

Public Abstract

First Name:James

Middle Name:Kenneth

Last Name:Cook

Adviser's First Name:Paul

Adviser's Last Name:Watkins

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:SS 2015

Department:Educational Leadership

Degree:EdD

Title:THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITING SKILLS AND OTHER COMPETENCY VARIABLES IN PREDICTING STUDENT SUCCESS IN ONLINE MBA COURSES

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to (a) explore the relationship of student cognitive skill indicators (predictor variables) to student performance in online and face-to-face MBA courses (criterion variables) at a Midwestern United States University (University) conferring undergraduate and graduate degrees in a variety of academic fields; (b) determine if there is a statistically significant correlation between the predictor and criterion variables; and, (c) determine if there is any statistically significant difference between any statistically significant correlations of predictor and criterion variables. A sample of 322 students were studied using seven-years of pre-existing data (Fall 2006 – Fall 2013) from the Center for Scholarship Teaching and Learning (CSTL) online course database, the student module of Ellusian database used by the University Registrar's office, and the Institutional Research department at the University. Statistical correlation and regression procedures were used to analyze the data.

Contrary to existing online education research, this study did not conclusively indicate that students' ability to write effectively had any significant relationship to students' performance in online versus face-to-face courses in the MBA program at the University. This finding, combined with the foundational learning theory research, suggests that online course design, pedagogy, and assessment may be mitigating the affect differences in student writing skills and learning has on student performance in online versus face-to-face courses.

This study also found significant differences in the relationship of student GMAT-Verbal score, GMAT-Analytical Writing score and GMAT-Total score, and student performance in online versus face-to-face MBA courses. Student GMAT-Verbal score and GMAT-Total score significantly correlated with student performance in face-to-face MBA courses, but did not significantly correlate with online MBA courses. Student GMAT-Analytical Writing score significantly correlated with student performance in face-to-face MBA courses, but had a weaker correlation with student performance in online MBA courses. These findings suggest that the use of GMAT scores in making MBA program admission decisions may not be appropriate. This study indicated that GMAT scores were not valid predictors of student performance in online MBA courses at the University.

Finally, this study indicated that students with undergraduate grade point averages less than 3.0, and students with combined undergraduate grade point averages and GMAT scores outside the threshold of the requirements for regular MBA program admittance, performed successfully. Comparing this finding with the findings that student Writing Proficiency Exam scores and EN140 Grades of students were also valid predictors of student success in Online MBA program courses; and, the finding that GMAT scores were not valid predictors of student performance in Online MBA program courses; suggest that the use of Undergraduate Grade Point Average and GMAT scores for MBA program admission requirements should be reviewed and possibly revised.