

Advising Satisfaction: Implications for First-Year Students' Sense of Belonging and Retention

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Overview

- Academic Advising
- Theoretical Framework
- Methods
- Results
- Limitations & Future Directions
- Discussion



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Academic Advising

- Important to the success of college students
- “Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience” (Light, 2001, p. 81).



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Advising & College Perceptions

- Findings demonstrate that when students partake of advising services, they feel better about their advisers as well as the institution as a whole (Nadler & Nadler, 1999; Peterson, Wagner, & Lamb, 2001).



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Advising Satisfaction & Retention

- Concise empirical evidence on the relationship between academic advising and student retention is relatively mixed (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991)
- Metzner's (1989) study revealed that high-quality advising had a statistically significant positive effect on persistence as transmitted through advising's positive impact on grades and satisfaction.
- Gap in the literature: few studies address advising satisfaction and student outcomes



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Advising Satisfaction

- Satisfaction with academic advising involves many factors:
 - Relationship and rapport
 - Quality and accuracy of advice
 - Realistic and timely advice
 - Frequent, engaged conversations
 - Developmental approaches



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Importance of Academic Advising

- A study of 81,094 students from 87 four-year public colleges and universities found that students rate academic advising as the most important priority among 12 campus-related characteristics (Noel-Levitz, 2011)
- Yet, for decades, national surveys have found that academic advising is one of the college experiences rated lowest in student satisfaction (Allen & Smith, 2008)



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Theoretical Framework

- Based upon Price's (1977) model of employee turnover, Bean's (1980, 1983) causal model of attrition views student attrition as analogous to employee attrition in work organizations.



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Bean's (1980, 1983) Model

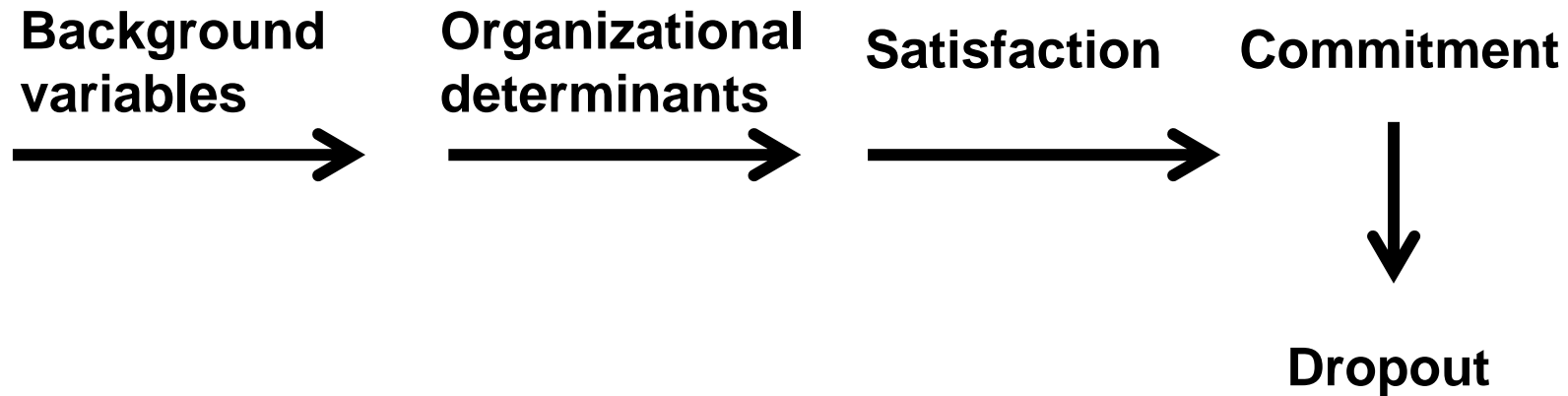
- Background variables: precollege characteristics including academic achievement, socioeconomic status, residence, etc.
- Organizational determinants: factors including integration, perception of development, grade point average, staff/faculty relationships, living on campus
- Intervening variables: satisfaction and institutional commitment
- Student dropout (outcome variable)



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Bean's (1980, 1983) Model



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Research Questions

- What is the relationship between advising satisfaction and first-year students' retention to year two?
- What is the relationship between advising satisfaction and first-year students' sense of belonging on campus?



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Methods

- Survey
- Descriptives
- Factor analysis
- Logistic regression: retention (a dichotomous outcome)
- Linear regression: sense of belonging (a continuous outcome)



Student Experience in the Research University (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 each campus



SERU Survey

SERU Consortium currently includes 18 universities, including 15 AAU institutions:

- All nine undergraduate campuses of the University of California system
- 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 (private)



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SERU Survey Participants

- In fall 2009, 5,400 non-transfer first-year students enrolled at UMNTC
- SERU survey response rate was 35% ($n = 1,904$).

Table 1

Frequency of Demographic Variables

| <i>Variables</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Male | 838 | 39.1% |
| Female | 1305 | 60.9% |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 25 | 1.2% |
| African American | 84 | 3.9% |
| Hispanic | 50 | 2.3% |
| Asian | 232 | 10.8% |
| White | 1604 | 74.8% |
| Other/Unknown | 5 | .2% |
| International | 143 | 6.7% |
| Non-First Generation | 1167 | 74.4% |
| First Generation | 401 | 25.6% |



Measures

- Dependent:
 - Sense of belonging (factor of four items, $\alpha = .86$)
 - Retention from year one to year two
- Independent:
 - Advising satisfaction: faculty, peer, college/staff, department
 - Gender, race, and first-generation status
 - Cumulative gpa
 - D, F, W counts
 - First-year seminars and living on campus
 - Campus climate (six items, $\alpha = .91$) and academic engagement, (six items, $\alpha = .86$)



Results

Table 2

Rating of Satisfaction with Four Types of Advisers

| | Very dissatisfied | | Dissatisfied | | Somewhat dissatisfied | | Somewhat Satisfied | | Satisfied | | Very satisfied | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------------|-----|-----------------------|------|--------------------|------|-----------|------|----------------|------|
| | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % |
| Faculty | 28 | 1.7 | 45 | 2.8 | 125 | 7.7 | 562 | 34.4 | 736 | 45.1 | 136 | 8.3 |
| Student peer advisers | 22 | 1.4 | 36 | 2.2 | 179 | 11.1 | 711 | 43.9 | 581 | 35.9 | 89 | 5.5 |
| School or college staff | 27 | 1.7 | 45 | 2.8 | 130 | 8 | 526 | 32.3 | 708 | 43.5 | 191 | 11.7 |
| Departmental staff | 23 | 1.4 | 38 | 2.3 | 162 | 10 | 583 | 35.9 | 690 | 42.5 | 128 | 7.9 |

Most students rated they were “somewhat satisfied” to “very satisfied” with advising in four areas



Results

As satisfaction increases, so does the sense of belonging factor score.

| | Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Faculty Advising | -1.65 | -0.70 | -0.49 | -0.14 | 0.19 | 0.49 |
| Peer Advising | -1.81 | -0.68 | -0.42 | -0.09 | 0.23 | 0.70 |
| School/College Staff Advising | -1.55 | -0.26 | -0.56 | -0.23 | 0.19 | 0.53 |
| Departmental Staff Advising | -1.91 | -0.56 | -0.57 | -0.14 | 0.23 | 0.60 |



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Results

As satisfaction increases, so does retention (although most markedly in school/college and departmental advising)

| | Very Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Faculty Advising | 92.9 | 88.9 | 94.4 | 95.6 | 96.3 | 97.1 |
| Peer Advising | 95.5 | 97.2 | 93.3 | 95.8 | 96.0 | 98.9 |
| School/College Staff Advising | 88.9 | 91.1 | 90.8 | 96.6 | 95.8 | 98.4 |
| Departmental Staff Advising | 87.0 | 89.5 | 93.8 | 96.6 | 95.7 | 97.7 |



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Results

- Satisfaction with all four types of advising is positively related to students' sense of belonging.

Table 4

Regression Analysis Predicting First-Year Students' Sense of Belonging.

| Predictor | B | SE | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------|--------|-----|
| Constant | -2.33*** | .24 | | |
| Faculty Satisfaction | .10** | .03 | | |
| Peer Satisfaction | .14*** | .03 | | |
| Faculty Satisfaction | | | .10** | .03 |
| Peer Satisfaction | | | .14*** | .03 |
| School/College Staff Satisfaction | | | .08* | .03 |
| Department Staff Satisfaction | | | .13*** | .04 |
| W Count | -.15 | .08 | | |
| Lives in Residence Halls | .25*** | .07 | | |
| First-Year Seminars | .11* | .05 | | |
| Academic Engagement | .22*** | .02 | | |
| Campus Climate | .11*** | .02 | | |
| R^2 | | 27.3% | | |

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$



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Results

Table 5

Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting First-Year Students' Retention

| | | | Wald's | e^{β} Odds |
|-------------------------------|---------|------|--------|---------------------|
| Faculty Satisfaction | .05 | .18 | .08 | 1.05 |
| Peer Satisfaction | .04 | .18 | .04 | 1.04 |
| College Staff Satisfaction | .40* | .20 | 4.00 | 1.48 |
| Department Staff Satisfaction | -.24 | .22 | 1.20 | .79 |
| Students of Color | .69 | .42 | 2.74 | 1.99 |
| First-Generation | -.95** | .29 | 10.82 | .39 |
| GPA | 1.12*** | .31 | 13.16 | 3.06 |
| D Count | .53 | .43 | 1.53 | 1.69 |
| F Count | -.28 | .38 | .56 | .75 |
| W Count | -.64* | .31 | 4.30 | .53 |
| Lives in Residence Halls | -.51 | .40 | 1.64 | .60 |
| First-Year Seminars | .80* | .32 | 6.37 | 2.23 |
| Academic Engagement | .09 | .13 | .46 | 1.09 |
| Campus Climate | -.20 | .14 | 2.05 | .82 |
| Constant | -.63 | 1.30 | .24 | .53 |

Note. $R^2 = .05$ (Cox & Snell), $.16$ (Nagelkerke). * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

- Satisfaction

with
positively
related to
students'
retention.



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Discussion

- This study suggests that advising satisfaction is important in enhancing students' sense of belonging and retention
- I do not mean to suggest that advising satisfaction is not the *only* predictor of retention and sense of belonging...but advising satisfaction may co-occur (co-vary) with other satisfaction indicators



Limitations

- Satisfaction is subjective and mutable
- Multiple factors = satisfaction
- Institutional context
- Survey limitations



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Future Directions

- What factors influence students' satisfaction with advisors?
- How do those factors impact sense of belonging and retention?
- Who is dissatisfied? Why? What can we do to change?



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Recommendations

- Consider asking students about their satisfaction (and related factors)
- Consider developing more detailed assessments and policies to enhance areas of lower satisfaction
- Consider replicating predictive studies—what other factors are impacted?



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Discussion

- What elements are associated with students' satisfaction of advising on your campus?
- Why do you think that advising satisfaction matters in student success?



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Thank you!

- References available upon request:
please email me at ksoria@umn.edu



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