

A Brief Report:

Gender, Ethnicity, Academic Standing and Student Issues Reported in Advising Files

General College Office of Research and Evaluation

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Advising files have the potential to increase our understanding of the factors that contribute to student departure or interfere with students' academic success. Previous studies have found a variety of student academic (e.g., poor academic performance, low motivation) and non-academic issues (e.g., family issues, financial issues) documented in advising files (Wambach, Hatfield, et al., 2003; Xie, Wambach, Franko, Connor, 2005). One of the prior studies also found that students who left school in good academic standing had fewer issues reported in their advising files than those who left on probation or suspension (Xie, Franko, Wambach, Jansen & Connor, 2005). The present study was designed to examine associations between student issues documented in GC advising files and students' gender, ethnicity, and academic performance. These associations could not be adequately tested in prior studies due to small sample sizes (Xie, Franko et al., 2005; Xie, Wambach et al., 2005).

Description of The Sample

Data used in this study included advising files, demographic information, and cumulative GPA of 100 leavers and 100 persisters who were randomly selected from the GC 2003 NHS cohort. Details of sampling and coding of advising files were reported in prior studies (Xie, Franko et al., 2005; Xie, Wambach et al., 2005). For this study, the original data collected for leavers and persisters were combined, resulting in a total of 198 students with complete data for analyses. Table 1 presents the gender and ethnicity information for this sample. The ethnic labels are those entered in the UMN data warehouse at the time of the students' application. In addition, among the 198 students,

52.0% were in good academic standing, 34.8% had records of probation, and 13.1% had records of suspension.

Table 1
Demographic Information of the Sample (N = 198)

	Gender			Ethnicity					
	Male	Female	Unknown	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	American Indian	Unknown
n	94	102	2	87	40	54	8	3	6
%	47.5	51.5	1.0	43.9	20.2	27.3	3.0	1.5	3.0

Data Analyses and Results

The prior analysis of leavers suggested that female students have more work issues reported in their advising files than male students (Xie et al., 2005). Work issues were noted for 15.7% of the females and 7.4% of the males in this study. However, this difference was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 196) = 3.21, p = .07$.

The prior analysis of leavers also indicated an ethnicity difference in family issues. It was found that Asian students appeared to have more family issues documented than other ethnic groups, although the difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 8.70, p = .07$), given the small sample size (N =99). To examine if there is a significant ethnicity difference in family issues for the combined sample of leavers and persisters, a Chi-square test was conducted for three ethnic groups, White, Black, and Asian students. Hispanic and Native American groups were not included in the Chi-square test, given the small number of students in these two groups. The Chi-square test result indicated a significant difference in frequency of family issues reported among White, Black, and Asian students, $\chi^2(2, N = 198) = 7.78, p = .02$. Family issues were reported for 24.1% of Asian, 11.5% of White, and 5.0% of Black students. Two post-hoc Chi-square tests indicated that Asian students had significantly more family issues reported than Black

students, $\chi^2(2, N = 198) = 6.23, p = .01$, and that the difference between Asian students and White students was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 198) = 3.86, p = .049$, while controlling for Type I error by setting $\alpha = .025$ for each post-hoc analysis.

Chi-squares tests were also conducted to examine the association between student issues and academic standings. Four issues, academic alerts, low motivation, emotional/mental health issues, and incongruities, were selected for Chi-square tests as in the prior analyses, these issues were found to be likely associated with leavers' academic standing.

Table 2
Issues Reported for Students in Different Academic Standings ($N=198$)

Issues	Good Standing ($n_1 = 103$) ^a		Probation & Suspension ($n_2 = 95$) ^b		χ^2
	n	% of n_1	n	% of n_2	
Academic alert	47	45.6	68	71.6	14.68***
Low motivation	1	1.0	11	11.6	9.77**
Emotional/mental health issues	7	6.8	15	15.8	4.05*
Incongruities /overconfidence	2	1.9	12	12.6	8.60**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The results indicated significant differences in these issues between students in good academic standing and students on probation or suspension (see Table 2).

Specifically, the advising files of students on probation or suspension contained more academic alerts, low motivation issues, emotional/mental health issues, and incongruity issues than the files of students in good academic standing.

In summary, by combining data from leavers' and persisters' advising files, we found that ethnicity and academic performance were associated with several student

issues. Asian students had more family issues documented in advising files than Black students. Students on probation or suspension had more academic alerts, low motivation, emotional/mental health issues, and incongruities reported than students in good academic standing. Gender was not found to be associated with student issues.

References

- Wambach, C., Hatfield, J., Franko, J., & Mayer, A. (2003). *General college persisters and leavers: A comparative study*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota General College.
- Xie, B., Wambach, C., Franko, J., & Connor, J. (2005). *Are leavers and persisters really different: A comparative study of issues reported in GC advising files?* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota General College.
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