

Student Engagement and Persistence via Co-Curricular Activities

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to use technology (SIU Advantage) to track student engagement in co-curricular activities to measure student persistence, retention, and satisfaction. It has been well documented that student engagement in co-curricular activities have a positive impact on student retention rates. According to Trowler and Trowler (2010), student engagement “influences outcomes including critical thinking, cognitive development, self-esteem, satisfaction, and retention p.199”.

Student retention has been an issue for colleges and universities for decades. The national completion rate of a four year degree is a modest 35.3% for public universities (ACT, 2010). Similarly, the national student attrition rate has remained steady at 45% for decades (NCES, 2014).

The amount of student interaction with the educational institution is a positive influence on student persistence and retention (Conner, Daugherty, & Gilmore, 2012). Therefore, any co-curricular activity students might participate in can have a positive impact on their academic performance.

SIU Advantage is a new program, piloted this spring and opening to the entire university this fall to attempt to increase student engagement as well as to measure the amount of co-curricular activities students participate in. This is program will also provide students a “co-curricular transcript” of their activities the student will be able to use to market themselves to potential employers. The program has developed four “Advantage Tracks” for students to experience. Those tracks include; Cultural, Intellectual and Professional Skills, Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Development, and Personal and Social Responsibility. It is anticipated by students participating in these tracks and creating a personalized co-curricular transcript the student will differentiate themselves from competing employment applicants. The added benefit for the college and university is a more engaged student population which potentially can translate into greater persistence and retention.

The intent of the study will be to collect data on CASA students who participate in SIU Advantage events and compare academic performance and persistence of the participants to a similar cohort that has not participated in Advantage events. Also the study will create specific Advantage CASA track to stimulate student engagement.

Bibliography

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