

## University Students' Factors of Success

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The purposes of the study were to (a) identify factors in the graduates' lives and in their university experiences that contributed to their graduation from the university, (b) identify obstacles to the graduates' success, and (c) determine how these obstacles were overcome by the graduates. The qualitative data were gathered by interviewing students identified as graduating within four years of being admitted as freshmen to the university. Thirty-seven participants were interviewed in focus groups, individual sessions or virtual conversations.

The qualitative data showed that participants — on average — identified eight factors of success and 10 types of obstacles. The factors of success included an expectation to graduate in four years, a motivation to graduate, a value for studying, recognition of the importance of class attendance, a personal support system, campus involvement, a campus support system, and a wise use of campus resources. The obstacles included crisis issues, joyous family occasions, financial problems, lack of awareness of resources, absentee administrators, problems with staff, difficulties with coursework, difficulties with advisors, problems with teachers, and dissatisfaction with university housing.

These students were able to overcome barriers by positioning themselves to succeed. They did not allow any obstacles to prevent them from graduating. This study

contains 15 recommendations to improve retention based on adapting a campus-wide commitment to retaining students.