

Exploring a Hispanic Student Sense of Belonging in a College of Agriculture

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Introduction

- A 2022 study concluded it was essential to create strategies for a more welcoming environment for Hispanic students for higher retention and wellbeing (Schwartz et al., 2022).
- Estrada et al. (2017) theorized that the inability to achieve workforce diversity in STEM fields, such as agriculture, is due to institutional barriers that need to be removed and focus should be placed on students' commitment and ability to persist in STEM fields and majors.
- An institutional push to grow the Hispanic population within agricultural colleges, alongside a consistent concern of belonging, brings an opportunity to assess Hispanic students' sense of belonging on campus.

Theoretical Framework

- This study utilized Lane's (2016) Model for Programmatic Impact on Retention and Degree Attainment among Underrepresented students in STEM.
- Researchers utilized an 18-statement Sense of Belonging framework from an Ohio State survey (Giorgi, 2020) to study the perceived sense of belonging within Hispanic agricultural student.

Methodology

- Secondary analysis of a 2021 agricultural college-wide DEI survey, assessing (N=323) students' perceived sense of belonging, stratifying for data on Hispanic students compared to their non-Hispanic peers (Ford & Headrick, 2022).
- Levene's (1960) Test of equality of variances was utilized t statistics non-assuming homogeneity of variance were computed for any violated assumptions.

Results

Table 1

Comparative Means of Students' Belonging Statements by Hispanic Origin Status (N = 326)

Belonging Statement (I feel...)	Hispanic		Non		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
I belong in CASNR.	3	0.8	3.4	0.7	>.001**
Most of my peers in CASNR are like me.	2.2	0.8	2.8	0.8	>.001**
Most faculty members are like me.	2.2	0.8	2.7	0.8	>.001**
Most staff members are like me.	2.2	0.8	2.8	0.7	>.001**
CASNR allows me to be my authentic self.	3	0.8	3.3	0.7	.004*
Diversity is valued and celebrated within CASNR. (EVNA)	2.7	0.9	3	0.8	.005*
CASNR leadership understands that diversity is critical to success.	3	0.7	3.2	0.6	.006*
I have connections with other Texas Tech students.	3.2	0.8	3.4	0.7	.02*
I feel a sense of belonging at Texas Tech.	3	0.8	3.3	0.7	.02*
I can engage with students, staff, and faculty from other cultures.	3.1	0.8	3.3	0.7	.02*
My unique background and identity are valued in CASNR.	2.9	0.8	3.2	0.8	.03*
I have connections with Texas Tech faculty.	3	0.8	3.2	0.7	.04*
I belong in my major.	3.2	0.8	3.4	0.6	.04*

*p < .05, **p < .001

- The mean score of each statement of belonging was higher among non-Hispanic students in comparison to Hispanic students.
- The statements with the lowest mean score for Hispanic students were: "Most of my peers in CASNR are like me," "Most faculty members are like me," and "Most staff members are like me" (M = 2.2).
- For non-Hispanic students, the statements "Most of my peers in CASNR are like me" and "Most staff members are like me" shared the same mean (M = 2.8), and the statement "Most faculty members are like me" had a slightly lower mean (M = 2.7).

Conclusions

- While Texas Tech CASNR does not solely enroll the HSI designation 25%, 18.1% of the respondents did identify as Hispanic or being of Hispanic-origin.
- It is important to recognize the individual colleges' role, but also the individual majors and departments, in addressing the needs and support offered to Hispanic students.

Implications

- More work must be done to support Hispanic students and other underrepresented students in colleges of agriculture.
- Students who feel like they belong are more likely to continue in their major and be empowered to impact the profession.
- In order for universities to properly address the challenges facing students, they must be aware of their experiences.
- We suggest replicating surveys, such as this one, to help investigate the current state of student belonging and involvement and assist decision-making for the best resources and support.

ABSTRACT
& REFERENCES

