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First Generation College Students & Campus Resources

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Definition

- U.S. Department of Education, the definition of a first-generation college student is:
“An individual, neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree; or an individual who, prior to the age of 18, regularly resided with and received support from only one parent and whose supporting parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or an individual who, prior to the age of 18, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or adoptive parent.”

Note: If your parent(s) and/or guardian(s) attended college but do not have a bachelor’s degree (i.e., did not graduate or have an associates degree), you are considered to be first-generation.

Introduction

Main Background Facts

- Most first-generation college students come from low-income families
- In addition, they are also commonly distressed by the amount of school work they are receiving
- Parents may be less understanding because they are unfamiliar with college (Means & Pyne, 2017, Demetriou et al., 2017, Petty, 2014).
- Trying to attend college under these circumstances provides additional challenges for first-generation students.
- The Persistence and Success Program (PSP) is a on campus program for first year first generation college students
- These things have been instrumental in shaping why we wanted to work with and hopefully help this specific population.

Research Questions

- Research Question 1
 - Do campus resources, such as the counseling center and career center correlate with how well first-generation students feel they belong on Valparaiso University's campus?
- Research Question 2
 - Do campus resources, such as the counseling center and career center correlate with how well first-generation students do academically?

Methods

Survey – 5 Sections

- Demographics
 - Multiple Choice Questions
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Year in School
- Campus Resources
 - Scaled Questions
 - Never, Once, Once a Semester, Once a Month, Twice a Month, Once a Week
 - Academic Advisor
 - Writing Center
- Campus Community/ Feelings of Belonging
 - Scaled Questions:
 - Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree, Not Applicable
 - “I feel that I fit well as part of the Valpo community”
 - “I am pleased about my decision to go to college”
 - Academic Preparedness/ Success
 - Scaled Questions:
 - Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree,
- Not Applicable
 - “I have been keeping up with my academic work”
 - “I expect to receive a bachelors degree from Valparaiso University”
- Experience
 - Short Answer Response
 - “What, if any, are challenges of being a first-generation college student on campus?”

Results

Demographics

- 170 responses out of 742 recipients
- Gender
 - 70% Female
- Race
 - 71% White
 - 24% Latinx
 - 5.8% African American
 - 5.3% Asian American/ Asian or Pacific Islander
- Age
 - 95.3% Traditional Students (18-24)
 - 4.7% Non-Traditional (25+)
- On-Campus vs. Commuter
 - 55.8% On-Campus Students
 - 44.2% Commuter

Campus Resources & Campus Community

- Significant positive correlation
 - +0.326 p < .001

Campus Resources & Academic Preparedness

- Not a significant correlation
 - +0.149 p = .053
- Independent campus resources were not correlated with academic preparedness

Campus Community & Commuters

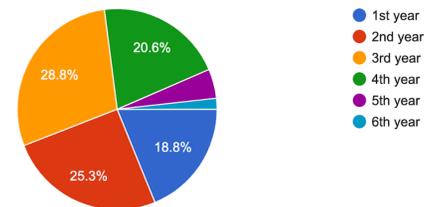
- Significant negative correlation
 - .386 p < .001

Campus Community & Age

- Significant negative correlation
 - .164 p = .033

What is your year in school?

170 responses



Academic Preparedness & Age

- Significant negative correlation
- .156 p = .042

Challenges First-Generation College Students Face:

- “Everyone I meet has a family that went to college. No one understands that I have no one in my personal life who knows anything about college. At Valpo, I am just expected to know everything about college when I arrive.”
- “Financial aid issues is probably the biggest challenge. With no one in my family having gone to college before, they don’t know the FAFSA process or how financial aid works or different types of aid.”
- “There is a lot of pressure to succeed and that can be especially hard if you feel you haven’t been performing as well as you should be”

Limitations

- Answers are biased toward the middle
 - Replaced all “Not Applicable” answers to “Neutral”
- 70% of responses were from females
 - Not represented of first-generation college student population campus
- Cannot infer causation
 - Cannot show that the use of campus resources came before campus community
- Do not know if campus resources are helping students
 - For example, even if a student goes to the Academic Success Center, we do not know if the student was helped
- Self-Identified First-Generation College Student
 - There may be some students on the list that do not know identify as first-gen students but took the survey anyways

Conclusions

Use of Research

- Use data to implement new ideas into the Persistence and Success Program (PSP)
 - Guest speakers from certain campus resources to describe the importance of that resource
- See use of campus resources and how we can get students to use more on campus
 - Advertising the use of the resource on campus
- See which campus resources are used more often and make sure to give information to new first-generation students coming to campus
- Find ways to mitigate the challenges provided in the research
 - Discuss with Provost office on how to combat these challenges

Acknowledgements

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