

Should I Stay or Should I Go?:

Analyzing Predictors of Retention Among College of Agriculture Freshman

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(See Abstract for all References)

Introduction

- Enrollment in Colleges of Agriculture has increased in recent years (STEM Food and Ag Council, 2014)
- Retention and graduation rates have not increased to match enrollment and job market projections (U.S. DOE, 2019)
- Academic readiness benchmarks, non-academic involvement, and non-cognitive factors have all shown potential as indicators of student success (Bazelais, Lemay, & Doleck, 2016; Bowman, Miller, Woosley, Maxwell, & Kolze, 2019)

Conceptual Framework

- Chapman's (1981) Model of Student Success served as the conceptual framework for this study
- Student characteristics and external influences are factors in students' expectations of college life and choice of institution
- The decision to leave college is often due to students' perceptions that their characteristics and external influences no longer fit

Purpose & Objectives

- This study sought to determine what factors could predict the retention CoA freshman
- This study had two objectives:
 1. Determine what factors serve as statistically significant predictors of retention of CoA freshmen
 2. Determine if a model exists that can correctly classify CoA freshmen on whether or not they would be retained to the next fall semester

Methods

- Data were collected from CoA freshmen enrolled in an introductory course during Fall 2018 ($N = 170$), with 87% yielding usable data
- An instrument was delivered to collect data on academic grit, efficacy, long term goals, demographics, and personal information
- Fall 2018, Spring 2019, and cumulative GPA, as well as Fall 2019 enrollment status was collected from the LSU Registrar
- Discriminant analysis (Barrick & Warmbrod, 1988) was used to determine if any statistically significant factors could be used in a model to accurately predict retention

Results

| Variable | p | Λ | Model Accuracy |
|--------------------------|-----|-----------|----------------|
| Spring 2019 GPA | .00 | .865 | 94.1% |
| Freshman Cumulative GPA | .00 | .878 | - |
| Fall 2018 GPA | .00 | .906 | - |
| Father's Education Level | .05 | .974 | - |

Discussion and Recommendations

- Second semester GPA is a significant predictor of retention
- This may be a symptom of a greater problem in students' decision to stay in college
- Time is a limiting factor in reacting to second semester GPA
- Intrusive advising (Varney, 2007) may be an avenue to aid students in raising their second semester GPA, leading to increased retention rates