

A Description of College of Agriculture and Related Sciences Student Behaviors Regarding Postsecondary Education

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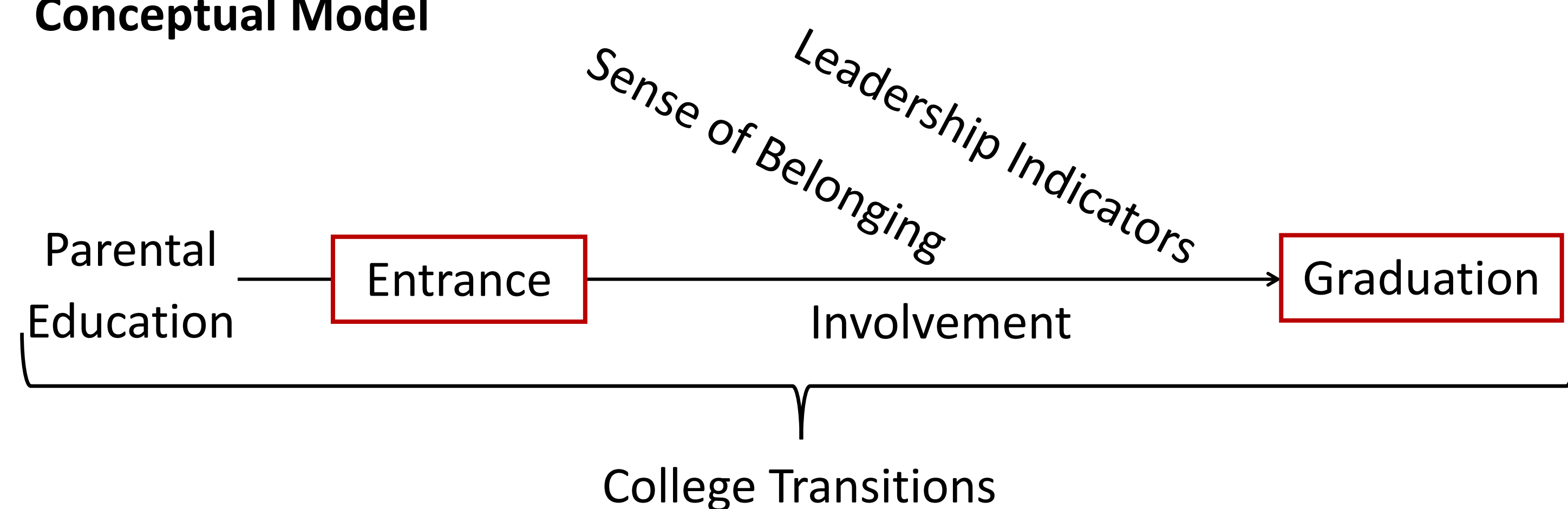
Introduction

- First-generation college students (FGCS) have been documented as historically disenfranchised from college outcomes.
- Career outcomes are equivalent for first- and continuing-generation (CGCS) graduates who obtain a bachelor’s degree.
- Data support that FGCS are enrolling in agriculture and the related sciences at higher rates than in other disciplines.
- Lesser levels of engagement and involvement by FGCS in college experiences have been historically correlated to departure.

Conceptual Framework

This research was founded on Astin’s (1977, 1991) I-E-O model and theory of involvement. Inputs interact with experiences to shape outcomes for those experiences. Additionally, experiences have varying effects on outcomes based on quality and quantity of involvement.

Conceptual Model



Methodology

- Purpose of study was to describe experiences of students in postsecondary education, by college and generational status.
- Study utilized secondary datasets to explore experiences of students at The Ohio State University (OSU), and compare differences between generational status and colleges.
- OSU’s Student Life Survey, 2019 cohort (n = 726), and Multi-institutional Study of Leadership, 2018 cohort (n = 2635) were used.
- Descriptive statistics were calculated for the variables of on-campus involvement, leadership capacity, leadership efficacy, leadership motivation, and sense of belonging.

Table 1.

Percentage On-campus Participation by College, and Generational Status

Activity	University		CFAES	
	Total	First-Gen	Total	First-Gen
Student Organization	58.9	53.8	69.4	54.5
Social Fraternity or Sorority	12.1	5.5	18.3	18.1
Intramural Sports	15.1	10.3	20.4	18.1
Service	12.4	13.8	20.4	18.1
Undergraduate Research	13.0	10.3	24.5	27.2
On-campus Job	31.5	35.1	53.1	45.4
Learning Community	12.0	6.2	14.2	0.0
Capstone	7.7	9.7	14.2	27.2
Not Involved	16.9	24.1	10.2	9.1

Table 2.

Scale Means for Targeted Variables

Variables	University		Generational Status	
	Overall	Ag. Related	Continuing	First-Gen
Leadership Capacity ^a	4.14	4.15	4.15	4.16
Leadership Efficacy ^a	3.08	3.11	3.11	3.11
Leadership Motivation ^a	3.91	3.91	3.91	3.90
MSL Sense of Belonging ^a	3.69	3.73	3.66	3.71
SLS Sense of Belonging ^b	18.4	18.9	18.4	18.4

Note. Scale scores are calculated based on survey responses.

^a Scale score averaged, range 1 – 5, with neutral of 3.

^b Scale score summed, range 6 – 24, with no neutral.

Results and Findings

- Participation in activities by CFAES students is greater than that of the overall university.
- First-generation students (n = 11) affiliated with CFAES were found to participate more than CGCS peers in undergraduate research, and capstone experiences.
- Respondents either were neutral, or agreed with each of the constructs for leadership, regardless of field of study, or generational status.
- Colleges of similar size and diversity characteristics were found to have similar levels of sense of belonging, and leadership indicators, but were found to be less involved than CFAES, regardless of students’ generational status.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

- Students affiliated with CFAES at OSU participate more than peers in other colleges, regardless of generational status.
- There is no difference by field of study or generational status for leadership indicators or sense of belonging within the sample.
- These findings are offered to begin describing the way students engage by college affiliation and field of study, as called for by previous research.
- The lack of difference in leadership indicators and sense of belonging between FGCS and CGCS should be further explored, as previous literature suggests a disparate effect of generational-status on these indicators.
- Further investigation exploring the potential effects of the higher rate of participation in undergraduate research on participation in graduate education for FGCS students affiliated with CFAES, which has been documented as an area where FGCS do not participate equally.

References

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years*. Jossey-Bass.

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