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## Research Article

### Trend Analysis of Admission, Enrollment and Completion in SNSU Graduate Programs

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## ABSTRACT

For teachers, obtaining a bachelor's degree represents an important turning point in their academic careers and is unquestionably a positive step forward. Even while earning a bachelor's degree is an impressive accomplishment, it frequently is not enough to make the most impact on student's lives. Thus, upgrading themselves through enrollment in graduate programs equips them with an advanced technical understanding of their subject matter. The study focused on the trend analysis of admission, enrollment, and completion in the graduate programs of Surigao del Norte State University from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2021-2022. Data were taken from the Registrar's Office. At the same time, the factors contributing to the late and low completion rate in the programs were obtained purposively from sixty (60) respondents; most of them were graduate students who were identified to stop schooling in the semester where they were supposed to write their thesis and dissertation due to lack of funds needed to spend during the writing period of their research. The study revealed a growing trend in the admission, enrollment, and completion rates from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2021-2022. The growing trend is because adequate knowledge and skills can be obtained from enrolling in the graduate program, which could be primarily used in maximizing the teaching-learning process in the classroom by having the students as the recipient of learning. However, there is a low rate in terms of completion, which encouraged the author to recommend to the management to review the existing policies on writing research and improve its learning environment.

**Keywords:** *Admission, Completion rate, Enrollment, Graduate programs, Trend analysis*

## Introduction

Professionals in the education sector today are enthused to alter job paths or better

position themselves for growth chances, while some pursue graduate study because their chosen profession demands a graduate degree.

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This level of education is valuable for a growing number of positions in the information economy today and having a master's degree distinguishes one from other job applicants. Apart from the reasons for pursuing a graduate study program, the ability to learn is crucial to one's survival. Our minds are fed by knowledge acquisition and lifelong learning. Today, developing critical thinking abilities and learning new approaches in interacting with individuals from various cultural backgrounds depends on ongoing education. (Nagpal, 2017). If organizations want to survive in today's global economy, they must be creative, adaptable, and constantly moving forward (Holbeche, 2019; Maynard et al., 2015; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). The workforce's skills and knowledge are essential to achieving this. But how can you find this kind of workforce at first? Innovation, attempting new things and doing things in a different way all require learning. People must gain new knowledge or skills to advance and see things differently.

Organizations that do not encourage ongoing learning fail to innovate, maintain the status quo in their operations, and never achieve anything new. Employees must be capable of pushing themselves to learn new things and develop fresh perspectives and abilities. Learning must be adaptable and available whenever needed. The human capital theory states that a country's education level affects how its economy grows. The statement implies that a person's chances of experiencing economic growth increase with their level of education. Mendoza (1994), who asserted that developing nations and even those that have already been developed still lay out effort, time, and financial resources to keep advance the utmost potentials of their citizenry, provided a well-articulated argument for the significance of education concerning the progress of a country. He claimed that well-cultured and mannered human resources could stimulate the development syndrome, which results in advancing and developing nations, and even developed ones doing the same.

The Surigao del Norte State University being the only state university in the Province of Surigao del Norte offers graduate programs both in master's (4 programs, MIE with

specializations, MIT, MA-Math Ed, and MAEd with specializations) and doctoral degrees (Ph.D. in Technology Management) to remain loyal to its mission which is to provide quality and sustainable education to its clientele in the province and catchment areas where the majority of its graduate-students are teachers in DepEd and other private basic education institutions in the locality. However, looking into the previous data of admission, enrollment, and completion rates in the graduate programs, there seems to be a dire need to analyze SNSU as a higher learning institution to be able to have a better preparation for the future based on the data utilized from the past and the present.

### **Literature Review**

A master's degree will intensify one's employment options. Between 2006 and 2016, the number of positions requiring a master's degree increased by about 20%. A master's degree has replaced a bachelor's as the entry requirement for employment in several occupation-related disciplines, including higher education administration, public affairs, and social services. In the 1980s, one may get entry-level employment as a student services coordinator, academic adviser, or admissions counselor with a bachelor's degree.

For these identical entry-level positions in 2000, applicants without a master's degree were not considered. Even if it does not guarantee success in the long run, obtaining a graduate degree unquestionably opens many more job opportunities. Gaining a graduate degree can help your secure employment information from the U.S. Data from the Census Bureau emphasized that those with graduate degrees have an unemployment rate of 3.5%, compared to 4.5% for those with only bachelor's degrees. In comparison, those with doctorates (2.5%) and advanced professional degrees (2.1%) have unemployment rates that are roughly half as high as those with only bachelor's degrees.

Graduate degree programs are progressively becoming professionalized because of a growing focus on preparing graduates for jobs in business, government, and non-profit sectors. The United States Census Bureau reported that American workers between the ages of 21

and 64 with graduate degree programs earn an average annual salary of \$55,242, opposite to those with a bachelor's degree, who earn a salary average per annum of \$42,877. The statistics are in favor of graduate degree holders. This demonstrates how attaining a graduate degree can improve a person's financial standing as it displays a close to 30% difference in average monthly earnings.

The research conducted by Osei et al. (2017) revealed that the year 2011 was found to have the most students admitted and enrolled, having a number of 1,669 and 1,370, respectively. While 2015 was found to have the fewest admissions and enrollments, with a frequency of 576 and 436. From 2009 to 2011, admission trends indicate an annual increase, but from 2012 to 2015, a decrease. Between 2009 and 2015, there was a fluctuating trend in the number of students enrolled. Comparatively speaking, the completion rate for science programmers was lower than for human programmers. Due to problems with their homes, finances, theses, and exams, candidates could not graduate on time. It is advised that KNUST-IDL put strategies in place to guarantee growing student enrollment and timely program completion.

When the College of Agriculture Technology became the Polytechnic College, Roman and Villanueva (2017) demonstrated that the trend changed and became fractal because there was a window of opportunity to introduce new programs. A steady increase in enrollment also characterized the university's three stages of transition. Additionally, it was discovered that the enrollment patterns between BNCAT and LSPU and LSPC and LSPU differed significantly from one another, although the trends between BNCAT and LSPC were similar. Finally, the analysis identified a fit model for the trend with a high degree of confidence and was able to predict enrollment trends for the following ten years.

According to research by the Council of Graduate Schools in the USA (2010), the most common justification for enrolling in graduate programs was to promote professional objectives. There was a resounding agreement among stop outs/dropouts and current graduate students that obtaining a master's degree

was mostly done to advance their knowledge and abilities. Following this, they expressed a desire to learn more about a topic they were really interested in and boost their chances of getting hired, promoted, or paid more. Sixty-six percent of STEM master's students finished their programs of study after four years. After two, three, and four years, completion rates in STEM's wide subjects were strikingly equal, but it was significantly higher for MBA students.

At the two-, three-, and four-year points, women in STEM master's programs had greater completion rates than men. In contrast, over the same time, the completion rates for women enrolled in MBA programs were lower than those for men. In the final publication, completion rates for these and other demographic details are provided in detail. Furthermore, in terms of attrition, 10%, 17%, and 23% of STEM master's students discontinued their studies after the first six months, one year, and two years of study, respectively. 10% of MBA students, on the other hand, discontinued their studies after the first two years. With a few rare exceptions, attrition rate patterns were largely consistent with completion rate patterns.

Most students, including dropouts, reported high overall satisfaction with the program's structure, advising, instruction, and other facets of their master's experience. The two most significant influences identified as being essential to helping someone complete a master's degree successfully were enthusiasm and less financial family backup. Interference from employment was shown to be the most likely to prevent a student from obtaining a master's degree.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study examined students' admission, enrollment and completion rates of the Graduate Programs of Surigao del Norte State University from S.Y. 2009-2010 to 2019-2022 and identify the factors contributory for the graduate-students' late/low completion in the program.

### **Methods**

The study used a descriptive survey design; having graduated in the graduate programs were surveyed at a single point in time to

describe data on the factors accountable for the late completion in the programs enrolled through a questionnaire. There were 60 respondents in all. Secondary data were obtained from the Admission, Registrar's, and Graduate School offices and were analyzed quantitatively using the SPSS for the admission, enrollment, and completion rates. Quantitative data were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation.

## Results and Discussion

### Admission and Enrollment Trends in the Graduate Programs in SNSU

The admission and enrollment trend in the Graduate Programs of Surigao del Norte State University is shown in Figure 1. It can be gleaned that the trend in admission is increasing every school year, beginning from S.Y. 2010-2011, which was 120, to S.Y. 2021-2022, which was 690. This implies that several interested students, most of whom were teachers from basic education in the locality and nearby places and provinces, submitted themselves to admission policies where they underwent the I.Q. tests conducted by the Admission and Guidance Office, after which they underwent an Interview with the Interview Committee.

The results of Arnett's (2020) survey revealed that applications for admission climbed to 7.3% over the previous year in the graduate

school in the autumn of 2020, as emphasized in the Council of Graduate Schools report. This growth rate is significantly higher than the prior ten (10) years' median annual growth rate of 2.5%.

Moreover, Chen (2021) revealed that graduate schools generally receive a rise in applications during economic slowdowns. More students pursue graduate degrees during recessions to delay entering or to take a break from hostile job markets. In the meantime, the graduate school serves as an occasion for students to hone their knowledge and skills relevant to industries of interest and to increase their future salaries. For professional degrees, this mindset seemed to persist in 2020.

However, comparing the admission to the enrolment rate per school year in SNSU, it can be seen that among those who submitted themselves from admission (I.Q. Tests and Interviews), only a few were qualified to enroll in the program. This could be due to the non-passing of the I.Q. tests and/or interviews. Specifically, looking into the graph for enrollment, the trend is growing every school year from S.Y. 2010-2011, which was 85, and S.Y. 2020-2021, which was 647. However, it declined but was not so significant in S.Y. 2017-2018, which was 452 only, which revealed a decline of 0.87% compared to its previous school year.

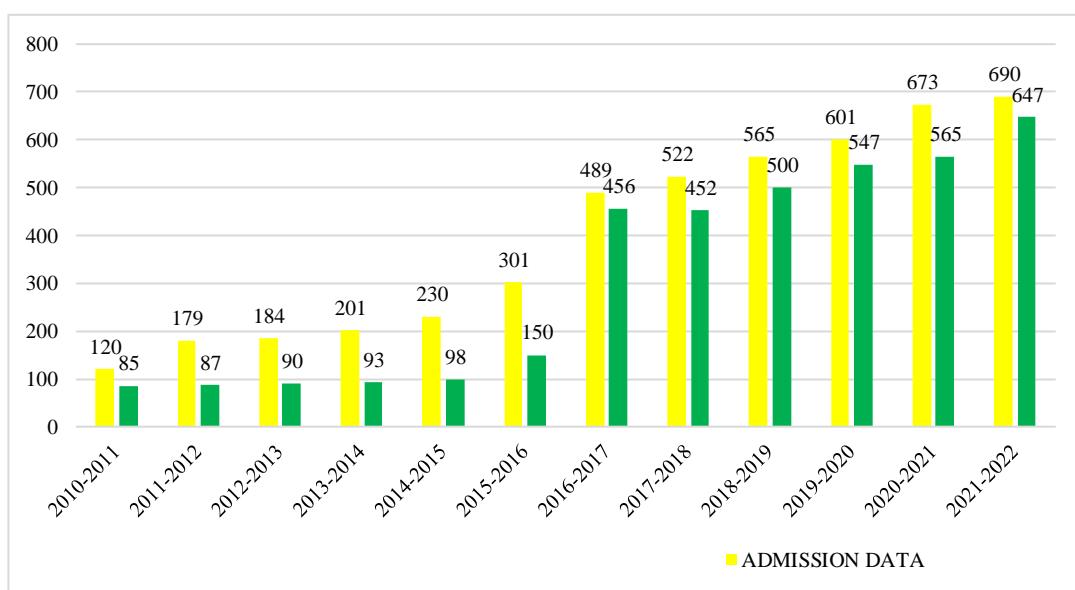


Figure 1. Admission and Enrollment Trends in the Graduate Programs of Surigao del Norte State University

## Enrollment Trend and Completion Rates in the Graduate Programs of SNSU

Figure 2 illustrates the enrollment and completion rates in the graduate programs of Surigao del Norte State University. The trend in enrollment is going upward from SY 2010-2011 to SY 2021-2022. Even when the pandemic had attacked the globe, enrollment was still high in the affected school years because the students could shift from face-to-face to online classes, which was the modality used in SNSU during the pandemic.

The finding of this study, however, was negated by the report recently released by the Council of Graduate Schools, which examined the impact of the pandemic on enrollment among the 558 institutions participating in the survey. According to the poll conducted and revealed by Zhou and Gao (2021), first-time international student enrollment had significantly fallen (12.6 percent) from the previous academic year because to travel restrictions brought on by the pandemic (20.0 percent).

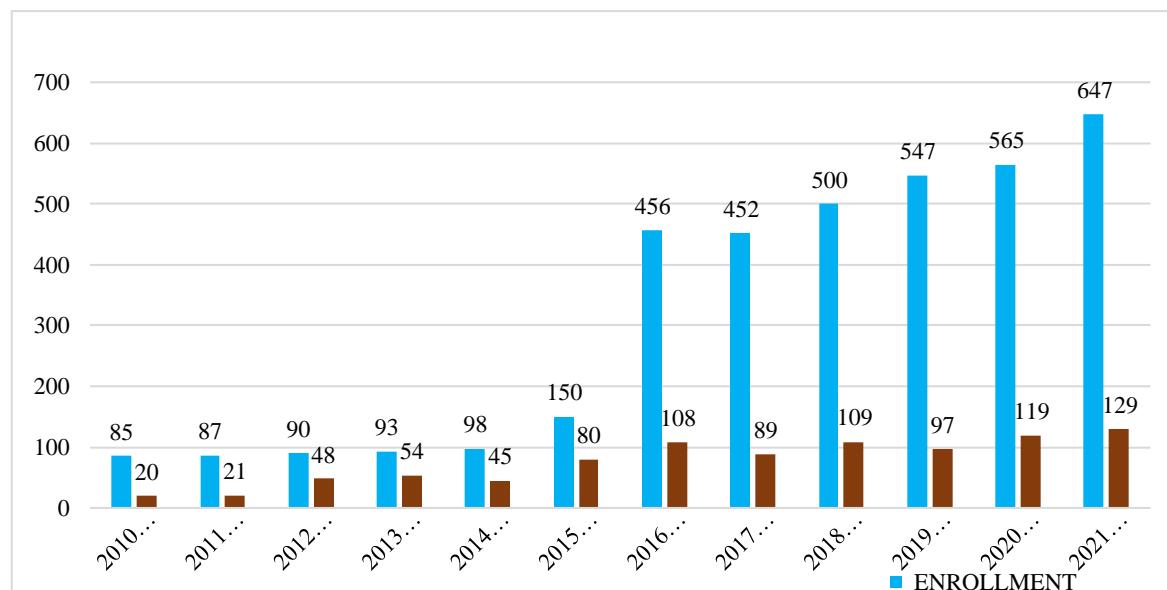


Figure 2. Enrollment Trend and Completion Rates in the Graduate Programs of Surigao del Norte State University

## Factors Influencing the Late and Low Completion in the Graduate Program

Nevertheless, despite its high enrollment rate per school year, very few have completed the program. Factors accountable for the late and low completion rate in the graduate programs, where among the reasons, lack of funds for a thesis and dissertation is the number 1 contributory factor.

Table 1 reveals the factors influencing the late/low completion rate of students taking up graduate programs at Surigao del Norte State University. It is shown that the average mean of 3.64, SD of 0.50, and verbal interpretation of strongly agree emphasized that all these factors have contributed to the late completion of the program enrolled in a given period.

Specifically, item 5, "Lack of funds for thesis/ dissertation) obtained the highest mean of 4.14, described as strongly agree. This entails that undergoing thesis/dissertation writing requires logistics which the students do not have sufficient funds for its expenses. With this, McWade (1995) introduced the concept of financial aid to help disadvantaged students pay for their education. Through financial assistance, the students could lessen unneeded expenses and achieve their aim of attending college. No matter the degrees they are enrolling in and their areas of interest, monetary assistance may be accessible in various forms like scholarships, fellowships, and grants. Additionally, students are eligible to qualify for federal and private loans with flexible terms and rates of repayment. Malaysian graduate students

have few options for financial support. Only graduate students who are enrolled full-time are eligible to apply for assistantships. There are extremely few assistantships, and they depend on government financing. Married students are discouraged from applying due to poor pay.

Item 9, "Lack of communication with the academic and/or thesis/dissertation adviser" ( $M=3.90$ ; Strongly Agree), emphasized that communication is fundamental to both. Constant communication between them from the start of the research inscription until its final defense and revision of the manuscript should be established. The kind of adviser-advisee communication relationship can make or break the experience in graduate programs. It is no surprise that advisor relationships are often the number one issue students have highlighted when asked to identify their top frustrations with the graduate programs. There seems

to be something like the advisor-advisee relationship that can feel inherently disempowering. Other factors such as "delays for thesis/dissertation adviser" ( $M=3.80$ ), "Late completion of thesis/dissertation" ( $M=3.70$ ), and "Examination-related issues" ( $M=3.67$ ) are among the top five issues accountable for the inability of the graduate-students to complete the program within a specified duration of time.

The studies by Gardner (2008) and Wamala et al. (2012), which identified the causes of the poor completion rate of graduate degrees, provide support for the conclusions. These are categorized into three main themes: inadequate student performance, ineffective supervision, and ineffective research setting. Studies have looked at various criteria, including personal, academic, and financial ones, but none have consistently found one that tends to impact completion before the others.

*Table 1. Factors Influencing the Late and Low Completion in the Graduate Program*

<b>Factors Accountable for the Late and Low Completion Rate in the Program</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Sd</b>	<b>Verbal Interpretation</b>
1. Too many requirements	3.32	0.45	Agree
2. Examination-related issues.	3.67	0.42	Strongly Agree
3. Late completion of thesis/dissertation.	3.70	0.72	Strongly Agree
4. Delays for thesis/dissertation adviser	3.80	0.34	Strongly Agree
5. Lack of funds for thesis/dissertation.	4.12	0.56	Strongly Agree
6. Family burdens.	3.30	0.64	Agree
7. Health issues.	3.56	0.52	Strongly Agree
8. Internet-related problems.	3.40	0.44	Agree
9. Lack of communication with the academic and/or thesis/dissertation adviser.	3.90	0.40	Strongly Agree
10. Interference from employment.	3.67	0.48	Strongly Agree
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.64</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

## Conclusion

Graduate students are enrolling in graduate programs in the university to acquire an adequate background to apply theory to practical practices in the field. However, with the competitive requirements set by the university for new entrants, only a few have been allowed to enroll and complete the program due to financial reasons. Furthermore, the result of the completion rate, which is found to be very low, becomes a challenging area in the graduate program at the university.

## Recommendations

With the preceding conclusions of the study, the management sector in the University is recommended and encouraged to let the graduate students feel safe and secure. They need to know and realize that they can freely and democratically express their thoughts, especially regarding research writing as the final requirement in obtaining the degree. Research mentoring is also a great way to take things one step further. Graduate students feel very special and important when they know they are

accountable to themselves and have one person looking out for them during their thesis/dissertation writing. Institutionalization of mentorship programs is often an excellent way for graduate students to build relationships with the entire academic community, which can motivate them to finish their degree.

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