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Support, Commitment, and Persistence: Are Students in Supportive Academic Programs More Committed to Their Institutions?

Twila Murray
Advisor: Molly Schaller

Purpose of Study: To determine whether community colleges can increase their overall retention rates by incorporating characteristics of effective programs into all programs across the institution.

Rationale
- Institutional commitment predicts retention.
- Supportive programs may lead to increased retention and graduation rates (Nitecki, 2011).
- Can programs be constructed such that they increase student commitment to the institution?
- Can institutions predict student commitment based on the academic program of enrollment?

Method
- 307 Clark State Community College students completed a survey
- Independent Samples T Test conducted to compare the mean institutional commitment scores for Agriculture/Horticulture (high supportive) and Associate of Arts (low supportive) programs
- 11 one-way ANOVAs conducted to determine significance of 11 factors on affecting institutional commitment scores
- Tukey post-hoc tests performed to identify significant pair-wise levels of factors

Results
- The AG program had a mean institutional commitment score that was significantly higher than the score for AA.
- 4 factors were found to be significant overall:
  - Academic Program, Time out of High School (traditional/non-traditional students), Age, and Marital Status
- Non-traditional, older, and married students have higher mean institutional commitment scores than their counterparts. These more committed subgroups are more prevalent in the AG program than in the AA program.
- When holding other factors constant, AG continued to average a higher mean institutional commitment score than AA.