

Pathways to Graduation for Indigenous Students

University of Saskatchewan

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Purpose

Success for Aboriginal students has become a priority at the University of Saskatchewan. As an under-represented minority facing systemic financial and social challenges, more accurately tracking the flows of these students through various programs, providing adequate instructional and social supports, and improving retention and time to completion are important goals.

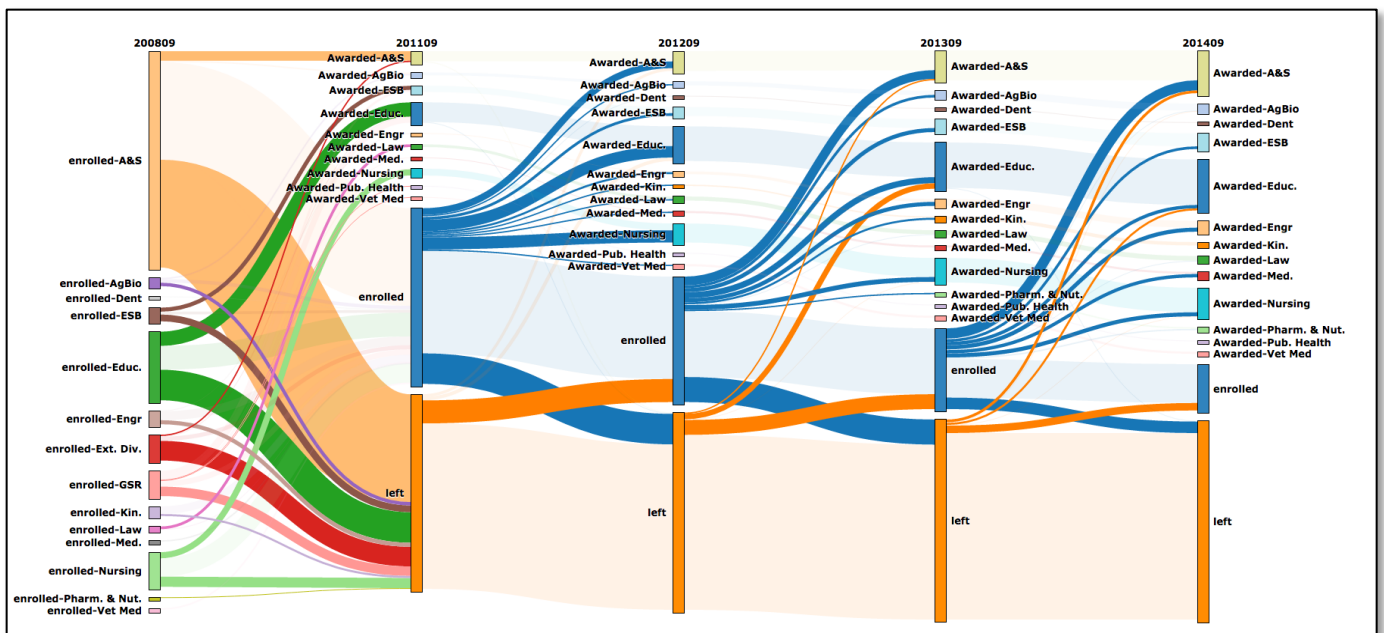


FIGURE 1. SIX YEAR GRADUATION AND ATTRITION FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS.

Tool: Ribbon

Efforts to bring student data at the University of Saskatchewan into a University Data Warehouse have been successful and it is now relatively easy to build up a specific dataset for visualization in the ribbon tool. Aboriginal student enrolment data for in various disciplines have been collected since 2008. Retention initiatives put into place in recent years can be quickly analyzed using the Ribbon Tool to determine if success rates and dropout rates are affected for Aboriginal students in various demographic categories.

Evidence

The Ribbon visualizations show a sizeable proportion of Aboriginal students stop out for one or more academic years, potentially due to financial constraints or family obligations. This increases average time to graduation for Aboriginal students to a level considerably higher than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Further analysis has looked at the impact of a "learning communities" initiative instituted in 2012 and changes in financial aid policies in recent years.

Action

More questions have been raised than answered through the use of this tool and now more formal program evaluation projects are underway. In particular a study will soon be launched to determine the prevalence of academic under-preparation and its impact on student retention and success as opposed to social and cultural factors.