Mapping the Academic & Social Engagement of First-Year Students @ UMNTC

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Overview

• Theoretical Foundations
• SERU Survey
• Findings
  – Academic Engagement
  – Academic/Social Engagement
  – Social Engagement
• Discussion
Theoretical Foundations

• Why does academic and social engagement matter? Connection to student success.

• Role of high impact educational practices (Kuh, 2008).

• Engagement as two-way street (Kuh, 2009)
Research Questions

• What is the relationship between academic engagement-related activities and first-year student grade point average?

• What is the relationship between social engagement-related activities and first-year student grade point average?
Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey

- SERU Consortium currently includes 18 universities, including 15 AAU institutions:
  - All 9 undergraduate campuses of the University of California system
    - Berkeley
    - Davis
    - Irvine
    - Los Angeles
    - San Diego
    - Santa Barbara
    - Riverside
    - Santa Cruz
    - Merced
  - University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
  - University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
  - Rutgers University
  - University of Florida
  - University of Pittsburgh
  - University of Oregon
  - University of Texas at Austin
  - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  - University of Southern California
SERU survey

• Systematic environmental scan of the undergraduate experience
• In-depth analysis of the varied types and levels of undergraduate engagement in research universities
• The survey is organized around five thematic research areas:
  – Academic engagement
  – Civic and community engagement
  – Global knowledge, skills, and awareness
  – Student life and development
  – Wildcard module for the University of Minnesota
SERU survey design

- Census survey of undergraduates
- Modular construction—minimize time needed for completion
- Core items (100% of participants)
- Modules (1 of 4 randomly assigned to varying % of participants)
  - Academic Engagement 30%
  - Community & Civic Engagement 20%
  - Student Development 20%
  - “Wild-Card” UM Specific Questions 30%
What is the purpose of the SERU?

- Three major uses of the SERU Consortium design and survey products include the following:
  
  - **ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW:** The SERU Survey provides a census and longitudinal data set providing a broad range of analysis including comparisons with equivalent academic programs at other Consortium campuses.
  
  - **CAMPUSS AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT/ACCREDITATION:** Provides ability to integrate SERU survey data with other campus data sets to identify effective programs and experiences to particular university strategic goals and missions.
  
  - **ADDITIONAL REPORTS AND ANALYSIS:** Data and analysis for internal and external reporting needs. The SERU Survey is also part of the new “voluntary System of Accountability” (VSA).
SERU survey sample

- In spring 2010, the SERU was distributed to 28,237 undergraduate students at UMNTC.
- 9,651 students responded to at least one question (34.2%).
- 2,007 FY Students
- 18.51 (SD .85)
- 61% F, 39% M
- 3.31 gpa (3.18)

American Indian and Alaskan Native 1.1%
African American 3.7%
Chicano-Latino 2.4%
Asian-Filipino-Pacific Islander 10.6%
White 75.2%
Other .3%
International 6.7%
Methods

• Focused only on FY students
• Descriptive analysis for frequencies
• Simple linear regression to determine relationship between variables and grade point average
Measures of Academic Engagement

• How often this year have you
  – Gone to class unprepared
  – Gone to class without completing assigned reading
  – Skipped class
  – Contributed to a class discussion
  – Turned in a course assignment late
  – Sought academic help from instructor or tutor when needed

• How many hours a week do you spend on
  – Studying and other academic activities outside of class
How frequently during this year have you gone to class unprepared?

85% never to occasionally
15% somewhat to very often

\[ n = 1653, p < .001 \]
How frequently during this academic year have you gone to class without completing assigned reading?

66% never to occasionally
34% somewhat to very often

$n = 1653, p < .001$
How frequently this year have you skipped class?

90% never to occasionally
10% somewhat to often

$n = 1632, p < .001$
How frequently this year have you contributed to a class discussion?

47% never to occasionally
53% somewhat to very often

$n = 1658, p < .05$
How frequently this past year have you turned in a course assignment late?

98% never to occasionally
2% somewhat often to often

\[ n = 1649, \ p < .001 \]
How often have you sought academic help from instructor or tutor when needed?

62% never to occasionally
38% somewhat to very often

\[ n = 1636, \ p = .66 \]
How many hours a week do you spend on studying and other academic activities outside of class?

- 38% 1-10 hours
- 41% 11-20 hours
- 20% 20+ hours

$n = 1867, \ p = .001$
Measures of Academic/Social Engagement

• How often during this year have you
  – Worked on class projects or studied as a group with other classmates outside of class
  – Helped a classmate better understand the course material when studying together
  – Interacted with faculty during lecture class sessions
  – Had a class in which a professor knew or learned your name

• How difficult has it been to find students in your classes to study with?
How often have you worked on class projects or studied as a group with other classmates outside of class?

50% never to occasionally
50% somewhat to very often

$n = 1656, p < .01$
How often have you helped a classmate better understand the course material when studying together?

49% never to occasionally
51% somewhat to very often

$n = 1653, p < .01$
How frequently this past year have you interacted with faculty during lecture class sessions?

71% never to occasionally
29% somewhat to very often

$n = 1642, p = .25$
How difficult has it been to find students in your classes to study with?

- 21% very difficult to difficult
- 38% somewhat easy
- 41% easy to very easy

$n = 462, p < .001$
How often have you had a class in which the professor knew or learned your name?

41% never to occasionally  
59% somewhat to very often

$n = 1649, p < .01$
Measures of Social Engagement

• Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:
  – I feel valued as an individual on this campus
  – I feel that I belong at this campus

• How satisfied are you with your overall academic experience?

• How many hours a week do you spend
  – Socializing with friends
  – Partying
I feel valued as an individual on this campus

22% strongly disagree to somewhat disagree
78% somewhat agree to strongly agree

\[ n = 287, \ p < .01 \]
I feel that I belong at this campus

10% strongly disagree to disagree somewhat
90% agree somewhat to strongly agree

n = 1657, p < .001
How satisfied are you with your overall academic experience?

11% very dissatisfied to somewhat dissatisfied
89% somewhat satisfied to very satisfied

$n = 1654, p < .001$
How many hours do you spend per week (seven days) socializing with friends?

1% 0 hours
59% 1-10 hours
31% 11-20 hours
9% 20+ hours

$n = 1881, p < .01$
How many hours do you spend per week (seven days) partying?

39% 0 hours
53% 1-10 hours
7% 11-20 hours
1% 20+ hours

\[ n = 1872, \ p < .001 \]
Implications for Student Affairs

- Early messages to students & families about value of academic and social engagement.
- Design & implementation of intentionally integrated programs (Lardner & Malnarich, 2008).
- Create opportunities for students to reflect on experiences.
Limitations

• Only one indicator of academic achievement was studied: first-semester gpa
• Ceiling effect with gpa
• Differences in gpa were relatively small—these are still good average gpas overall
• The explained variance is small for each relationship (typically less than 5%)
• Bias effect—first-year students who responded had higher average gpas than all first-year students