

# Digest of Recent Research

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Edited by John M. Braxton

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**The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC)** is an association of more than 765 nonprofit independent colleges and universities and higher education affiliates and organizations that has worked since 1956 to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of private higher education's contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on providing services to leaders of independent colleges and universities as well as conferences, seminars, and other programs that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, and institutional visibility. CIC conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers. CIC also provides support to state associations that organize programs and generate contributions for their member colleges and universities. The Council is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit [www.cic.edu](http://www.cic.edu).

### About the Digest

CIC's *Digest of Recent Research* is a compendium of summaries of research that independent college and university presidents are likely to find helpful. Published three times a year, the *Digest* highlights timely research from scholarly journals and other publications with a focus on findings relevant to presidents and to other leaders of independent colleges and universities. Edited by John M. Braxton, professor of higher education at Vanderbilt University, each *Digest* offers a brief summary of selected articles that includes a discussion of the findings and implications for action by the leadership of independent colleges and universities. CIC is grateful to the Spencer Foundation for its support of this new series.

Reviews in the *Digest of Recent Research* can be downloaded as a single document (PDF). For questions or comments about the *Digest*, please contact Hollie Chessman, director of research projects, at [hchessman@cic.nche.edu](mailto:hchessman@cic.nche.edu).

### About the Editor

John M. Braxton is professor of higher education in the department of Leadership, Policy, and Organizations at Vanderbilt University. He serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of College Student Retention* and served as the editor of the *Journal of College Student Development* from 2008 to 2015. Braxton has co-authored or edited 13 books, including: *Rethinking College Student Retention*, 2013 (with William Doyle, Harold V. Hartley III, Amy Hirschy, Willis Jones, and Michael McLendon), *Professors Behaving Badly*, 2011 (with Eve Proper and Alan Bayer), *Faculty Misconduct in Collegiate Teaching*, 2003 (with Alan Bayer), and *Institutionalizing a Broader View of Scholarship Through Boyer's Four Domains*, 2002 (with William Luckey and Patricia Helland). Braxton also is past president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE). Braxton is the recipient of the ASHE Research Achievement Award and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) – College Student Educator International's Contribution to Knowledge Award.

## Editor's Note

This issue of the *Digest of Recent Research* contains summaries of seven carefully selected articles that span a range of topics that presidents and other senior leaders of CIC member colleges and universities may find informative and useful. One article, “Campus Leadership and the Entrepreneurial University: A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective,” pertains directly to the role of CIC presidents as strategic leaders. Both presidents and chief academic officers will find the article “Family Friendly Policies in STEM Departments: Awareness and Determinants” useful. This article identifies family-friendly policies that level the playing field for women faculty and faculty members of color to be successful in their academic careers at the institution and in a STEM department.

Other articles summarized in this issue address students and factors that affect their success on campus, including binge drinking, physical and mental health impairments, homesickness, non-college problems, and non-cognitive factors (such as “grit”). CIC presidents may benefit from a greater awareness of such topics and their consequences for the achievement of institutional goals and objectives. CIC presidents also may elect to refer these article summaries to other campus leaders in student affairs, enrollment management, and institutional research.

This *Digest of Recent Research* includes articles from the four core journals of higher education: *The Journal of College Student Development*, *The Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, and *The Review of Higher Education*, which maintain rigorous standards for publication. (Their average manuscript acceptance rate is approximately 10 percent.) Occasionally pertinent articles from other referred academic journals are included.

—John M. Braxton

# Strategic Presidential Leadership

Leih, S. and D. Teece. 2016. "Campus Leadership and the Entrepreneurial University: A Dynamic Capabilities Perspective." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 30, 182–210.

## SUMMARY

In this article, Sohvi Leih and David Teece focus on the role of university presidents in positioning their universities for success through evolutionary fitness. Evolutionary fitness entails making necessary changes to give a college or university a competitive advantage and enhance its long-term performance. The authors contend that evolutionary fitness requires campus leaders to recognize opportunities, set priorities, execute wisely, and transform quickly. Put differently, evolutionary fitness requires dynamic capabilities that move institutions of higher education beyond excessive attention to political and social pressures, financial stability, efficiency, and accountability.

Leih and Teece put forth a Dynamic Capabilities Framework to gain insight into how campus leadership may engage in evolutionary fitness. The authors used the dimensions of this framework as a lens to view the actions of campus leaders at two highly regarded research universities: Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley. They chose these two high-performing universities to demonstrate how they attained their stature through distinctly different paths. Stanford, in particular, constitutes a good choice because of its emergence from a regional university to an elite national university.

Sensing, seizing, and transforming comprise the three core dimensions of the Dynamic Capabilities Framework. Each of these core dimensions stipulates functions for campus leaders to perform. Table 1 of the article lists these functions for each of the three core dimensions. CIC presidents will find the details of this framework particularly useful. For *sensing*, campus leaders need to identify global trends; recognize opportunities that increase access to funding, endowment gifts, and talents; and recognize threats to enrollment, faculty retention, and quality of services. Examples of functions pertinent to *seizing* include the implementation of processes that support new academic activities, acquire needed resources and manage expenditures, and foster a climate of entrepreneurship. Changing the campus culture, forming partnerships with unconventional constituents, and eliminating programs and departments with records of poor performance constitute the functions of *transforming*.

The authors used case study methodology to view the actions of presidents at Stanford and Berkeley. They used three primary sources of data: interviews, archival documents including oral histories, and media reports.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Leih and Teece organize the findings of their case study analysis using the three core dimensions of the Dynamic Capabilities Framework. Examples of findings follow; CIC presidents are encouraged to read this article, and refer to Table 2, for more details on application of the Dynamic Capabilities Framework.

**Sensing.** Leaders at Stanford recognized trends and opportunities and dedicated institutional resources to enact their strategy. In comparison, Berkeley leaders were less able to achieve consen-

sus on threats and opportunities rendering sensing activities less likely.

**Seizing.** At Stanford, consensus on the strategic direction of the university between its board of trustees and campus leaders enabled it to perform functions of the seizing dimension of the Dynamic Capabilities Framework. Campus leaders rapidly responded to the identified opportunities. Faculty members and students at Stanford were uninvolved in these functions. In comparison, campus leaders at Berkeley were accountable to the regents of the University of California system and to its

faculty members. Thus, seizing actions by campus leaders at Berkeley were constrained by stakeholders who were unaware of how the university maintains and expands its resources.

**Transforming.** Campus leaders at Stanford engaged transforming activities such as seeking a national and global reputation rather than regional one, engaging in curricular and programmatic reforms, developing "steeple of excellence," and increasing the endowment of the university. Although the authors did observe some transformative actions by campus leaders at Berkeley,

they assert that Berkeley's leadership did not quickly recognize opportunities and begin the transformation.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION BY CAMPUS LEADERS**

Leih and Teece posit "strong dynamic capabilities will bring evolutionary fitness to the campus. Ordinary capabilities bring only technical/operational fitness" (p.187). Presidents of CIC colleges and universities will find both the Dynamic Capabilities Framework and the findings pertaining to the three core dimensions of this framework useful in their efforts to set a strategic direction

for their campuses. These tools would be useful to position the institution for success during turbulent times facing independent colleges and universities. Moreover, CIC institutions seeking national reputations and enhanced institutional stature will find the actions of Stanford University particularly useful.

In addition, the components of the Dynamic Capabilities Framework could be used in an assessment of the college or university either to determine its evolutionary readiness or as basis for institutional improvement. Although the authors view the role of faculty members in institutional governance as a constraint on evolutionary readiness, CIC

presidents may choose to encourage the participation of faculty members in the transformation of their institutions.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Sohvi Leih is assistant professor of management in the College of Business Administration at Loyola Marymount University.

David Teece is professor of global business in the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley.

### **LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT**

The following references are recommended for readers who wish to learn more about strategic leadership.

Aleste, J.W. 2014. *Revenue Generation Strategies: Leveraging Higher Education Resources for Increased Income*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing.

Ramsden, P. 1998. "Managing the Effective University." *Higher Education Research and Development*, 17(3), 347–370.

Seigel, D.S. 2014. "Responsible Leadership." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 28(3), 221–223.

Teece, D.J. 2007. "Explicating Dynamic Capabilities: The Nature and Microfoundations of (Sustainable) Enterprise Performance." *Strategic Management Journal*, 28, 1319–1350.

# Faculty Personnel Policies

Su, X. and B. Bozeman. 2016. "Family Friendly Policies in STEM Departments: Awareness and Determinants." *Research in Higher Education*, 57, 990–1009.

## SUMMARY

Xuhong Su and Barry Bozeman evaluate family-friendly policies as mechanisms for equity and inclusion among faculty members. Family-friendly policies work to "level the playing field" in the recruitment and retention of women and minority faculty members. A level playing field is particularly important for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) departments where women and minorities are underrepresented among the faculty ranks.

Su and Bozeman focus on whether the chairpersons of STEM departments at U.S. research-intensive universities are familiar with six family-friendly university policies. Su and Bozeman used data from the 2010 Survey of Academic Chairs/Heads, which was administered to all chairs and department heads (n=1,832) in 149 STEM doctoral degree-granting universities. A response rate of 43 percent coupled with the merging of the responses to the survey with another dataset resulted in a sample of 408 STEM department chairs at 135 research-intensive universities. Su and Bozeman report that little response bias exists in the demographic characteristics of this sample.

The survey evaluated the following six family-friendly policies for faculty members: (1) tenure clock stop, (2) paid family leave, (3) unpaid family leave, (4) onsite childcare, (5) spousal employment assistance, and (6) workload reduction for family reasons. For each of these six policies, department chairs were asked to indicate the existence of the policy at their university (1=yes, 0=No) and their degree of familiarity with the policy (1=not at all familiar to 4=very familiar).

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Su and Bozeman report that, based on the survey responses, three of the six family-friendly policies exist at the majority of research-intensive universities of the STEM department chairs/heads who responded to the survey. More specifically, 60 percent of these universities have a stop-the-tenure-clock policy and 55 percent of them have paid and unpaid family leave as university policies. About one-third of chairs and department heads indicate that their university has onsite childcare (34 percent) or spousal employment assistance (33 percent); and 42 percent indicate that their university has a policy for workload reduction for family reasons.

STEM department chairs/heads express familiarity with a stop-the-tenure-clock policy, but less familiarity with the other five family-friendly

policies. For the policy of onsite childcare, the respondents expressed the least degree of familiarity with this particular family-friendly policy.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMPUS LEADERS

Although this study focused on chairs/heads of STEM departments at research-intensive universities, its findings have clear implications for CIC presidents and chief academic affairs officers. Undergraduate instruction in the STEM fields constitute a marker of distinction for many CIC member colleges and universities. For such STEM departments to maintain their excellence, the recruitment and retention of academic talent is necessary. Accordingly, the rationale for this study and its findings indicate a need for CIC presidents and chief academic affairs officers to formulate family-friendly policies if they

do not already exist. These policies level the playing field for women faculty and faculty of color to be successful in their academic careers at the college or university in general and in the STEM department in particular. All six policies warrant consideration, especially those that are relatively uncommon at research-intensive universities such as onsite childcare and spousal employment assistance.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Xuhong Su is assistant professor of political science at the University of South Carolina.

Barry Bozeman is professor and director of the Center of Organizational Research and Design in the School of Public Affairs at Arizona State University.

## LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT

The following references are recommended for readers who want to learn more about family-friendly policies for faculty members.

Lewis, S. 1997. "Family Friendly Employment Policies: A Route to Changing Organizational Culture or Playing about at the Margins?" *Gender, Work & Organizations*, 41(1), 13–23.

Lewis, S. 2001. "Restructuring Workplace Culture: The Ultimate Work-Family Challenge." *Women in Management Review*, 16(1), 21–29.

Raabe, P.H. 1997. "Work-Family Policies for Faculty: How 'Career-and-Family Friendly' is Academe?" *Academic Couples: Problems and Promises*, 208–225.

Storm, S. 2006. "Architecture of Inclusion: Advancing Workplace Equity in Higher Education." *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender*, 29, 247–334.

# Enrollment Management

Akos, P. and J. Kretchmar. 2017. "Investigating Grit as a Non-Cognitive Predictor of College Success." *The Review of Higher Education*, 40, 163–186.

## SUMMARY

In this article, Patrick Akos and Jen Kretchmar center their attention on whether grit, a non-cognitive factor, can improve the predictability of first-year grade point average beyond the influence of high school grades and standardized test scores. These authors point out that admissions officers typically use measures of cognitive ability (standardized test scores) and academic achievement (high school grades) to determine which applicants are most likely to succeed.

Akos and Kretchmar state that existing studies often show that pre-college grades and test scores explain only 25 percent of the variance in first-year grade point averages. These authors also note that standardized test scores are highly related to students' socioeconomic status. Consequently, interest is rising in supplementing the two cognitive factors with non-cognitive factors to inform admissions decisions.

Akos and Kretchmar posit the construct of grit as a non-cognitive factor, which they define as a "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" (p.165). It consists of two distinct dimensions: (1) consistency of interest and (2) perseverance of effort. The authors indicate that research shows that grit predicts a range of achievement outcomes. Hence, they ask the question: Does grit predict first-year GPA and two other measures of college student success: hours earned towards graduation and change in major? With regard to change in major as a marker of student success, Akos and Kretchmar view a student who has not changed their major by the beginning of their fourth semester as successful.

To address this question, Akos and Kretchmar used a sample of 209 first-year students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These students completed an instrument comprised of eight items to measure grit. The authors provide examples of items that measure its two dimensions. For example, the reverse-scored statement "New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones" is indicative of consistency of interest. As an example of perseverance of effort, the statement is "I am a hard worker."

The authors used a series of hierarchical multiple regressions to address whether grit predicts first-year GPA and two measures of college student success: hours earned toward graduation and change in major. In these regressions, Akos and Kretchmar controlled for factors other than grit that also may partially predict first-year GPA and the other two measures of student success. The control factors included standardized test scores, strength of the high school curriculum, high school grades, gender, underrepresented minority status, and first-generation status. The authors included three measures of grit: a total score of grit, consistency of interest, and perseverance of interest.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Akos and Kretchmar found that grit as a total score and perseverance of interest wield statistically significant positive influences on first-year grade point average. The authors illustrate the influence of perseverance of interest on first-year grade point average by noting that a student with a low perseverance of interest score of 2 might be predicted to earn a 2.92 GPA whereas a student with a high

perseverance of interest of score 5 could be predicted to earn a 3.51 GPA.

A mixed pattern of results emerged for the other two measures of student success: credit hours earned and change of major. Grit as a total score and neither of its two dimensions (consistency of interest and perseverance of effort) have little or no influence on credit hours earned. Yet the total score of grit and consistency of effort affect change of major in a statistically significant way.

Put differently, the lower the consistency of effort score the greater the probability of changing major.

The authors also report that total grit scores and consistency of effort scores do not differ in a statistically significant way by gender, underrepresented minority status, or first-generation status. Minority students, however, scored lower on the perseverance of interest than non-underrepresented minority

students in a statistically significant manner.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION BY CAMPUS LEADERS**

CIC presidents and chief academic affairs officers may elect to discuss with enrollment management officers at their institutions whether to consider the use of grit and its dimensions of consistency of effort and perseverance of interest to inform admission decisions. An applicant's total grit score and its pertinent dimensions could be used to help make

admissions decisions regarding applicants that are marginal for admission because their standardized test scores or their high school grades are either below other applicants in the admissions pool or below stated admissions' criteria. Such applicants with high total grit scores or high perseverance of interest scores may warrant an offer of admission because of their higher likelihood of earning a satisfactory first-year grade point average.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Patrick Akos is professor of education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jennifer Kretchmar is senior assistant director of admissions for research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### **LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT**

The following references are recommended for readers who want to learn more regarding the construct of grit.

Duckworth, A.L., C. Peterson, M.D. Matthews, and D.R. Kelly. 2007. "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 1087–1101.

Duckworth, A.L. and P.D. Quinn. 2009. "Development and Validation of Short Grit Scale (grit-s)." *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 91, 166–174.

# Alcohol Use

Trolian, T.L., B.P. An, and E.T. Pascarella. 2016. "Are There Cognitive Consequences of Binge Drinking During College?" *Journal of College Student Development*, 57 (8), 1009–1026.

## SUMMARY

Teniell L. Trolian, Brian P. An, and Ernest T. Pascarella found that the influence of binge drinking during college depends on the students' entry level of critical thinking. More specifically, those students who entered college with lower levels of critical thinking ability experienced the negative effects of binge drinking during college. The authors put this finding into sharp perspective by stating "binge drinking during college functioned to exacerbate further the cognitive deficit of students who started college with the least well-developed critical thinking skills" (p. 1021).

Trolian et al. ask the important question: Does college student binge drinking negatively affect the critical thinking abilities of undergraduate college students? The authors use data compiled by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) to point out that 80 percent of college students drink and about 50 percent of these students engage in binge drinking. More specifically, binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks in a row for males and four or more drinks in a row for females. The NIAAA regards binge drinking as high risk or dangerous drinking.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The authors suggest that binge drinking may affect the cognitive ability of college students as it changes their sleep habits. They suggest that diminished academic performance results from increased sleepiness during the day brought on by disruptions in the students' sleep. Moreover, an increase in neurocognitive deficiencies also occurs because of binge drinking and negatively affects the learning and intellectual development of college students who binge drink. Such negative effects on the learning and intellectual development of college students harm the development of their critical thinking abilities.

Trolian et al. used the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Critical Thinking Test developed by the American College Testing Program. The Critical Thinking Test is a reliable instrument with high concurrent validity with other measures of critical thinking. This test of critical thinking was administered to a longitudinal panel of 826 students who participated in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts

Education (WNS). The students took the CAAP Critical Thinking Test in the late summer/early fall of 2006 and again in spring 2010. Thus, this study used a pretest-posttest design. The WNS consists of student samples from 17 four-year colleges and universities, including 11 liberal arts colleges, three research universities, and three regional universities.

The authors used ordinary least-squares regression to determine the influence of students' binge drinking behavior on their critical thinking abilities at the end of the fourth year of college. Binge drinking behavior during college was an independent variable of this study's pretest-posttest design, and the dependent variable was critical thinking abilities at the end of the fourth year of college. The authors also controlled for other factors that might influence the critical thinking abilities of students, such as pre-college levels of critical thinking (the late summer/early fall 2006 administration of the CAAP Critical Thinking Test), pre-college academic ability (ACT Composite Test score), and pre-college academic motivation.

The results indicate that the influence of binge drinking during college depends on the students' entry level of critical thinking. Those with initial lower critical thinking skills were more negatively impacted by binge drinking.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION BY CAMPUS LEADERS

CIC member institutions espouse the development of critical thinking abilities as an important outcome of an undergraduate education. Consequently, the findings of this study should signal both a policy and pragmatic alarm for CIC member institutions. The negative effects of binge drinking on critical thinking joins a list of other negative outcomes involving student health and safety. Although the incidence of both drinking in general and binge drinking in particular may vary across college campuses whether they are public or private, the adverse influence of binge drinking on critical thinking provides an incentive for CIC member institutions to devote further attention to what the authors call a "wicked problem" (p. 1022).

Such attention begins with a review of the literature on institutional approaches to reducing college binge drinking. CIC leaders may wish to delegate the responsibility for enacting such institutional approaches to the chief student affairs officer of their institution.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tenielle L. Trolian is assistant professor of educational administration and policy studies at the University of Albany, State University of New York.

Brian P. An is associate professor of educational policy and leadership studies at the University of Iowa.

Ernest T. Pascarella is professor and Mary Louise Peterson Chair of Higher Education at the University of Iowa.

## LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT

There are three categories of references that readers may wish to consult to further their understanding of student alcohol use. The first two categories include some of the references cited in the article by Trolian et al. and the final category includes links to on-line resources:

### Reduction of College Binge Drinking Behaviors

Carter, C.A., and W.M. Kahnweiler. 2000. "The Efficacy of the Social Norms Approach to Substance Abuse Prevention Applied to Fraternity Men." *Journal of American College Health*, 49, 66–71.

### Institutional Approaches to Curb Binge Drinking

Bishop, J.B., T.T. Downs, and D. Cohen. 2008. "Applying an Environmental Model to Address High-Risk Drinking: A Town/Gown Case Study." *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy*, 22(4), 3–16.

Buettner, C., D. Andrews, and M. Glassman. 2009. "Development of a Student Engagement Approach to Alcohol Prevention: The Pragmatics Project." *Journal of American College Health*, 58, 33–38.

Glassman, T., N. Haughton, J. Wohlwend, S. Roberts, T. Jordan, F. Yingling, and A. Blavos. 2013. "A Health Communication Intervention to Reduce High-Risk Drinking among College Students." *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 50, 355–372.

Ziemelis, A., R. Bucknam, and A. Elfessi. 2002. "Prevention Efforts Underlying Decreases in Binge Drinking at Institutions of Higher Education." *Journal of American College Health*, 50, 238–252.

### On-Line Resources

Harding, F.M., and K. Kruger. 2016. "Addressing Violence, Substance Abuse, and Mental Health Concerns among College Students." *Future Directions for Prevention in Higher Education*. NASPA: Student Affairs Educators in Higher Education. [www.naspa.org/about/blog/future-directions-for-prevention-in-higher-education](http://www.naspa.org/about/blog/future-directions-for-prevention-in-higher-education)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)—College Drinking: Changing the Culture  
[www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)

# Impact of Life-Events on Students

Cox, B.E., R.D. Reason, and S. Nix. 2016. "Life Happens Outside of College: Non-College Life-Events and Students' Likelihood of Graduation." *Research in Higher Education*, 57, 823–844.

## SUMMARY

Bradley E. Cox, Robert D. Reason, and Samantha Nix contend that life events that occur outside of college may have implications for educational outcomes such as graduation from college. For this reason, Cox et al. assert, "college and university administrators have an inherent interest in understanding the effects of students' life events outside of college" (p. 824). To shed light on the possible effects of non-college life events on student educational outcomes, the authors test the hypothesis that specific stressful non-college life events that occur while students are attending college detrimentally affect the likelihood of their graduation. The authors test this hypothesis using data collected from students at 28 selective colleges and universities that participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen. Liberal arts colleges are included in the group of 28 colleges and universities. This six-year study sample includes 3,914 students.

Three forms of non-college life-events are used to test the hypothesis of this study. The forms that emerged from the literature include death, finance, and psychological. Death-related life-events include the loss of an immediate family member, the loss of a member of the extended family, or the loss of a friend during the previous 12 months. Finances focused on whether the student's parents were affected during the previous 12 months by losing a job, going on public assistance or welfare, or becoming seriously ill or disabled. Psychological non-college life events that may have occurred during the past 12 months included whether the student's parents separated or divorced, an immediate family member was a crime victim, or an immediate family member got into trouble with the law. The authors computed composite scales for each of these three forms of life-events.

The authors used logistic regression to test the guiding hypothesis that stressful non-college life events detrimentally affect the likelihood of a student's graduation from college. The dependent variable was whether the student graduated from their initial institution of enrollment within four years of entry. Composite scales measuring the occurrence of the three forms of non-college life-events (death, finances, and psychological) served as the independent variables in this logistic regression. In addition, statistical controls were included for the students' demographic characteristics, standardized test scores at college entry, college GPA, on-campus residency, and the amount of time students spend in class, working, socializing, and studying. These controls were used to account for influences on graduation other than non-college life-events that have been established in the higher education literature.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study offer some support that stressful non-college life events that occur while students are attending college detrimentally affect the likelihood of their graduation. Only psychological non-college life events, however, reduced the student's likelihood of graduation from their original college or university within four years. Both death and financial non-college life-events wield little or no influence on the likelihood of graduation within four years.

The authors found the occurrence of each of the three types of psychological problems decreased the chance of graduation within four years by about 23 percent.

The authors also indicate that 52.9 percent of sophomores and juniors in selective colleges and universities had experienced a non-college life event during the past 12 months. Moreover, some students experienced two or more non-college life events. Of the three types of psychological life events, Cox et al. report that 8 percent of students had an

immediate family member victimized during the past 12 months and that 6.9 percent had an immediate family member with legal problems. Another 3.8 percent had had their parents separate or divorce within the previous year.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION BY CAMPUS LEADERS

The findings of this study should alert presidents, chief academic officers, and chief student affairs officers at CIC member colleges and universities to the

significance of life events that occur external to the college environment. In the words of Cox et al. “students’ lives outside of college can have dramatic effects on academic outcomes” (p. 823). Students with non-college psychological life events are at risk of not graduating within four years after their initial enrollment. Early alert systems and intrusive advising are approaches that colleges and universities might deploy. Early alert systems involve asking faculty and staff members to identify students who demonstrate signs of personal or academic difficulty. Academic advisors who subscribe to intrusive advising may learn of such events through their regu-

lar conversations with students. The authors also suggest that residence hall staff and residential assistants may identify students living on campus who have experienced non-college psychological events.

Beyond their identification, CIC colleges and universities need mechanisms in place to help students cope with the consequences of their non-college life events. If college counseling services are unable to serve such students, then CIC member institutions should consider appointing an individual to coordinate the institutional response across different offices and services.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bradley E. Cox is associate of education at Florida State University.

Robert D. Reason is professor and associate director of research and administration in the School of Education at the Iowa State University.

Samantha Nix is a doctoral student in higher education at Florida State University.

Megan Gillman is assistant director of the university honors program at Florida State University.

## LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT

The following references are recommended for readers who want to learn more regarding similar aspects of student life.

Oimette, P., and J.P. Brown (eds). 2003. *Trauma and Substance Abuse: Causes, Consequences, and Treatment of Comorbid Disorders*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Reynolds, A.L. 2010. “Counseling and Helping Skills.” In *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession*, edited by J.H. Schuh, S.R. Jones, and S.R. Harper. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

# Adjustment to College

Sun, J., L.S. Hagedorn, and Y. Zhang. 2016. "Homesickness at College: Its Impact on Academic Performance and Retention." *Journal of College Student Development*, 57 (8), 943–957.

## SUMMARY

Jie Sun, Linda Serra Hagedorn, and Yi Zhang ask the question: Does severe or intense homesickness of first-year college students negatively affect their academic performance and first-year persistence in college? The authors situate the problem of homesickness within the context of all the adjustments to college that students make during their first year. They note that students encounter many challenges such as living independently from their parents and making new friends. Sun et al. recognize that most first-year students experience some homesickness. Their concern, however, focuses on severe or intense homesickness that they contend negatively affects students socially and intellectually.

The authors conducted a secondary analysis of data collected from the MAP-Works survey distributed at a land-grant research university in the Midwest. MAP-Works is designed to identify at-risk students. This survey was administered to all first-year, first-time students in the fall semester enrolled at the focal university. Homesickness is one of the categories explored by this survey. The sample used by Sun et al. consists of 10,217 students who responded to the MAP-Works survey. They judge this sample to be representative of first-year, first-time college students at the focal university.

The authors conducted a factor analysis on the five items of the MAP-Works survey that measure homesickness. Examples of these include: "Do you miss your family-back home?" "Feel upset because you want to go home?" and "Think about going home all the time?" From the factor analysis, they identified two forms of homesickness: Homesick Separation and Homesick Distress. Unfortunately, the authors do not define either of these two forms of homesickness nor do they list the specific items that comprise them. Homesick Distress, however, is identified as the more serious of the constructs, while Homesick Separation is moderate in relationship to the former.

To determine the influence of these two severe forms of homesickness, the authors used ordinary least squares multiple regression and logistic regression. The authors assessed the influence of homesickness on first-semester GPA using multiple regression with controls for other factors that might also influence first-semester GPA. These control variables include student background characteristics, residency classification (in state or out of state), parents' educational level, pre-college academic preparation (e.g., ACT scores and high school class rank), the college environment (on-campus or off-campus residence), and sense of belonging. Although a logistic regression was conducted, this same statistical design was used for first-year student persistence as the dependent variable.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Sun et al. learned that Homesick Distress negatively affects both first-semester GPA and first-year persistence of college students. As distress about being away from home increases, a student's first semester GPA decreases and the likelihood of departing from college increases. In contrast, Homesick Separation exerts little or no influence on either first-semester academic performance or first-year student persistence.

The authors also found that students who enter college with low ACT scores, are out-of-state residents, and have a low sense of belonging experience greater degrees of Homesickness Distress. These findings create a profile of students at risk for severe homesickness.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION BY CAMPUS LEADERS

Because many CIC member institutions are residential and enroll students from

out-of-state, student Homesickness Distress could constitute a problem for the adjustment of first-year, first-time students. This problem carries with it lower levels of academic performance and the likelihood for departure at the end of the first year.

Sun et al. offer some useful recommendations. Parents, students, and advisors should encourage students to have open discussions about the consequences of being away from home, such

as missing family and friends. These discussions might take place during fall orientation for first-year students. In addition, open discussions could occur at different times during the first six weeks of the semester when homesickness distress may be problematic for students. The authors also suggest the use of social networking websites to forge stu-

dent contacts and develop social support groups before students arrive on campus.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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### LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT

The following references are recommended for readers who want to learn more about homesickness.

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Giddan, N.S. 1988. *Community and Social Support for College Students*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

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# Student Health Concerns

Carroll, J.M., C. Muller, and E. Pattison. 2016. "Cooling Out Undergraduates with Health Impairments: The Freshman Experience." *The Journal of Higher Education*, 67, 771–800.

## SUMMARY

Jamie M. Carroll, Chandra Muller, and Evangeleen Pattison ask the question: Are first-year college students with health impairments more likely to receive negative signals regarding their degree progress, academic fit, and educational expectations than students without health impairments? The authors consider two categories of health impairments—physical and mental. Physical impairments were defined as any noncognitive impairment to include sensory, orthopedic, or health issue, whereas mental impairments were defined as any cognitive impairment including learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADD), depression, or emotional disturbances.

The importance of this question stems from lack of college success that students with health impairments experience. The authors point out that only 16 percent of students with health impairments earn their bachelor's degree in contrast to more than half of students without health impairments (Kochhar-Bryant, Bassett, and Webb 2009). Moreover, students with health impairments comprise 9 percent of the undergraduate population of colleges and universities (Newman et al. 2011).

Carroll et al. focus on the role health impairments play in a student's adjustment to college during their first year of attendance. They posit that students with health impairments experience less progress toward their degree, lower degrees of academic fit, and lower educational expectations.

The authors used a sample of 11,820 first-year students who completed the spring 2004 survey of the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS). Survey responses were matched with transcript data collected. These students were enrolled in two- or four-year colleges and universities and stated a goal of receiving their bachelor's degree. From this data, the authors developed two measures of students' self-reported impairments: physical and mental.

Carroll et al. used student transcript data to compute measures of degree progress and academic fit. More specifically, the authors used college-level math completion and earning at least 20 credits as markers of degree progress. The students' grade point average at the end of the first year was used as a measure of the student's degree of academic fit as well as whether a student failed at least one course during their first year of college. The authors used the educational expectations of students reported in spring 2004 and spring 2006 to ascertain whether their expectations were lowered. Expectations were defined as lowered if an individual in 2004 expected to receive at least a bachelor's degree and in 2006 they expected to receive an associate's degree or no degree.

The authors used logistic regression to determine the influence of physical and mental health impairments on college math completion, earning at least 20 credits, course failure, GPA, and educational expectations with controls for the student's background, academic preparation, enrollment characteristics, and the first-year college experience.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

First-year students without health impairments and college students with physical health impairments experience similar levels of progress toward their degrees in terms of their completion of college-level mathematics, earning 20 credits, failing one course, first-year

grade point average, and their educational expectations. In stark contrast, first-year students with mental impairments are less likely to earn 20 credits and are more likely to fail one course, earn a lower grade point average at the end of their first year of college, and lower their educational expectations than their first-year student counterparts without health impairments.

This pattern of findings suggest that students with mental health impairments experience less success during their first year of college than do first-year students with physical health impairments or students without health impairments. Put differently, students with mental health impairments are at a higher risk for departure from their college of initial enrollment.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION BY CAMPUS LEADERS

Three implications for CIC institutions emerge from the findings of this study. These implications are as follows.

1. Students with mental health impairments constitute a heretofore “hidden” category of students at risk for first-year departure from colleges and universities. If not already established, CIC member institutions should consider the creation of a disability services office or designated disability services staff member. Such an office or staff member could arrange or develop the accommodations that students with

mental health impairments need to support their academic success.

2. Partnerships with campus and community resources who specialize in mental impairments will be key to assisting these students—whether through counseling centers on campus or agencies in the community.
3. CIC member institutions also should consider establishing a campus intervention team to assist students whose mental impairments may be impeding their progress. Members of this team could include the dean of students, a staff member from disability services, manager of academic advising, as well as residence life and other key campus

constituents who work with these students.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jaime M. Carroll is a doctoral student in sociology and a trainee in the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Chandra Miller is professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin.

Evangeleen Pattison is a doctoral student in sociology and a trainee in the Population Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

## LITERATURE READERS MAY WISH TO CONSULT

The following references are recommended for readers who want to learn more about efforts to accommodate students with physical or mental impairments.

Barnard-Brak, L., D. Lechtenburger, and Y.W. Lan. 2010. “Accommodation Strategies of College Students with Disabilities.” *The Qualitative Report*, 15(2), 411–429.

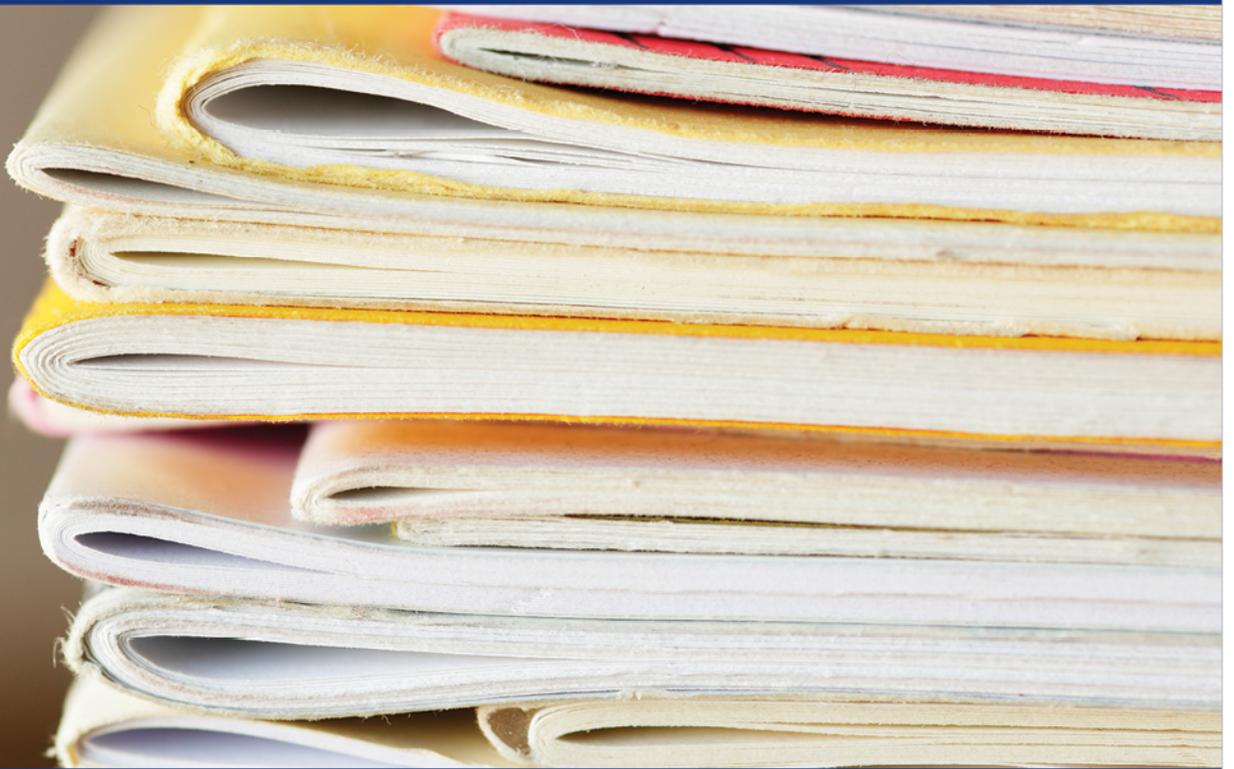
Fuller, M., J. Georgeson, M. Healey, A. Hurst, K. Kelly, S. Riddell, H. Roberts, and F. Weedon. 2009. *Improving Disabled Students’ Learning: Experiences and Outcomes*. London, England: Routledge.

Kochhar-Bryant, C., D.S. Bassett, and K.W. Webb. 2009. *Transition in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

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