support to applicants
Pros/Cons – Literature Review

- **Pros**
  - Safety (?)
  - Need-to-know (housing, academic programs)
  - Financial aid
  - Student support

- **Cons**
  - Minorities
  - No legal duty
  - No evidence effect of safety
  - Negative effect on applicants
Research Study

- **Mixed-Methods**
  - Document analysis/coding
  - Descriptive statistics

- **Assessment**
  - Effect of process on applicants
  - Academic progress
  - Disciplinary history
Graduate Research Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Sample (n=54)</th>
<th>RI Population (n=14,366)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men – 35 (65%)</td>
<td>Men – (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women – 19 (35%)</td>
<td>Women – (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White – 37 (68%)</td>
<td>White – (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American – 13(24%)</td>
<td>African-American – (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range – (21-64)</td>
<td>Age Range – (14-87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age – 32</td>
<td>Average Age - 23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Average number of convictions: 1.76
Graduate Research Study

- **Admissions Decisions**
  - Recommended for Admission: 48
  - Not Recommended: 6

- **Conditions of Admission**
  - Admitted, No Restrictions: 5
  - Admitted, No Housing: 38
  - Admitted, Special Restrictions: 5
  - Not Admitted, Incomplete Application: 2
  - Not Admitted, Significant Criminal History: 2
  - Not Admitted, Other: 2
Graduate Research Study

- Enrolled
  - Total: 34/48
  - Drop out rate: 50%
  - Average GPA: 1.76

- Conduct Violations Since Enrollment
  - 0/34
Graduate Research Study

• Significant Written Statements

  ▫ “I need this education more than anything so I can obtain financial stability and housing for myself and family”

  ▫ “Having this on my record has cost many opportunities that I will not have another chance at”

  ▫ “I believe that I have been fully rehabilitated so that I can be a viable member of society. I’ve made a mistake and paid for it”
Graduate Research Study

- “I am writing this letter with the sole reason of obtaining admission into [RI]. I believe that writing this letter is merely another form of discrimination due to the fact that my felony conviction should have nothing to do with my enrollment in college...”

- “It is truly one of my lifelong regrets that I obtained a criminal record. To make a long story short, I lost my job, my last check, and my self-respect”
Graduate Research Study

• Conclusions of research
  ▫ Process did not make campus safer
  ▫ Process distressed and deterred some applicants

• Recommendations
  ▫ Discontinue special admissions policies
  ▫ Amend special admissions policies
  ▫ Assess/ research special admissions policies
    • Safety outcomes
    • Student experiential outcomes
    • Policy review
Assessing Your Policies

- Schuh, Upcraft, & Assoc
- 2001
Review of Terms

• **Research** – diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications, etc.

• **Assessment** – any effort to gather, analyze, and interpret evidence which describes institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness.

• **Evaluation** – any effort to use assessment evidence to improve institutional, departmental, divisional, or agency effectiveness.
Goals

• Track trends
• Learn about experiences of applicants with felony convictions
• Learn about experiences of students with felony convictions
• Learn about community’s perceptions
Tracking

- Who?
- How many?
- Criminal offenses?
- Admissions decisions?
- Dangerous trends
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Minorities
  - Criminal offense types
Needs Assessment

- Why college? Why now?
- Job history?
- Family needs?
- Court order/probation?
- GED? DEV?
- Student support services?
  - Focus groups
  - Interviews
  - Admissions essays
Satisfaction Assessment

• Were needs met?
  ▫ Admissions process?
  ▫ Interactions with review committee?
  ▫ Communication about the process?
  ▫ Post-admission student services?
Outcomes Assessment

• Learning Outcomes
  ▫ Student Judicial Process
  ▫ Recidivism
    • Survey behavioral intentions

• Campus Safety Outcomes
  ▫ Crime rates (Clery)
  ▫ Student policy violator: criminal history ratio
Environmental Assessment

• Do faculty know?
  ▫ Do they agree?

• Do students know?
  ▫ Do they agree?

• Are they fearful?
• Do they know ex-offender students?
• Can they find written policies?
Resource Assessment

• **Time: Cost: Personnel**
  - Admissions $$$
  - Application > admissions decision time
  - Phone call log
  - Committee time
Dropout Assessment

- Follow-up
  - Phone call
  - Survey
  - Email
Comparable Institution Assessment

• Benchmark to compare:
  ▫ How many applicants
  ▫ Consistency in decisions making
  ▫ Which offenses are most concerning
  ▫ Process
  ▫ Authority/drive for policy
  ▫ Assessment programs?
Internal Audit

- Review policies bi-annually
- Check with Mission Statement
  - Core Values
  - Vision Statement
- Purpose
- Relevancy
My Challenge for YOU

- Use one of these methods
- Relay data to administration, faculty & students
- Revise policies as needed
- SHARE!
Ethical Issues

• Don’t “out” ex-offenders
  ▫ Limit access to student files
  ▫ Don’t publish names of ex-offenders

• Politics
  ▫ Let unbiased data speak for itself

• Not conducting assessment is unjust
References


