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ALEXANDER NICKOLAS AKULLI, 2015

EMBEDDEDNESS OF FOREIGN-BORN FACULTY AT COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Advisor: Dr. Roger Baldwin

Abstract

Globalization and knowledge-driven economies have created a transnational landscape of career opportunities for scholars in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. Attracting and retaining highly skilled individuals has been an important discussion in academic literature. For several decades, foreign-born faculty members have pursued their careers in the American professoriate and make up a significant percentage of STEM disciplines. As competition for talent increases across borders, little is understood about foreign-born faculty members in the American professoriate.

The present research investigated the embeddedness of university professors who are foreign-born and employed in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines at comprehensive universities in the United States. Embeddedness is a positive construct that focuses on why people stay in their jobs. This study utilized online survey methodology to collect data from individuals who were clustered at randomly selected comprehensive universities. The institution served as a means to find eligible participants; no data was collected on the institution or the local community.

The analysis of data collected included calculating an embeddedness index for the study sample; analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-tests were used to help explain the variance in embeddedness of foreign-born faculty members included in the present study. Descriptive analysis was used to help understand what describes the foreign-born STEM faculty members in this study.

The data from the present study show that foreign-born faculty members are highly embedded. Embeddedness in the university was significantly higher than embeddedness in the community. Factors such as gender, homeownership, and geographical region of origin were found influential in the embeddedness of foreign-born faculty members who participated in the present study. In addition, for nearly a quarter of the sample in the present study, identifying as foreign-born was not synonymous with identifying as an international faculty member.

Findings from the present research can inform policy and practices related to recruitment, socialization and retention of foreign-born faculty members in the American professoriate. University administrators and policy makers should consider these findings and explore ways to increase the embeddedness of foreign-born faculty members in the community. Recommendations for future research, policy, and practice are included.



STEVEN CHRISTOPHER ARGUE, 2015

SUPPORTING UNDERGRADUATE SPIRITUALITY: COLLEGE-RELATED FACTORS EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN STUDENTS PERCEIVE AS AFFECTING THEIR WORKING THROUGH SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE WHILE ATTENDING A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

Undergraduate experiences of spiritual struggle on campus are common and indeed necessary for personal spiritual development and holistic maturity, but they are often unseen or misunderstood by universities, leading to a lack of their support and even detrimental effects on the students; experiencing that struggle. The purpose of this study is to understand Evangelical Christian undergraduates' descriptions of factors that contribute to their spiritual struggle and the resources they accessed to work through that struggle. Understanding what these students see as supportive resources, relationships, and experiences available to help them work through spiritual struggle can offer additional insights to public colleges and universities they can apply to support students' spiritual and holistic development. Thirty-nine interviews were conducted with twenty undergraduates in a qualitative study at a major Midwestern university. While students' descriptions of the factors that contributed to their spiritual struggles and the resources they accessed to work through those struggles remained consistent with previous literature descriptions, this study extends the research on undergraduate spiritual struggle by focusing on Evangelical Christian undergraduates; further classifying students' spiritual struggle descriptions by adopting Parks' (2000) spiritual development framework; and introducing a separating-integrating continuum to describe students' views of their campus and how these may influence the kinds of spiritual struggles they encounter and the resources they will access to work through that struggle. By providing richer descriptions of Evangelical undergraduate spiritual struggles, public universities will be more aware and better prepared to support these students as they work through their spiritual struggle experiences.



LEAH E. BEASLEY-WOJICK, 2015

BEATING THE ODDS: A CASE STUDY OF A LOW-INCOME, MINORITY PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL WITH HIGHER THAN EXPECTED FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE-GOING AND THE PARTNERSHIP THAT HELPED MAKE IT POSSIBLE

Advisor: Dr. James Fairweather

Abstract

Low-socioeconomic status (SES) and minority high school students aspire to attend four-year higher education institutions at similar rates as their White and high-SES peers, yet, their college-going and persistence rates still lag far behind. Research suggests that partnerships between K-12 and higher education institutions might help address the problem of college access for low-SES, first-generation and underrepresented students.

The purpose of this single case study was two-fold: (a) to provide an in-depth examination of one predominantly African American, low-SES, public high school that is sending higher than expected numbers of students on to four-year institutions and (b) to examine the effects of the institutional and personal relationships between this high school and local four-year institutions on this successful college-going rate.

One-on-one interviews, document analysis, and observations revealed that one informal relationship between a guidance counselor and four-year college financial aid director was significant in providing information to students about college cost and financial aid. Most importantly, a formal partnership between the case study high school's district and nearby four-year technological institution was crucial to the high school's success in two ways: by developing the structure of the high school in a manner that enabled a strong college-going culture and by collaborating with one another to offer an on-campus experience for seniors.

Finally, being a school of choice of modest size assisted school leaders in implementing their vision of a college-oriented culture. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers and practitioners interested in developing and sustaining successful partnerships between high schools and four-year colleges.



CHRISTINE ELIZABETH BENSON, 2015

WHITE COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO CAN “SEE” THEIR OWN RACE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF HOW ADULT LEARNERS AND TRADITIONAL STUDENTS DESCRIBED RACE AND RACISM AT MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Advisor: Dr. Matthew Wawrzynski

Abstract

The American college classroom is projected to become more racially and ethnically diverse, which is consistent with the vision and ideals of higher education. However, research shows that White students, who represent the largest racial group currently on campuses, are unable to recognize themselves as having a race, do not understand the privilege associated with being White, and fail to grasp the prevalence of racism. Colleges and universities need to better understand how White students interpret and make sense of their own race in order to fulfill their missions of encouraging respect for diversity and preparing students to become engaged citizens in a democratic and global society. The purpose of the current study was to determine how White students at Midwestern University who could “see” their own race (Chesler, Peet, & Sevig, 2003) explained their understanding and experiences of race in light of the changing racial landscape of the American university and country. Further, this study examined the educational and non-educational experiences that caused White students to perceive or reflect upon the meaning of their own race, some for the first time.

The research informing this study occurred at Midwestern University, chosen for its location in Metropolitan Detroit—which was noted as the most segregated urban area in the United States. Ten students were selected for this qualitative study based on their responses to the Oklahoma Racial Attitude Scale – Revised (ORAS-R), one of the few tools available to measure the racial consciousness of White persons. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each student. Analysis of audio recordings and transcripts revealed four themes.

White college students’ directly described their experiences of being White, and talked about struggling to identify the privileges associated with their race. Additionally, students expressed a desire to discuss race, but lacked the ability and confidence to do so while on and away from campus. Students talked about racism, but were unaware of its causes and far-reaching effects. Despite living in the most racially diverse era for higher education and the United States, findings in this study supported existing literature that White college students have deep awkwardness and discomfort when discussing race and hold many inaccurate and uninformed ideas about race, White privilege, and racism. Half of the students in this study said they did not actively or frequently reflect on or notice their race, and none spoke in an outright positive manner or with pride about their race. Participants engaged fully in the interviews, but acknowledged they did not always feel capable of doing so while on campus or in their lives away from campus.

Findings from this study have implications for practice and policy in higher education. Students need supportive campus spaces in order for conversation on race to be effective. Educators and student affairs professionals need to be skilled in working across the many facets of identity in White populations (e.g., age, social, racial, ethnic, sexual, gender and gender identity, etc.) to provide such educational spaces. Students need practice with real-world strategies and tactics to disrupt racial jokes, slurs, and stereotypes when these are voiced on and off campus. Intentional, required, ongoing and well-facilitated campus experiences dedicated to understanding race are needed. Related to policy, educational administrators of both K-12 and postsecondary institutions must commit to requiring all students to participate in high-quality multicultural educational experiences. Sharing real and meaningful data about admissions and funding processes with students before, during, and after they are enrolled will help uncover larger social justice issues within education.



JOHN R. BONNELL, 2015

CHANGING LANDSCAPES IN KENYAN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SHIFTING CONTEXTS UPON RELIGIOUS-ORIENTED UNIVERSITIES

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

This research study explores how faith-based universities in Kenya are responding to rapid changes in the higher education market and policy environment as they endeavor to function as part of the national university system and maintain religious heritage. The research investigates one primary question emerging from my 2012 pilot study of private universities in Kenya: how are changes in higher education policy and the national context impacting faith-based universities (FBUs)? The focus is two-fold: identifying environmental factors affecting FBUs, and describing ways in which FBUs are adapting to such factors. Qualitative, multiple case study analysis (Stake 2000; Yin, 2009) allows for robust investigation of one type of institution in the diverse landscape of Kenya, a nation that boasts some of the oldest public and newest private universities in East Africa. Environmental factors under investigation include changes in national policies (2010 Constitution, 2012 University Act, Vision 2030), trends in the higher education market, and socio-cultural shifts. Few studies have sought to understand the role of FBUs even though such institutions offer a large percentage of state-accredited programs in Kenya (Commission of Higher Education, 2012). Accordingly, this study investigates the dynamic between national and institutional goals to illuminate FBUs role in the national system.

This study utilizes an organizational framework (Bolman & Deal, 1984, 2008) to analyze institutional responses and a systems approach (Chapman & Austin, 2002; van Vught, 2008) to interpret those responses within the national context. Levy's typology (1986, 2009a) offers dimensions of comparative analysis between religious-oriented and other types of private universities. Benne's (2001) typology of church-related colleges is useful for identifying the influences upon and changes within the inner workings of FBUs. The study elicits multiple perspectives to inform analysis of three purposefully-selected FBUs: Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Daystar University, and Pan Africa Christian University. Primary data sources include institutional documents, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with 33 leaders and faculty members as well as two public officials at the Commission for University Education, the government agency that oversees all public and private universities.

The study concludes that shifts in the higher education environment are influencing how leaders and faculty members perceive the vision for Christian higher education, the means by which FBUs carry out their educative mission, and the context in which the institutions function. The study yields theoretical and practical implications for Christian higher education in Africa, university leaders, faculty members, and policy-makers. The research is significant for several reasons: insights from the institutional perspective will be relevant to developing countries, like Kenya, where public systems increasingly rely upon private institutions to abate escalating demand for higher education, where concerns about quality are changing government-university relations, and where religious-oriented higher education persists.

Findings contribute to scholarship of international higher education systems, organizational adaptation, institutional theory, and Christian higher education. Discussion considers universities' roles in multiple dimensions of development in Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa. The study invites further research to explore methodological approaches that foster an integrated understanding of African perspectives of development, religion, and education, eschewing a polarizing (arguably imposed) dichotomy between sacred and secular.



CHERI DeCLERQ, 2015

DECISION MAKING RESPONSE TO DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION: WHAT'S A PLACE LIKE US TO DO?

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

This study extends our understanding of decision making by considering the responses of not-for profit organizations facing a potentially disruptive innovation. In particular, the study explored what matters most as business colleges respond to the online education. The study adds to the current body of literature on decision making through the dual lenses of institutional isomorphism and the behavioral theory of the firm. The primary research question was, "What factors are most salient in how a business college responds to the potentially disruptive innovation of online education?" This question is relevant and important to organizational leaders given the current environmental context. Exploring decision making in this way provides both theoretical and practical contributions.

A qualitative multiple-case study explored decision factors at four public university business colleges. Through semi-structured interviews, participants revealed their sense of what mattered most in their institutional decisions. Data were analyzed within the institution and across the college cases, with themes identified using both an inductive and deductive approach. Ten themes emerged that were shared across the cases to varying degrees. Four unique themes, one from each case, also became evident through the analysis.

Four major findings were discovered. First, each institution was unique: in each case one of the most salient themes was relevant only at that college. Second, the findings provide limited support for institutional isomorphism. Third, there was limited support for organizational slack. Lastly, there was limited support for performance-aspiration gap. Additional contributions were also made to our understanding of top management teams and the diffusion of innovation.

Practitioners will benefit from this study by recognizing the impact their institution's historical, cultural and environmental context has on decision making. As importantly, leaders should seek to understand how institutional stakeholders perceive their "place like us" before implementing a decision strategy. Colleges with lower levels of organizational slack can be expected to place a higher priority on innovative market solutions than those with higher levels. Future studies could extend these findings by considering alternate proxies for organizational slack and performance-aspiration gap, by exploring other disruptive innovations, or expanding the study into other types of not-for-profit institutions.



THERESA M. GUSTAFSON, 2015

TEACHER EDUCATION AS DISTANCE EDUCATION: PRE-SERVICE EXPERIENCE AND THE USES OF TECHNOLOGY

Advisor: Dr. Steven Weiland

Abstract

As colleges of education find their place in the digital age, there is considerable pressure to prepare their teacher candidates for life in the 21st century classroom. The call for more technology integration into teacher preparation assumes that students preparing to be teachers have the background and experience with technology to build upon. This study addresses two dimensions in the technology experiences of the group of students described with the generationally defined demographic term "Digital Native" and addresses a gap in the research on pre-service teacher candidates and their experience in a unique and completely distant teacher education internship. The research was completed through a qualitative, holistic single-case design focused on a single unit of analysis, the "Digital Native" pre-service teaching interns at a large, Midwestern research university (Yin, 2009, p. 46). This research tried to build on the work of Gruzd et al. (2012), which was the first study that used the Universal Theory of the Acceptance and Use of Technology for qualitative semi-structured interview research. Findings suggest that "facilitating conditions" and "effort expectancy" had the most influence on the acceptance and use of technology by "Digital Native" pre-service teaching interns in a distance learning program. Limitations of this research include concentration of the study on a single cohort of students in a unique pre-service internship program. Generalizing the results to other pre-service teacher distance education programs in different settings could be difficult.



WILLIAM FRANK HEINRICH, 2015

EXPLORING ENACTED MENTAL MODELS OF LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

This study explored thinking and activity, or enacted mental models, of faculty and staff who have some experience with learning outcomes assessment in higher education. Interviews and concept maps were used to surface various influences, descriptions of actions, and connections between actions for 12 participants occupying either staff or faculty roles. All participants were known to have engaged in learning outcomes assessment. Important outcomes include descriptions and categorization of influences labeled disciplinary training and socialization, environmental and cultural influences, and incentives and accountability. Also found were motivating factors for conducting assessment and common assessment mindset patterns that influenced behavior. By supporting connected mindsets in assessment, various behavior changes can be encouraged to help identify the value of institutional learning outcomes to multiple stakeholders. Findings point assessment leaders toward adjustments to assessment-related training and professional development to better incorporate or consider individual mental models about their own influences of training, their current environment, and relationships to accountability. This study contributes to literature and practice by describing discrete influences on assessment and how influences work together in various formats to result in various assessment mindsets across levels of an institution.



ALEECE B. HODGES, 2015

A CASE OF ONE RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING REGION

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

Community colleges have traditionally assisted students in gaining affordable education to either transfer to a four-year college, or receive technical training to enter the workforce (Kahlenberg, 2012; Laanan, Hardy, & Katsinas, 2006). Since the economic downturn of 2008 there has been greater pressure put on community colleges to update their programs in order to re-train dislocated workers in areas of need and to play a greater role in their local communities to assist in improving economic opportunities (Phelps, 2012). Current research on the role community colleges play outside their academic offerings is very limited. Additionally, current research does not distinguish among varying types of community colleges. The Carnegie Classifications made their first sub-classifications in 2005 which identified community colleges as either urban, suburban, or rural (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, 2013). Since the new sub-classifications there has not been research examining rural community colleges.

Using the learning region framework and the concept of human capital as conceptual frameworks the purpose of this study was to examine how one rural community colleges engages with their local community. Specifically, this study identified who the key stakeholders were that the college worked with most closely. Second, this study examined the relationships between the stakeholders, and how the college supported lifelong learning and economic development for the region. Data was collected through interviews, observations, document review, and a survey of business owners.

The findings of this study suggest that the rural community college has stronger relationships with their stakeholders when they have a specific project to work on. The findings also indicate that the relationships with their key stakeholders are dependent on strong leadership and leaders that are committed to improving the local community. Challenges experienced by the rural community college that inhibit their ability to connect with their stakeholders were limited resources and a negative community mentality around lifelong learning. The study also found that the college does not serve as a driver of economic development for the region, but rather works to support a separate economic development organization in the region. The implications of these findings on the rural community college and future research are also presented.



JESSICA LUCILLE KNOTT, 2015

ONLINE TEACHING AND FACULTY LEARNING: THE ROLE OF HYPERMEDIA IN ONLINE COURSE DESIGN

Advisor: Dr. Steven Weiland

Abstract

Using semi-structured interviews, this study set out to explore how faculty experiences in reading, teaching, and technology inform their use of hyperlinks and hypermedia in online teaching, learning, and course design. Further, an exploration of how faculty learn new technologies as they develop their online courses serves as a lens through which to view course design and its evolution. Study findings reveal that the use of hypermedia in online course design reflects the reading preferences and practices of the faculty developing the course. Further, findings indicate that, even when formal faculty development programs are offered, faculty learning is extremely fluid, with heavy reliance upon the resources they can find easily and immediately as a means of learning new things. New teaching philosophies were rarely adopted, but new course structure elements and technologies were adopted if the faculty felt they would assist in the content delivery process. As a result, recommendations include the development of just-in-time resources for faculty, and the development of faculty development programs that allow for individualized assistance and transfer.



TONISHA BRANDY LANE, 2015

“IT’S NOT JUST ONE THING!” EXAMINING THE ROLE OF A STEM ENRICHMENT PROGRAM IN FACILITATING COLLEGE READINESS AND RETENTION AMONG UNDERSERVED STUDENTS OF COLOR

Advisor: Dr. Kristen A. Renn

Abstract

Advancing the success of students of color in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) is a pressing and complex issue. There are several trends (e.g., changing demographics, an aging workforce, and globally competitive market), which make improving retention and success among students of color in STEM fields important. STEM enrichment programs have shown promise in sustaining underrepresented students’ science interests and strengthening their readiness for college level work. Thus, this study investigated how a STEM enrichment program facilitates college readiness and retention among students of color at a predominantly White, large, public, research university.

In this study, I used an explanatory, holistic case study approach to examine the strategies and practices employed in the program to support student success (Yin, 2003). The study was conducted at Jefferson State University (pseudonym), a predominantly White, large, public research university in the Midwest. The Comprehensive STEM Program (CSP, pseudonym) at Jefferson State was established in 2007 with the National Science Foundation Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (NSF-LSAMP) grant. CSP contains eight program components: a six-week academic intensive residential summer bridge program, bi-weekly advising meetings, weekly recitation sessions, selected STEM sections of math and science courses, first-year seminar, residential assignment, peer mentoring, and undergraduate research opportunity. The program capacity is 50 students.

The conceptual framework that guided this study integrated three theoretical constructs: (1) the Expertise Model of Students Success (EMSS), (2) sense of belonging, and (3) science identity. Drawing upon expert’s systems theory, EMSS contends that identification of barriers, knowledge, and actions are central to understanding the student experience and student retention. The sense of belonging and science identity constructs provided additional lenses to explore how the program fostered community and academic and professional development opportunities for its participants.

To explore my research questions, I interviewed 50 individuals: 42 current and former program participants, 2 administrators, 2 instructors, and 4 recent baccalaureate recipients and former program participants. I also conducted 24 hours of participant observations and analyzed over 200 pages of documents. A Model for Programmatic Influences on College Readiness and Retention among Underserved Students of color emerged from the findings. This model is comprised of four major themes: proactive caring, holistic support, community building, and STEM identity development catalyst. Proactive caring was found to be a philosophy and approach used for student retention. Holistic support attended to the myriad of needs of the program participants. Community building practices created a familial atmosphere and conditions to develop meaningful relationships. STEM identity development catalysts were the ways in which the program buttressed science identity development.

This study concludes with recommendations for practice, policy, future research, and theory on students of color pursuing degrees in the STEM disciplines. The implications from this study support the need for continued federal and institutional support for STEM enrichment programs to address opportunity gaps, provide a supportive and caring environment for underrepresented groups, and bolster pathways for STEM identity development.



JODI L. LINLEY, 2015

WE ARE (NOT) ALL BULLDOGS: MINORITIZED PEER SOCIALIZATION AGENTS' CRITICAL SENSEMAKING ABOUT COLLEGIATE CONTEXTS

Advisor: Dr. Kristen A. Renn

Abstract

The undergraduate students who facilitate higher education socialization initiatives educate prospective and new students about campus culture and thus work toward the enactment of institutional goals for diversity and retention. Because campus climates are unwelcoming to minoritized students, minoritized students who serve as peer socialization agents (e.g., campus tour guides, orientation leaders) experience discrepancies between the messages institutions expect them to convey about campus culture and their own lived experiences. The purpose of this study was to understand the ways minoritized students who serve as higher education peer socialization agents make meaning of their collegiate contexts in relation to their minoritized identities and socialization agent positions. Through qualitative research methods framed by Critical Race Theory and the concept of a meaning-making filter mediated by self-authorship, I explored the sensemaking of 13 minoritized peer socialization agents (MPSAs) at a single large, Midwestern predominantly White institution. Most MPSAs in this study made sense of their campus culture in the context of pervasive discrimination, engaging meaning-making filters fostered by counterspaces, and enacting counterstorytelling as an empowering act of resistance.

This study illuminated the ways minoritized students experience racism, cisgenderism, and heterosexism in their daily lives. MPSAs experienced microaggressions, tokenization, and dehumanization in their classrooms, in out-of-class campus spaces, and off-campus. Discrimination was also apparent within socialization initiatives through deceptive messages about campus climate, an emphasis on resource awareness, unbalanced training about specific populations, and diversity teambuilding that, according to the MPSAs I interviewed, benefited majoritized students. The underlying perspectivelessness of socialization programs and training contributed to MPSAs' battle fatigue in a climate that institutional leaders should not ignore as they pursue their goals for a diverse student body, retention, and graduation.

Most MPSAs in this study described social integration with other minoritized students in physical counterspaces (i.e., campus cultural centers), cultural organizations, and MPSA subcultures, but not necessarily in the broader campus. When students' experiences do not align with the campus master narrative, counterspaces with other minoritized students serve as the mechanism for MPSA integration and sense of belonging.

With simultaneous positive and negative feelings about their university, MPSAs engaged counterstories in an attempt to communicate nuanced messages to other minoritized students and challenge the campus master narrative. Counterstories also facilitated MPSAs' own sense of belonging and sense of self. This study unmask the perspectivelessness of socialization programs and suggests implications for practice, for theory, and for research. This study identifies the racist, cisgenderist, and heterosexist climates minoritized students experience and challenges institutional leaders to adopt philosophies and practices that have the potential to change the master narrative from perspectivelessness to identity-awareness.



JESSICA MANSBACH, 2015

ILLUMINATING THE PARADOXES: FACULTY VOICES ON ONLINE TEACHING

Advisor: Dr. Ann Austin

Abstract

The term paradox, used by scholars studying organizational behavior (e.g., Cameron & Quinn, 1998) denotes an apparent contradiction. Findings from this study give voice to faculty members' positive and negative perceptions of the impact of online teaching on key elements of their work. Findings show that across the group of 19 faculty participants, and within the experiences of individual participants, there are positive and negative ways that online teaching impacts faculty members' experiences of key elements of faculty work. On the one hand, faculty respondents reported perceiving that online teaching enhances key elements of faculty work. On the other hand, they also reported that online teaching diminishes key elements of faculty work. For example, while faculty members appreciate the flexibility of online teaching, the flexibility presents challenges related to how to manage their schedules. The mixed findings draw attention to the positive and negative ways in which online teaching impacts faculty work lives.

Many organizational leaders attempt to ignore paradoxes because they are messy and illuminate areas of tension (Chen, 2002). Findings from this study suggest that higher education leaders would be remiss in ignoring faculty members' perceptions of the paradoxical nature of online teaching. Instead, higher education leaders should embrace these paradoxes as opportunities to understand the diverse perceptions faculty members express in regard to the impact of online teaching on key elements of their work. By acknowledging the tensions and complexities presented by online teaching, faculty members and higher education leaders can view this form of work through a lens of faculty growth.

Much of the literature about faculty work can be characterized as expressing a narrative of constraint that illuminates the difficulties and stresses of faculty work (O'Meara, Neumann, & Terosky, 2008). The literature about faculty members' experiences teaching online often reflects this narrative of constraint by highlighting the obstacles that discourage faculty from teaching online (Allen & Seaman, 2013). Alongside this narrative of constraint is a counter narrative of faculty growth that illuminates faculty members' capacity to persistently strive to overcome challenges in their work (O'Meara et al., 2008). The purpose of this study was to examine whether, alongside the barriers faculty encounter when they teach online, there are opportunities to experience elements of work that are associated with faculty satisfaction, productivity, and commitment: flexibility and balance, autonomy and academic freedom, relationships with students and colleagues, professional growth, and agency (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; O'Meara et al., 2008). Study participants were in the early middle, middle, or senior portion of the career, taught online undergraduate courses in a variety of disciplines, and held tenured and non-tenure-track appointments.

Results from the study shed light on how to better support faculty who teach online and draw attention to the complexities and opportunities for growth inherent in this form of academic work. I argue that higher education leaders and scholars should use the paradoxical findings from this study to help their institutions develop strategic ways to support faculty who teach online. For example, faculty development specialists can consider how to help faculty members to maximize the flexibility afforded by this form of work while at the same time helping them to better manage their schedules. By taking into account both the positive and negative impacts of online teaching on key elements of faculty work, higher education leaders are better positioned to use a variety of promising strategies to support faculty who teach online.



COLLEEN A. McDONOUGH, 2015

MENTORING EARLY ENGINEERING STUDENETS: FACULTY-STUDENT INTERACTION AS AN INDICATOR OF CLIMATE PERCEPTION

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

Engineering education is facing a challenge retaining qualified students due in part to perceptions of chilly climate (Marra, Rodgers, Shen, & Bogue, 2012; Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Climate perception in engineering programs can harm retention efforts, as it is a key influence in students' feelings of belonging in the discipline (Marra et al., 2012). Pejorative faculty interactions are a primary reason cited by students for chilly climate, which leads to high transfer rates and low satisfaction rates among early engineering students (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997).

The current study provides an in-depth examination of the experiences of early engineering students at a large, public research university that participated in a programmatic intervention to improve perception of climate through a formal, faculty-student mentoring program. Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) serves as the theoretical framework. The key component of SCT is triadic reciprocal causation, which explains human action in terms of three mutually influencing factors: environment, self, and behavior. Feelings, beliefs, and thoughts influence behavior, therefore a change in one factor influences change in the others, and consequently, the outcome. The goal of the mentoring program was to positively influence students' perceptions of the engineering education environment through informal interactions moderated by the mentoring program. Faculty are critical socializing agents by virtue of their position as academic leaders who create and manipulate culture, and provide organizational meaning for students (Chen, Lattuca, & Hamilton, 2008; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). This is especially pertinent in engineering education, where faculty often facilitate student engagement with both the major and the profession. Existing research implies that students who spent time informally with faculty had increased student satisfaction, greater academic achievement, and higher rates of persistence (Chen et al., 2008; Pascarella, 1980; Tinto, 1993). Early engineering students have limited opportunities to interact with engineering faculty, relegated to large classes filled with peers and out of class office hours. The research questions that guided the current study are: (1) How do early engineering students perceive their interactions with engineering faculty? (2) How do early engineering students perceive the climate of engineering as a result of having participated in a formal mentoring program?

Participants were enrolled in an introductory engineering design course, had declared engineering as their major, and opted to participate in the mentoring program. The data were collected from semi-structured interviews with student participants who represented each of the engineering majors offered at the college.

Results of the current study indicate that despite high grade point averages and significant extracurricular involvement, many study participants were intimidated by engineering faculty, shared fears of imposter syndrome, and sought out faculty connection in the humanities and social sciences. Participants did not associate engineering faculty interactions, behavior, or approachability with the college climate. However, participants in the current study welcomed engagement with engineering faculty, and for those students whose mentors met their expectations, positive outcomes occurred. While the program provided students with mentors and gave students the overall impression that engineering faculty wanted to interact with them, it did not influence students' perceptions of the engineering climate.



JOHN WILLIAM MEDENDORP, 2015

MIGRATION AND MOTIVATION: AN ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATION FOR RETURN TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AMONG FOREIGN-TRAINED CHINESE PH.Ds.

Advisor: Dr. Reitu Mabokela

Abstract

Brain drain has been a much studied phenomenon. Its fundamental dynamic is the departure of highly talented individuals from developing economies for more developed economies. The assumption is that the primary motivation for brain drain is the pursuit of higher earnings. The effects of brain drain are more contested. Some contend that the effects are entirely negative, depriving developing countries of human capital and realized as well as unrealized income. Others argue that the effects are mixed, with substitutionary effects in educational systems in developing countries caused by the departure of the highly talented and the prospect of earnings-enhancing emigration. Others point to the beneficial effects of diaspora communities, such as remittances and foreign direct investment in country of origin due to the presence of expatriates in the diaspora. Empirical evidence on the brain drain phenomenon is mixed, showing strong negative effects for small countries but some positive and some negative effects for larger countries.

This study focuses on the effects of brain drain on higher education systems by examining the motivation for return among foreign trained PhDs. Brain drain affects the higher education sector disproportionately because it consists in its majority of the highly skilled. The effects of brain drain on higher education systems can be devastating. For that reason, the retention of the highly skilled becomes an important imperative for higher education systems, especially in developing countries. There has been a significant body of research devoted to the question of why the highly talented leave their countries of origin – economic research, psychological research, and sociological research. There is relatively little research, however, on the reasons why the highly skilled return to their countries of origin. There is even less research on why scholars return to academic systems in their country of origin. This study seeks to fill that gap. This is a qualitative study that uses some quantitative methods in order to model the results. The qualitative portion is based on 36 in-depth, coded interviews with returned scholars working within the higher education system in the People's Republic of China. These 36 coded interviews rendered key insights into the reasons for return among these 36 returned scholars. The study finds that professional factors were the primary motivation, but nuanced by different values placed on personal factors, institutional factors, and sociological factors. The results of this coding process are triangulated with a word count analysis, a word tree analysis, and a word cloud analysis. In the quantitative modeling of the resulting data, several demographic variables were regressed against the four factors described above – professional, personal, institutional, and sociocultural – using a one-way ANOVA, to find whether there was significant variance in the influence of these four factors among different demographic groups. Several significant variations were found among the groups. The results of these two analyses – the qualitative and the quantitative – shows that the return decision is the result of high levels of correspondence between the personal values of the decision maker and conditions in the country of origin. This correspondence is modeled in a simple utility function.



RAYMOND D. ROBINSON, 2015

THE COLLEGIAL EFFECT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HOW FACULTY MEMBERS PERCEIVE COLLEGIALLY AND ITS EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUALS AND DEPARTMENT

Advisor: Dr. Kristen A. Renn

Abstract

Faculty members in American higher education institutions are the stewards of their institutions (Astin & Astin, 2000). They practice this stewardship both by performing well as individuals and as groups. Faculty members hold one another accountable, specifically through decisions on hiring, promoting, and granting tenure to colleagues. Their three-fold responsibility of teaching, scholarship, and citizenship requires both independence and interdependence. Furthermore, faculty members desire to work in supportive, collegial environments. They want to work with collegial people.

What is less clear is how faculty members define collegial behavior and how that behavior affects individual and collective work. This dissertation study explored how faculty members in various disciplines define collegiality. Data were collected to address this goal through interview questions asking them to describe collegial and un-collegial peers and their behaviors. I then explored how faculty members perceived the effects of those behaviors on individual and departmental work. The results of this study help establish and strengthen definitions of faculty collegiality, and suggest that collegiality affects both individual and departmental work in a variety of ways, including productivity and efficiency.

This study began with a conceptual framework of collegial attributes and behaviors that guided interview questions. Twenty-three faculty members representing many disciplines from a single research institution (RU/VH) participated in interviews. Participants described personal perceptions of collegiality and un-collegiality. They also explained how collegial and un-collegial behaviors affected their work and the work of their department. The interview data helped refine the initial framework and provided examples and stories of best practices in cultivating collegial behavior and culture.

Collegiality was described by all participants as a variety of behaviors demonstrating care for others and their success. Collegial faculty members expand others' perspectives and opportunities, work in collaborative ways, are unifying in their work, and are future-oriented. The effects of collegiality identified by participants include increased productivity and efficiency for individuals and departments, an increased sense of community, and a positive culture. Un-collegiality was described as a variety of behaviors that could be characterized as self-centered. Un-collegial behaviors include selfishness, lack awareness of others, negative behaviors, use perceived academic superiority or institutional hierarchy to claim power, and in some circumstances, discriminate. The effects of un-collegiality identified by participants included decreased efficiency, isolation of self and others, missed opportunities, and talent quarantine, which I defined as restricting the institution's ability to take full advantage of an individual's skills and knowledge.

The results of this study will provide helpful information to faculty members, department chairs, and other higher education leaders who seek to develop and encourage collegiality; the results will also be useful to researchers and scholars who study academic work.



CHARLES ROBERT SHORETTE II, 2015

INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCING NONBLACK ENROLLMENT AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Advisor: Dr. Brendan Cantwell

Abstract

In order to better understand diversity on HBCU campuses and broaden the scope of scholarly work on HBCUs, this study attempts to provide a nuanced view of nonblack enrollment at HBCUs from an organizational perspective by pursuing the primary research question: Are there institutional characteristics of HBCUs that influence nonblack enrollment patterns between the years 2000-2010? Perna's (2006) conceptual model of college choice, specifically the higher education context, and the education production function of frameworks serve as lenses through which this issue will be viewed. This investigation uses data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and employs a fixed effects panel data regression analysis to examine enrollment patterns in hopes of better understanding an element of college choice. The findings of this study suggest that institutional characteristics influence nonblack enrollment differently depending on institutional control. For public HBCUs, spending on academic support per FTE student was found to be a strong positive predictor of nonblack enrollment, whereas graduation rates had statistically significant negative effects on nonblack enrollment at private HBCUs. Consequently, implications for policy, practice, and future research are discussed.



LOUISE MICHELLE VITAL, 2015

TET CHAGE! AN INVESTIGATION OF THE HAITIAN EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE OF HAITI

Advisor: Dr. Reitu Mabokela

Abstract

Despite the large quantity of information regarding deficiencies within the Haitian education system, there is limited knowledge regarding the educational interventions that have been successful in Haiti. Further, there is even less information known on specific programs and the approaches used to respond to educational challenges in the country. This case study of the Haitian Education and Leadership Program (HELP), a higher-education centered organization in Haiti provides insight on the perceived challenges within the Haitian higher education system and it illuminates the various strategies that HELP employs to support the academic and future success of the university students in it its program.

Two research questions guided the study that investigated key stakeholders perceptions of challenges within the Haitian higher education system and inquired how various components of HELP supported the academic and future success of HELP scholars. HELP students, alumni, and staff, along with two non-HELP higher education stakeholders in Haiti were interviewed for this study. The framework for this research study incorporates the concepts of “university access” and “university persistence.” The conceptual framework drew from two World Bank background reports written by Rowan-Kenyon, Savitz-Romer, and Swan (2010) and Savitz-Romer, Rowan-Kenyon, Weilundemo, and Swan (2010) who provided a guide for evaluating and creating effective interventions for successful participation, persistence, and retention in tertiary (higher) education. The findings from this study provide insight on the range of challenges that students experience within the Haitian higher education system. HELP participant’s reflections on their experiences within the university system included those that could be categorized as barriers to university access and barriers to university persistence. They also described the impact of the January 12, 2010 Haiti earthquake on their education as well as institutional practices and behaviors that impacted their university experiences. This study also included study participants’ perceptions of what is going well within the higher education landscape in Haiti. Overall, HELP study participants emphasized the role of HELP in responding to and alleviating barriers that could have proved to be detrimental to the university access, persistence, and graduation and future success of HELP scholars.

In addition to discussing their perceptions of the Haitian higher education system, HELP participants also shared their perspectives on HELP’s approach. HELP students and alumni shared their thoughts on the various components of HELP they experienced, and HELP staff discussed how they believed their role supported the success of HELP scholars and alumni. Considering the findings of this study, HELP strategies reveal that that a multi-prong approach that incorporates academic and counseling support, co-curricular and extra-curricular initiatives, enrichment courses, and a comprehensive scholarship award offers the opportunity for the most ideal university experience in an international setting like Haiti. This study concludes with implications for policy and practice for various entities within the education sector in Haiti. The findings and discussion from this study also indicate that an expansion of the terms “university access” and “university persistence” is warranted to include experiences in settings like Haiti, which has implications for theory. This study also offers suggestions for future research on higher education in Haiti, which may prove beneficial for determining interventions to be utilized in other low-income/developing countries.



GINA VIZVARY, 2015

“TRUE TO THE HIGHEST IDEALS OF THE UNIVERSITY” VIEWING CONFLICT AS A CATALYST FOR REEVALUATING INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

Advisor: Dr. Steven Weiland

Abstract

Conflict at institutions of higher education is not new. However, with the prevalence of the internet, disputes now capture the attention of national media outlets and can spread quickly to a large audience via social media sites and online publications. Over the last decade, conflicts over athletics, curricular changes, online classes, and special-interest research initiatives have pitted faculty against faculty and faculty against administration. At times whole campus communities may become involved in the fray, from students to staff to alumni. Organizational literature on colleges and universities tells us that higher education institutions have unique characteristics that distinguish them from the business or for-profit world. Universities must continuously innovate and adapt in order to stay relevant to society. Yet they are also decades or centuries old, with traditions, legacies, and unique cultures that pervade campus life. This tension between the old and the new, tradition and innovation, presents challenges to university leaders. When new decisions seem to contradict longstanding traditions, there is bound to be backlash.

The focus of the current study was to understand the tensions that fuel university conflict. The study utilized a historical perspective to research the conflict over the planning and implementation of the Milton Friedman Institute (MFI) at the University of Chicago in 2008. Administrators and faculty involved provided their views on the conflict through interviews. Additional data came from news articles, op-ed pieces, meeting minutes, letters, and e-mails. Historical information on the University of Chicago, Milton Friedman, and the Chicago School of Economics was drawn on to provide institutional and biographical information, and well as to make connections between the 2008 conflict and past people or events that emerged in documents and interviews.

Four primary factors were found to have influenced the nature of the MFI dispute: Reputation, Academic Freedom, Philanthropy, and Governance. The research data provide the opportunity for a discussion of conflict not as a negative, but as a chance to reevaluate institutional values, standards, and practices. Future directions of research and suggestions for practice are considered.



MICHAEL ZEIG, 2015

STRATEGIES OF PUBLIC REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES DURING CHALLENGING TIMES

Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Amey

Abstract

Higher education institutions face a number of challenges including constrained financial resources, increasing competition for a declining number of high school graduates, and growing calls for accountability from a variety of external sources. Public, regional universities, as institutions often considered to be “stuck in the middle” between major research universities and smaller niche colleges, are particularly susceptible to these challenges. This has led many scholars and observers of higher education to indicate that colleges and universities can no longer be all things to all people, and that clear strategies are needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of many institutions. Yet, strategy is an understudied area within higher education, specifically related to public, regional universities. Still, these institutions play a vital role in society, educating approximately four million students each year.

This study focused on examining the strategy, changes in strategy, and influences on strategy of three public, regional universities. Administrative and faculty leaders were interviewed and documents reviewed at each institution in order to gain perspective about what occurred at these institutions during a challenging time within the higher education industry. Key findings include: (a) many similarities in what institutions did in response to recent challenges, but greater differences in how and why they took certain actions, (b) more minor changes and adjustments in tactics than large-scale changes in institutional vision, and (c) a confluence of external and internal factors influencing the strategic direction of institutions. Implications for future research, policy, and practice are considered, specifically related to institutional differentiation, the pursuit of prestige, the future of institutional change, and the importance of balancing external and internal factors in establishing institutional strategy.