

Public Abstract

First Name: Robert

Middle Name: Samuel

Last Name: Hornberger

Adviser's First Name: Cynthia

Adviser's Last Name: MacGregor

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Heck (2004) stated, "Policy analysis is an important, but problematic, window on the educational world because it may illuminate or obscure what it views" (p. 318). A student's potential entrance to a four-year university is initially affected by an admission policy. However, often the policy, and resultant process, lacks an integral correlation with significant predictors of academic success and retention. Policy is instead set by political agendas and at decision levels that expand beyond the university. While formal procedures are therefore created at the university level and higher, informal practices become unclear and inconsistent to the practitioners (Fowler, 2009). Kretchmar (2006) suggested an inconsistency within these informal practices and lack of reliability in the process. Therefore, practitioners do not have dependable and credible processes to follow.

This quantitative study examined a sample of 249 conditionally admitted first-time freshman at a four year public university to answer four research questions pertaining to the potential prediction of academic success and college retention for conditional admits. The single-stage, convenience sample (Creswell, 2003) included students admitted during three semesters of fall 2006, fall 2007, and fall 2008. Variables related to student demographic, academic admission, first year academic success, and college admission factors were included in the study.

The findings of the study revealed that an emphasis on core curriculum classes taken during high school, especially the senior year, and the core curriculum coursework GPA should be emphasized by policymakers as determinants for admission exceptions. The results also highlighted the ACT English sub score for the full sample, and the high school GPA for the male sub group, as significant predictors of academic success and college retention. Other factors analyzed in the study, including the type of high school, whether a student earned college credit prior to college, whether a student participated in high school athletics, whether a student was an athlete at the college of study, ethnicity and race, whether the student received application for admission fee waiver, and the type of conditional admit, did not qualify as significant predictors in the final statistical model.

In addition to the study's focus on predictors of academic success and college retention, further study should also examine those factors that contain low correlations with academic success and

college retention, allowing for possible implications regarding identified risk factors and recommendations for improvements to the services and support provided to students.