

Predicting the Academic Success of Transfer Students During the First Year of College

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Abstract

The majority of the research conducted to date on transfer student academic success compares transfer students with first-year freshmen or native students (Belcheir, 1999, 2001; Carlan, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 1987; Cope & Hannah, 1975; Eimers & Mullen, 1997; Glass & Harrington, 2002; Keeley & House, 1993; Lorentz & Benedict, 1996; Lunneborg & Lunneborg, 1976; Miville & Sedlacek, 1995; Owen, 1991; Pascarella, 1999; Richman, 1979). Of the studies solely focusing on transfer student academic success, there is inconsistency in the variables selected for analysis and in the findings. Furthermore, transfer students from other four-year institutions are often excluded from these studies. The research generally focuses on transfers from a single community college (Townsend, McNerny, & Arnold, 1993) and oftentimes on transfers from a state's public community college system into the state's public university system (Graham & Hughes, 1994; Holton, 1991; Minear, 1998; Walker, 1992). There is a need for research that looks at transfer students from both two- and four-year institutions and that examines multiple variables associated with academic success.

The purpose of this study was to determine the value of the following factors in predicting the academic success of undergraduate transfer students in their first and second semesters of enrollment: (a) on-campus residency, (b) ethnicity, (c) gender, (d) domicile (in v. out of state), (e) Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, (f) number of credits enrolled in, (g) academic college, (h) class standing, and (i) last prior institution (two-year v. four-year). First semester GPA was included as an additional independent variable in the examination of second semester GPA.

The data analyzed in the study were collected in 2002 at a research institution in the mid-Atlantic region and were accessed through the student census file. Participants were students coded as entering undergraduate transfer students in the university's student census file during the fall of 2002. This study defined academic success as first and second semester Grade Point Average (GPA), which were used as dependent variables. The above factors were used as independent variables in a step-wise regression analysis.

The results indicated nine significant predictors of first semester GPA. The following variables contributed positively to first semester GPA: (a) SAT scores, (b) class standing, (c) being a student in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, and (d) attending Community College (CC) #3. The following variables contributed negatively to first semester GPA: (a) attending CC #1, (b) being Black, (c) attending CC #2, (d) attending Comprehensive University #1, and (e) attending CC #4.

The only significant predictor of second semester GPA was first semester GPA. This suggests that the first semester predictor variables help set a student up for academic success or failure. That tracking then carries over generally to second semester.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Purpose of Study	5
Research Questions	5
Significance of Study	5
Delimitations	7
Organization of Study	8
Chapter Two: Literature Review	9
Characteristics of Transfer Students	9
Transfer Students versus First-time Freshmen	10
Transfer Students versus Native Students	12
Diversity of Transfer Students	15
Variables Associated with Academic Success of Transfer Students	16
On-Campus Residency	16
Ethnicity	17
Gender	18
SAT Scores	18
Number of Credit Hours Enrolled in During a Semester	19
Academic College.....	20

Class Standing.....	21
Last Prior Institution	22
Previous GPA	24
Chapter Three: Methodology	27
Sample.....	27
Data Source	28
Data Analysis Procedures	28
Chapter Four: Results	31
Change in Data Collection Procedures.....	31
Description of Sample	31
Results Reported by Research Question	34
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications	44
Discussion	44
Relationship of the Findings to Prior Research	50
Implications for Future Practice, Research, and Policy	53
Limitations	55
Conclusion	56
References	58

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample	32
Table 2: Academic Characteristics of the Sample	33
Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations of SAT Scores and Number of Credit Hours	35
Table 4: Results of Step-Wise Multiple Regression Predicting First Semester GPA Using On-Campus Residency, Ethnicity, Gender, Domicile, SAT Scores, Number of Credits Enrolled, Academic College, Class Standing, and Last Prior Institution	36
Table 5: Results of Step-Wise Multiple Regression Predicting Second Semester GPA Using On-Campus Residency, Ethnicity, Gender, Domicile, SAT Scores, Number of Credits Enrolled, Academic College, Class Standing, and Last Prior Institution	43