Women and Higher Education in Utah: A Glimpse at the Past and Present

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State Comparisons

Figure 1.1: Female Enrollment by State
2008 Data, Public Institutions
Solid Green Bar Denotes Utah Average

Percent of State's Student Population that are Female
Purpose

The purpose of the two-year Utah Women and Education Project (UWEP) is to lead efforts within the state to understand and then motivate more young women to enter and stay in school long enough to obtain college degrees.

*May 2009-May 2011*
UWEP Critical Components

1. Primary research
2. Briefs and reports (www.uvu.edu/wep)
3. Online resource database (*released October 4, 2010 on Utah 2-1-1*)
4. Dissemination of findings: conferences, other presentations, and materials (marketing)

Instrument and Data Collection

- Protocol
  - Survey (quantitative)
  - Interview (open-ended; qualitative)
- 245 participants spent between 45 minutes to 3 hours to complete instrument
  - Average time was about 1 hour 30 minutes
- In-depth study
  - Many participants told us they had never thought so deeply about why they made the choices they made regarding college and what influenced them
Recruiting (1)

Live data collection sites:
- Snow College
- Center for Education, Business, and the Arts—Kanab (with Dixie State College)
- Box Elder High School
- Salt Lake Community College
- Southern Utah University
- University of Utah
- Utah Valley University

Recruiting (2)

Online recruits:
- Referrals (from college/university employees all over the state)
- Postcards (Community Action; DWS, LDS Employment Center, WIC)
- Online ads (Daily Herald, Craigslist, KSL, Survey Monkey)
- Blogs
- Cold calls from institutional lists
- UVU homepage
Ages

- 22-24 (22.4%)
- 25-28 (22.4%)
- 29-32 (12.2%)
- 18 (13.1%)
- 19 (11.4%)
- 20-21 (18.4%)

Marital Status

- Single (46.9%)
- Married (44.1%)
- Living with Partner (6.5%)
- Separated/Divorced (2.4%)
Counties/Regions

- Counties: Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Emery, Grand, Iron, Kane, Millard, Salt Lake, Sanpete, Sevier, Tooele, Uintah, Utah, Washington, Weber
- Regions:
  - Bear River (8.6%)
  - Central (7.4%)
  - Mountainland (32.4%)
  - Southeastern (0.8%)
  - Southwestern (14.8%)
  - Uintah Basin (0.4%)
  - Wasatch Front (34.8%)

Years in Utah

- More than 17 years (68%)
- 10-17 years (23%)
- Less than 10 years (9%)
Study Limitations

- Lack of participants in minority populations
- Recruiting strategies (not random sample)
- Perceptions (past, present, future)
- Quantified qualitative data (coding)
- Use caution when generalizing
- Causality

UWEP Model

- Beliefs
  - Socio-Demographic
  - Family Background
  - Values
- Normative Beliefs
- Attitudes
  - Individual Attributes
  - School Experiences
  - Other Activities and Experiences
- Subjective Norms
- Aspirations
- Intentions
  - Past Experiences and Behaviors
  - Perceptions of the Past and Present
- Aspirations
- The Behavior
  - The College Decision
- People of Influence
1. Value of Education

- **Informal hypothesis**
- **Brief**: “The Value of Higher Education for Women in Utah”
- Utah young women do not generally understand the broad value of a college/university education
- More educated—more value they see
- **All but three** said that getting more education is important/wonderful
- Many benefits outlined in the brief were not mentioned by **any** young women
Value of Education (2)

• Nearly all women who do not attend or who drop out truly believe they will get their degrees in the future.
• Many believe that if their husbands get the education for the family, the children/family will get the “benefits” of having educated parents, and they will have a “better future.”
• Only four women see becoming leaders as a reason to go to college.

Value of Education (3)

• Many women stated that they do not need a college education because they “will not use it.”
• Many say they do not want to go to college (or return) unless they know “exactly” what they want to do. For example, one states: “I don’t want to waste my time or money.”
• Some participants assume that a number of their courses (GE primarily) are a “waste” because they do not teach them exactly what they think they need to learn.
### Value of Education Categories (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96.3%</td>
<td>Economic, financial, and/or job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>Knowledge, learning, intelligence, and being smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>Self-esteem, self-worth, self-knowledge, accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>Better life, be successful, opportunities in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>Self-development and self-improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>Equity with men/respect for women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Value of Education Categories (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>Teach children or be an example to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>Influence society/world, to make a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>Social benefits and/or improving social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>Competencies (critical thinking, problem solving, community, decision making, human behavior, tolerance of others)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences between Categories

More educated women see these educational benefits more clearly:
- Knowledge, learning, and intelligence***
- Teaching children and being examples to them*
- Competencies*
- Social skills and benefits*
- Self-improvement*

Correlations:
* = >.05 p-value  
** = >.01 p-value  
*** = >.001 p-value

Broader Value

Young women who see the broader value of higher education are also those who:
- Attend college and graduate***
- Are more committed to attend***
- Are more committed to graduate***
- Have parents who are more educated*
Takeaways

Young women need to be taught the broad value of higher education while young.

– Parents can teach this value.
– English teachers could give assignment to write about the benefits of a college education (GE included).
– Elementary school teachers can bring in guest speakers (parents) to talk about it and give assignments around this topic.
– Other

2. Behavior: The College Decision

Beliefs → Attitudes
Socio-Demographic → Individual Attributes
Family Background → School Experiences
Values → Other Activities and Experiences
Normative Beliefs → Subjective Norms

Past Experiences and Behaviors

Aspirations

Intentions

The Behavior
The College Decision

Perceptions of the Past and Present

People of Influence
3. Intentions

**Proactive College Activities Scale**

- Saved money for college
- Discussed financial aid with someone (scholarships, loans, grants)
- Requested information from a college
- Visited a college campus
- Applied to a college
- Accepted or admitted to a college
- Received a scholarship or grant to attend
- Concurrent enrollment
- AP courses

**College Preparation Activities**

- Saved money for college
- Discussed financial aid with someone (scholarships, loans, grants)
- Requested information from a college
- Visited a college campus
- Applied to a college
- Accepted or admitted to a college
- Received a scholarship or grant to attend

All are linked to attending and graduating from college
Commitment to **Attend** College

- Saved money for college [1]
- Discussed financial aid with someone (scholarships, loans, grants)
- Requested information from a college
- Visited a college campus [2]
- Applied to a college
- Accepted or admitted to a college
- Received a scholarship or grant to attend

[1,2] = predictors from linear multiple regressions

Commitment to **Graduate**

- Saved money for college [1]
- Discussed financial aid with someone (scholarship, loans, grants)
- Requested information from a college
- Visited a college campus [2]
- Applied to a college
- Accepted or admitted to a college
- Received a scholarship or grant to attend [3]
High School Courses

Attending and Graduating from College:
1. AP [1]
2. High level math [2]
3. Mix of course types—primarily difficult courses [3]
5. Foreign languages
6. Social science
7. Fine arts
8. Science, math, and technology
9. Mixture of course types—primarily electives
10. CTE

Takeaways

• Parents need to encourage and assist their children in saving money for college early in life.
• Influential individuals should provide opportunities for young women to visit college campuses throughout their high school years and even earlier.
• Young women should be encouraged to take concurrent enrollment, AP, and other college preparation courses during high school. The specific reasons for this should be explained clearly.
Analysis of qualitative results found that young women believe they are being encouraged to go to college or attend college—not necessarily to graduate from college.
College Degree Sometime in Life?

- Yes: 89.8%
- No: 10.2%

Which Level of Degree?

- Doctorate: 7.9%
- Master's: 21.2%
- Bachelor's: 35.2%
- Associate: 17.6%
- Certificate: 4.5%
- None: 10.2%
Age of Decision

The age of decision is inversely correlated with:

- Commitment to attend college and graduate (***)
- Actively preparing for college (***)
- Desire for a higher degree level (***)
- Saving money for college (***)
- Having parents who
  - Are willing to help pay (***)
  - Discussed financial aid (***)
  - Give higher level of overall support (**)
  - Have a higher estimated income level (*)

These correlations suggest the younger the decision the better!
How committed are you to **graduating** from college sometime in your life?

Commitment to Graduate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None to Little</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interaction with Marriage

Current effect: $F(3, 241)=3.6353$, $p=.01354$

Effective hypothesis decomposition

Vertical bars denote 0.95 confidence intervals
Career Aspirations and Future Lifestyle

1 = Not important; 4 = Essential

**Correlations:** Commitment to Attend and Commitment to Graduate

### Career Aspirations and Future Lifestyle

3.63 Raising a family
3.61 Secure and stable future
3.29 Work schedule with time
3.23 Leave the world a better place***
3.10 Helping others in difficulty***
3.10 Being well-off financially
3.09 Being stimulated intellectually***
2.86 Variety of work experiences and challenges***

### Career Aspirations and Future Lifestyle

2.82 Freedom to schedule my own day* (-)
2.79 Doing creative or expressive work
2.74 Working closely with people***
2.63 Encountering a variety of people***
2.51 Successful in own business
2.41 Working for social change***
2.26 Recognition from others in field
2.25 Administrative responsibility**
1.94 Influence political decisions*

1 = Not important; 4 = Essential
Aspirations

- Focus on Husband: 6.5%
- Healthy: 7.8%
- Serve LDS Mission/Religious Service: 9.0%
- Own a Business: 10.2%
- Be Happy: 13.9%
- Travel: 20.8%
- Be Financially Stable: 21.2%
- Own House: 21.6%
- Community Activity/Volunteerism/Helping: 24.1%
- Learn Outside of College: 60.8%

Takeaways

- Approximately 90% of the young women (yes/no item) say they want a college degree in their lives sometime; however, in the qualitative results only 50% aspire to get an A.S. degree or higher.
- Researchers and educators need to explore the disconnect between the quantitative and qualitative results on young women’s aspiration to attend and graduate from college.
- Either way, we need to support their aspirations and dreams to make them a reality.
- Religious community can support college aspirations, since religious involvement is correlated with proactive college activities.
Takeaways

- Many women aspire to be a mother as well as a professional. Educators can help prepare women realistically for dual roles (or lead change for working mothers).
- Educators should address the needs of the 60% who want to learn outside of classroom, e.g., online classes or off-site locations.
- Parents and other influential individuals should discuss college with children as young as possible.
- We should talk to young women about “graduating”—not just “attending”—from college early in life.

5. Values/Religion

What does your religion teach you about continuing your education after high school?

- Very Important: 55.1%
- Moderately Important: 18.4%
- Not Important: 20.4%
- Missing Data: 6.1%
Church Encouragement

I feel like my religion (LDS) strongly encourages continuing education after high school. Our church teaches that knowledge is the only thing you take with you when you die (not cars, homes, etc.). I believe this, and that is partly why I went to college. Women are also encouraged by our church leaders to earn a college degree. Family is extremely important in our church, but the top leaders strongly encourage women to gain an education so they can teach their children and help support their families.

Top Church Leaders

What messages do you think are given from your top church leaders (e.g., Pope, prophet) about women earning college degrees?

- Very Important: 51.8%
- Moderately Important: 19.2%
- Not Important: 22.9%
- Missing Data: 6.1%
Perception of Teachings

My religion teaches education is not merely a good idea, it’s a commandment. We are to learn of things of both in the heaven and in the earth. They say it’s important to strive, learn and study in our lives and seek knowledge from the best books. They encourage getting education but do not expect us to get a degree.

Local Church Leaders

Do your local church leaders (e.g., youth leaders, bishop, rabbi, minister) talk to you about your education? If so, what do you think they are encouraging you to do with your educational and career choices?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately Important</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Data</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings (1)

• LDS participants felt strongly that their religion supports women attending college. They are taught that learning, knowledge, and college are important.

• Some say if they were more active in the LDS faith, they would probably have attended college.

• Many talk of the importance of attending college, but not necessarily about graduating.

• Many see no urgency; they believe they will finish “someday.”

Findings (2)

• Family trumps college “absolutely” for many participants. Marriage (or sometimes when a child is born) is the end of college for many.

• Many believe that women need to “give up” or “sacrifice” their college for the family. It is their “duty” to drop out of school.

• Many cannot see a situation where they can be married, have children, and continue college. It is all or nothing. They cannot see a life of integration. They do not see options.
Findings (3)

- Education gets lumped together with “work”; a “faithful LDS woman” stays home with her children (that means no outside work or education).
- There is a disconnect with “being prepared” or “having a job to fall back on” and not finishing with the degree.
- Some participants struggle with understanding why education is so important before marriage and then why they must “give it up.”

Findings (4)

- Education doesn’t just slide to second priority—for some it falls totally off the priority list.
- Of the three categories mentioned, encouragement from “local leaders” is the most powerful predictor of commitment, proactive college activities, and attendance and graduation.
- All three religious variables show powerful correlations with commitment, proactive college activities, and attendance and graduation.
Religious Activity

Religious activity is a strong predictor of the following (in various models):
- Attendance and graduation
- Proactive college scale
- Total leadership
- High school GPA
- Age of decision
- Father encouraged and/or supported
- Mother encouraged and/or supported

Takeaways

- Local church leaders play a particularly important role in encouraging young women to attend and graduate from college.
- Efforts should be made to discuss how young women can integrate marriage, family, and college.
- Realistic data (e.g., divorce rates, economic challenges) should be presented in church settings so that young women understand the importance of completing degrees and the importance of family.
6. Family Background

- Father
- Mother
- Paying for college

*Other Data Not Discussed*
- Siblings
- Relatives
- Family responsibilities

Fathers’ Education

The higher the level of a father’s education, the more likely his daughter will
- Prepare for college attendance (proactive activities).
- Attend and graduate from college.
- Receive more encouragement and support to attend.
- Develop a love for learning.
- Have a father who reads to her, helps her with homework, develops activities, and attends learning and cultural events.
- Have a father who sets a positive example of gaining knowledge and learning.
Fathers’ Actions

What did fathers do to help their daughters learn?

– Read to them*
– Homework/school projects**
– Learning and cultural events/activities*** [1]
– Attended school events**
– Encourage learning but not necessarily college
– Set positive example*** [1]
– Set negative example—motivated them positively
– Helped them develop a love for learning***

*Correlations to Category II
[1] =Predictors of Proactive

Quote

My father has helped me develop a deep love for learning. I remember when I was in 2nd grade I had an obsession with reading; my dad would suggest books to me, and sometimes even read the books at the same time as me so that we could discuss the plots. I remember always trying to read as quickly as he would when we were reading books at the same time so that he wouldn't have to wait for me to turn the page, of course, he didn't really mind waiting for me.
Influence of Fathers

At dinner, my dad would ask each of the kids what we learned that day in school. We not only had to tell what we learned, but express understanding of the subject.

I think my father tried to ruin learning for me. He made fun of me when I got put in a special reading class because I didn’t know how to read, and when I learned to love to read, he would take my books away. When I was in 5th grade, he grounded me for 4 months from doing everything but multiplication tables; he wanted me to be able to do them all in 30 seconds, 1-12. Which, I did, but now I can hardly remember any of them. I don’t talk to my father anymore, he was a jerk, and I don’t want anything to do with him.

Takeaways

• Efforts should be made to educate fathers regarding the critical role they hold in encouraging and supporting their daughters to be educated.

• Emphasis should be placed on helping fathers understand the importance of taking one-on-one time to read, do homework, and create learning activities with/for their daughters.

• To the fathers: Your daughters are watching and learning from you.
Influence of Educated Mothers

A mother’s education level was correlated with a daughter who:

• Actively prepared for college***
• Had a mother who attended college as a mom***
• Was encouraged to attend college**
• Talked with her mother about college**
• Received help with schoolwork**
• Developed a love of learning*
• Attended cultural and outside events*

Talking to Parents About College
Provided Encouragement/Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Takeaways

• Mothers could talk frequently to their daughters, **starting when they are young**, about attending college.

• Mothers could strongly encourage their daughters to attend college.

• Mothers could advise their daughters that there is value in both education and family life.

• Mothers who regret not attending college should discuss its impact on them with their daughters.
  • Mothers could help with homework and take an active interest in school and preparing for college.
Percent Parents Agreed to Pay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of College Costs to Pay</th>
<th>Percentage of Women Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% of college costs</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% of college costs</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% of college costs</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% of college costs</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financing College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What did parents say about financing college?</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willing to help and encouraged grants, loans, and scholarships</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to help</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged grants, loans, and/or scholarships</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not willing/unable to help</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked but unknown outcome</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not mention topic in narrative</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Takeaways

• Educate the parents of young girls about financial aid, so they can discuss it with their daughters early.
• Encourage parents to discuss attending and paying for college with their daughters at a young age (e.g., saving money or financial aid options).
• Teachers could discuss college options with young girls and women and encourage them to have additional conversations with their family members.
• Inform parents that support can be financial, material (e.g., books), living arrangements, and/or emotional.

7. Schooling/Non-Schooling

• College preparation during high school
• High school leadership
• High school activities
• Time spent in high school
• GPA
• Schooling experiences
• People in school (counselors, teachers, administrators)
• Friends and peers
• Other influential individuals
Qualitative results outline the most influential college preparation activities during high school:

1. College fairs/career fairs (individual conversations with people from colleges)
2. Field trips to colleges/universities
3. Presentations in classes (e.g., English)
4. Assemblies
5. SEOP
6. Published information (e.g., brochures, pamphlets)
7. Assessments (comment about middle school)
### High School Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious youth organizations***[2]</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school athletics/sports*</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School clubs or associations***</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer service***</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club or community sports</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor society***[1]</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drill/cheer</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama/theater</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student government*</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary or other magazine</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate/speech</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional organizations/associations</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political groups</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Time Spent in High School: GPA

A higher **GPA** is linked to...

- More hours exercise/sports [1]
- More hours participating in clubs [5]
- More time studying and doing homework [2]
- More time volunteering in the community
- Less household or childcare duties [4-]
- Less time partying
- Less time socializing face-to-face with friends [3-]
- Less time watching TV

Similar to ACT scores and attendance and graduation.
Time Spent in High School: Club

Higher number of hours spent in high school club-related activities correlates with...
- Attendance and graduation from college [4]
- Better grades
- More exercise/sports
- Less household chores [2]
- More studying or homework
- More time talking to teachers
- More volunteer work [1]
- Less time watching TV [3]

Time Spent in High School: Working

Higher number of hours spent working for pay in high school correlates with...
- Lower attendance and graduation from college
- More partying
- More socializing with friends (face-to-face)
- More time watching TV
Weber State University

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Takeaways

• Schools can host college fairs and provide opportunities for students to take fields trips to campuses.
• Efforts can be made to emphasize a strong high school GPA, with college as a goal.
• Efforts can be made to encourage participation in activities that provide leadership opportunities.
• Young women can be encouraged to join school clubs and volunteer in their communities.
• Working too many hours for pay may result in less likelihood of attending and graduating from college.

Schooling Experience

Middle and High School Experience

Overall experience in school is linked to commitment to attend/graduate from college.
People in School

- Administrators
- Counselors
- Teachers
- Coaches and club advisors

Quotes about Administrators

My principal really made me feel excited about the idea of going to college. He encouraged me to do my best, and to keep going. I think one of the biggest things that made an impact on me was that he was willing to learn who I was by name, my situation, and he took the time to give me advice.

Not a lot of administrators had interest in my education.

My assistant principal told me that I basically couldn’t be a teacher someday because it was a very difficult job.

My school’s administrators were apathetic towards me and felt like there was no point in talking with me since my attitude was so discouraged.
High School Counselors

- Very strong influence (12%)
- No influence (25%)
- Good influence (20%)
- Some influence (18%)
- Moderate influence (22%)

Influence of Counselors

My high school counselor was a great source. She was always encouraging me to apply for different scholarships and to get my FAFSA application filled out. She was always reminding me of deadlines and due dates.

My biggest influence was my high school counselor. He wanted me to get a good education and to really apply myself to the best of my abilities. He was supportive and wrote me many flattering and helpful recommendations for my Sterling Scholar and was in part a reason that I have succeeded thus far.
Fun Quote

The career counseling I remember was in junior high, and they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I said a dancer (I had never danced a day in my life). They wrote it down and put me in classes to help me get there (PE). The next year I switched to zoology so they put me in science classes.. much more up my alley. But really what was I supposed to know about careers at thirteen and fourteen... Yikes...a dancer?

Disturbing Quote

The counselor in High School talked about my goals for college (with my mom there). He asked what I wanted to be, and I told him veterinarian. He then pulled up my grades (3.4 GPA average) and told me that I should not waste my time being a veterinarian because I did not have the grades for it. That was devastating to hear, and I believed him.
Counselor Findings

- Counselors specifically assigned (e.g., ETS, school or career) were particularly influential.
- One-on-one (outside SEOPs) are most powerful influences.
- Correlations and predictors:
  - Commitment to attend college
  - Commitment to graduate from college
  - Proactive college activities [1]
  - Attending and graduating from college

Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No influence</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some influence</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate influence</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good influence</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very strong influence</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quote about Teachers

The worst part of high school was when I had more than one teacher tell me that I would never go anywhere in life, never amount to anything and never succeed. I know they say sticks and stones will break your bones but words will never hurt you, well, they do, and they totally hurt me. It took a while to shake off those hurtful things that were said to me, but I powered through everything and then ended up getting super good grades my junior and senior year.

Coach

I was a statistician for the wrestling coach who was also my English teacher. He was another great influence on me. During my MATC schooling my senior year we had to prepare a career packet which consisted of a resume and a referral letter from an adult. He was obliged to provide the letter for me and after reading it, I realized how much confidence he had in my abilities to learn, and be a wonderful contributor to society. This one letter provided me with the confidence and self worth I had been struggling to find for years.
Findings

- Lack of teacher influence is obvious with many participants (not one teacher talked to them even once about college).
- Those who felt they had “great teachers” in high school were more likely to attend and complete college.
- Many students feel teachers have not prepared them for college.
- Some young women not viewed as being “on the college track,” found counselors and teachers didn’t discuss college with them.
- Young women do not know their strengths; they are much more aware of their weaknesses.
- They get “evaluated” but many never get accurate “feedback.”

Influential People

1. Local church leaders*** [2]
2. Teachers*
3. Friends* [3]
4. Mother* [5]
5. Relatives
7. School counselors [1]

1+=predictors of Category II
[1,2,3,4,5]=significant predictors of proactive
Other Influential Individuals

Describe how others (examples: neighbors, employers, community members) have influenced your ideas and decisions about college:

- 37.3% Many outside people influenced me
- 31.1% No influence from others***(-) [1]
- 22.0% Influence from employers*
- 14.5% Influence from neighbors*
- 10.8% Influence from church/community members*[2]
- 9.5% Influence from family friends [3]

[1,2,3]=predictors of proactive college preparation

Questions about College

- Neighbors (16%)
- Church leaders*** [2,8](34%)
- Teachers* [D](38%)
- Relatives [E](40%)
- Siblings (41%)
- High school counselors (50%)
- Parents***[1,4] (72%)
- Friends/peers*[C] (77%)

[1,2]=predictors of category II
[4,5,6,7]=predictors of proactive
Takeaways

• Counselors are integral to helping students with proactive college activities.
• Teachers and administrators should be more aware of the powerful influence they can have on the college decision.
• Many people should be involved in creating the support system for college (e.g., parents, siblings, relatives, teachers, counselors, administrators, church leaders, community members, neighbors, employers).

8. College Decisions/Influences

• Influences to attend college
• Influences not to attend college
• Influences to return to college
• Reasons they did not continue
• Reasons they may attend in future
1. Influences to Attend College
2. Influences Not to Attend College
3. Influences to Return to College
Influences Not to Attend College

- Time/Balance: 11.4%
- Health Issues: 16.1%
- Negative School/College Experiences: 21.5%
- Lack of Direction/Goals: 26.8%
- Family Issues: 40.9%
- Economic: 53.7%

Influences To Return to College

- Available School Format: 5.9%
- Life Settles Down: 15.3%
- Raise Kids: 15.3%
- Concern for the Future: 28.2%
- Money: 28.2%
- Transformative Experience/Looking for Something Better: 38.8%
### Why Did You Not Continue?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprepared, Uncertain, Attitude</td>
<td>82.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Priorities</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Career Opportunities</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied with College</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

113 who fit into this category

### Attend College in Future (1)

Which of the following might influence your decision to attend college in the future?

- **83.8%** To develop skills
- **75.1%** To be able to get a better job
- **71.0%** Make more money
- **68.9%** To be a better person
- **57.3%** To gain a general education
- **56.4%** More cultured person
- **46.1%** To improve study skills
- **44.4%** Spouse/partner influence
Attend College in Future (2)

Which of the following might influence your decision to attend college in the future?

- 36.9% Couldn’t find a job
- 30.3% Role model encouragement
- 22.8% Parents wanted me to go
- 18.7% To be with my friends
- 13.3% Get away from home
- 9.1% To find a husband

Conclusion

Formal postsecondary education is a critical foundation for Utah girls and women of all ages to be able to fully develop themselves toward reaching their inherent potential. All of us can assist in some way to help more young women in Utah do just that!
Utah Women and Education Project

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