

Self-efficacy, Alcohol Expectancy, or Environment: What Factors Impact Student Academic Success

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Historically, offices of enrollment have relied on cognitive measures as predictors of student academic achievement. Educational data regarding degree attainment directs the consideration of other variables of influence. This literature review seeks to foster an understanding of the variables that encompass psychological constructs, behaviors, and the environment to provide additional insight for universities seeking to support and retain students on their academic journey. Specifically, professionals in the field of higher education must understand the impact of self-efficacy, alcohol expectancy, and the collegiate environment on student academic success and thereby embrace a mission to inspire the development of the whole person.

Keywords: college students, academic self-efficacy, academic achievement, alcohol expectancy

This literature review examines the variables that impact college student academic success in the United States. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) estimates that less than 63 percent of the students who pursued postsecondary degrees across institutions of higher education in the United States between 2013-2019 graduated from college within a four to six-year period (NCES, 2021). Explorations of the elements that impact student academic success are prevalent today as institutions of higher education seek to identify factors that impact academic achievement and positively influence degree completion (Barbera et al., 2017). The institution's ability to enhance the academic success of students and the overall collegiate experience is driven by the desire to impact the development of the whole person and ultimately

impact student retention rates, thereby scoring a win-win situation for both the individual student and the university (Pascarella, 1991). Such a quest is necessary for institutions of higher education as they seek to survive in the competitive educational market and circumvent the economic impact of student attrition rates (Higbee, 2005; Naidoo, 2018).

Specifically, this literature review examines research on the relationships between self-efficacy and alcohol expectancy as predictors for academic success in first-year college students within the context of the campus environment. Bandura (1977) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) often categorize factors as nurture or nature when considering the various influences that may either promote or inhibit a student's academic achievement. Nurture refers to the inherent qualities that the individual student brings to the university, and nature relates to the impact of the collegiate environment that serves to further shape and mold the individual on their academic journey. If factors of self-efficacy, alcohol expectancy, and environment are found to be predictive of academic success or, specifically, students at risk for academic challenges, then early intervention could enhance student academic achievement.

One might argue that a student's intellectual capacity is the greatest single variable impacting academic success. Historically, college entrance requirements of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and review of academic records served to screen and ensure that all enrolled students demonstrate a specific level of intellectual abilities and capabilities necessary to garner academic success. This position has changed as standardized tests are no longer used by many college admission teams (Furuta, 2017). We seek to understand further the factors that impact the achievement of one's academic success as colleges and universities are searching beyond the measure of one's intelligence quotient (IQ).

The Impact of Self-Efficacy on Academic Achievement

Self-efficacy has been identified as a predominant variable that impacts an individual's ability to achieve success. The concept of self-efficacy, first identified by Bandura in 1977, marries behavioral and cognitive concepts that provide a foundation for the development of coping mechanisms with the dimensional parameters of strength, duration, and frequency during periods of human adversity. Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy is a popular psychological construct where it is argued that one's sense of efficacy is shaped prior to one's matriculation to college. Bandura (1994) specifically defines perceived self-efficacy as an individual's belief about their ability to be successful across certain life situations. The three core elements of efficacy include confidence in relation to his or her ability, the individual's desire to engage in certain behaviors effectively, and the individual's attainment of a desired goal. The

premise of academic self-efficacy specifically relates to one's belief about their ability to be successful in the pursuit of academic challenges.

Self-efficacy is an important variable when investigating issues surrounding student academic achievement. Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through observing and modeling behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others that provide the theoretical framework for the basis of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Such observational learning has four process components: awareness of modeled behaviors; retention, coding, and rehearsal of the observed behaviors; physical reproduction of the observed behaviors; and motivation and reinforcement to replicate the behavior in the future (Bandura, 1994). It is this last element, according to Bandura (1994), that provides the mechanism for human agency or how individuals influence their own motivation and behavior. Zimmerman et al. (1992) verified the relationship between academic self-efficacy and self-regulated learning, finding that academic self-efficacy had both a direct and indirect effect on the self-regulated learning endeavors of students. One's ability to achieve high levels of motivation and to persevere in the face of obstacles directly relates to one's beliefs about his/her abilities or one's level of perceived self-efficacy, which influences behavior and the final outcome.

The concept of self-efficacy is viewed as a key psychological component in the determination of human motivation and learning outcomes, particularly as institutions of higher education search for avenues to enhance the academic achievement of college students (Bandura, 1994; Meng & Zhang, 2023). Cowles (2004) studied the characteristics that impacted students' academic success when compared with peers of similar or equal intellectual ability. A total of 19 students from a freshman class at a Western university participated in the study. Data was gathered through individual tape-recorded interview sessions. Statistical analysis consisted of coding each conversation to identify significant emerging themes across students. The major findings noted the pre-college differences in encouragement from guidance counselors, strong academic interest, and time-management skills as factors leading to student academic success. Renowned theorists have similarly asserted that one's beliefs, as shaped through relationships, provide a framework for self-appraisal and thereby direct future behaviors (Abelson, 1979; Bandura, 1977; Dewey, 1916; Felten & Lambert, 2020; Pajares, 1994).

Hutchinson-Green et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study of 12 students who were enrolled in first-year engineering courses at Purdue University and examined the self-efficacy beliefs of participants with respect to their decision to major in engineering. Open-ended, individual interviews were conducted with students to gather data regarding their efficacy beliefs and experience. The study concluded that

all participants had a high degree of self-efficacy as they entered the engineering program. However, they noted a change in participant levels of self-efficacy during the first semester as self-efficacy beliefs were impacted and often shaped following performance comparisons to other students in the program.

Educational researchers Artino et al. (2010) sought to determine the importance of motivation and emotion in student learning and performance of 136 second-year medical students. The researchers administered various surveys, gathered student course grades, and national board examination scores during this longitudinal study across two semesters. The quantitative findings confirmed the positive importance of motivation and emotion on student learning and performance. Specifically, the findings noted that students' level of academic self-efficacy was a predictor of anxiety, signifying that those who were confident about their ability to master the course were less likely to experience course-related anxiety.

Similarly, Niehaus et al. (2011) conducted a one-year, longitudinal study to examine how academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and student participation in an after-school program impacted the academic achievement of 47 Latino middle school students. The purpose of the study was to provide further research and empirical data to support the premise that academic self-efficacy is positively correlated with their measured performance of academic tasks. The after-school program, under the guidance of an executive director and two full-time staff members, was held in the participants' home school for 2.5 hours, one day per week. A volunteer staff of 12 tutors from the local high schools and a university worked with the core staff to implement the program, consisting of recreational activity, snack time, journal writing, and student-identified tutoring for various homework assignments. The team members were matched with individual students for the duration of the academic year, implemented the program components, and tracked student academic progress. The Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES), a 30-item, Likert-type instrument with acceptable levels of internal reliability ($\alpha = .82$), was used to measure student academic self-efficacy of the current participants. The data analysis used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and students' reading scores were used as a control variable. The results revealed that self-efficacy was a significant predictor of school attendance and math achievement in this group of Latino middle school students. The researchers further concluded that the results of this study were consistent with previous research on Latino students (Acoach & Webb, 2004; Buriel et al., 1998), which notes the important value of academic self-efficacy on student academic success.

Tatum (2012) studied 165 sophomore-level students at a large southwestern university located in the United States. The purpose of the study, which administered

several paper and pencil surveys to the students during one semester and gathered exam scores, was to assess work and job performance within a classroom setting utilizing a causal/path model to test predicted relationships. Self-efficacy was considered to be a key construct in the motivation casual/path model as it echoed the belief an individual has in their ability to perform a specific task. Tatum's study showed that individuals with high self-efficacy were more prone to persist when faced with struggles, display intrinsic motivation, and succeed in their academic pursuits. Regression analysis confirmed the predictive relationships between ability and achievement motivation with student grade expectations and self-efficacy. The results specifically noted a strong positive correlation between expectancy/self-efficacy and earned class grades. These results lend further support to the premise that self-efficacy is a vital construct used to predict students expected academic success (Bong, 2001; Bong & Clark, 1999; Bouffard et al., 2001; Lane & Lane, 2001; Lane et al., 2004; Ofori & Charlton, 2002; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Richardson, 2007; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997).

Chemers et al. (2001) conducted a study that identified achievement and adjustment as factors for academic success. The research concluded that efficacy-activated processes play a key role in student academic achievement, as the results demonstrated a positive correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance across a sample of university students. The results specifically noted that students who presented with strong self-efficacy and assurance in their abilities to accomplish new tasks successfully demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement and adjustment to the college environment. The inverse was true for individuals who presented with a weak sense of efficacy, doubted their capabilities to achieve, looked to challenges as threats to avoid, and performed poorly, further demonstrating that academic self-efficacy directly impacts academic performance and adjustment in first-year college students.

Majer (2006) undertook a longitudinal study of 96 first-generation college students to determine the academic self-efficacy of college students in relation to socio-demographic characteristics to determine if one's level of educational self-efficacy and socio-demographic characteristics are predictive of academic success. Majer concluded that the academic self-efficacy of first-generation students was predictive of one's level of academic success. These findings are consistent with the earlier research of Chemers et al. (2001), who conducted a longitudinal study on the academic performance and adjustment of 373 first-year college students in relation to students' perceived self-efficacy and found the existence of a strong predictive relationship between these variables.

Devonport and Lane (2006) studied the relationship between self-efficacy and coping as predictors of retention. Specifically, the researchers studied 131 first-year students pursuing undergraduate degrees in the areas of physical fitness and sports to assess one's level of coping strategies and behaviors using Crocker and Graham's COPE Inventory (1995; as cited in Devonport & Lane, 2006). The results support the existence of a strong positive correlation between coping skills, self-efficacy, and student retention. More specifically, one's level of coping strategies was directly correlated with one's sense of self-efficacy with respect to time management and planning behaviors, which positively impact academic success. These findings parallel the earlier research conducted by Peterson and Barrett (1987), who acknowledged the significant prevalence of negative self-efficacy and low achievement of first-year students, which ultimately impact student rates of attrition.

A study directed by Moseki and Schulze (2010) encouraged student self-regulated learning with 20 academically challenged engineering students at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). The researchers administered the LASSI, a learning and study strategies inventory, and implemented 12 workshop sessions over a three-month period to the participants. The LASSI was also administered post-intervention. The program was found to be successful at enabling students to move towards self-regulated learning, as noted by the statistically significant increases across seven of the ten measured scales on the LASSI and improved academic achievement. Moseki and Schulze (2010) further determined that the program helped to cultivate participants' development of self-efficacy, noting that self-efficacy is a critical component of self-regulated learning. This conclusion echoes the previous findings of Gaskil and Hoy (2002) and Parajes and Schunk (2001), who identified self-efficacy as being directly correlated with enhanced student success.

Honicke and Broadbend (2016) conducted a review of 59 studies to determine the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance. The researchers used a meta-analytic technique to assess the strength of the relationship between the two variables. The results of the findings suggested that although additional variables may moderate or mediate the relationship, a moderate positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance exists.

Research conducted by Hayat et al., (2020) with 279 medical students at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences supports earlier findings noting that positive academic self-efficacy impacts learning strategies, which results in greater academic performance. Similarly, the results of a study conducted by Fakhrou and Habib (2021) with 43 college students found that a positive, statistically significant relationship existed between academic self-efficacy and academic achievement.

Nair and Sutar (2023) conducted a study to determine the relationship between fear of failure, academic self-efficacy, and academic performance among 150 undergraduate and postgraduate students in India. The researchers administered a demographic questionnaire to gather GPA, the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (Conroy et al., 2002, as cited in Nair and Sutar 2023) to measure fear of failure, and the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, 1977) to assess students' level of academic self-efficacy. The researchers concluded that a negative relationship exists between fear of failure and academic self-efficacy, no significant relationship between fear of failure and academic performance, and the existence of a significant positive relationship exists between academic self-efficacy and academic performance. These current studies (Fakhrou & Habib, 2021; Hayat et al., 2020; Nair & Sutar, 2023), offer significant contributions, lending support to earlier findings that increased levels of academic self-efficacy is positively correlated with increased levels of student academic performance.

The Impact of Alcohol Expectancy on Academic Achievement

The notion that alcohol consumption patterns are formulated prior to college gives value to measures of alcohol expectancy, a concept that relates to the perceived psychological effects that may result from consuming alcohol (Smith et al., 1994). Victor Vroom (1964) developed the expectancy theory in the study of management to explain an individual's motivations with respect to decisions. This perspective is based on the expectancy-learning model, which theorizes that early learning experiences influence future behavioral choices (Jones, et al., 2001). According to Vroom (1964), motivation is defined as a process in which an individual makes choices based on an expected or anticipated outcome. The relevance of these findings is significant as a national survey of students at 140 U.S. campuses reports that alcohol use is heavily embedded across campus cultures, with four out of five students consuming alcohol (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990; Wechsler et al., 1994; Wechsler et al., 1998; Wechsler et al., 2000). A similar national survey of students indicated that "40% of college students report consuming five or more alcoholic drinks at least monthly" (Johnston et al., 2010). Current research by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) further supports these findings on college student alcohol consumption. In 2021, SAMHSA conducted a national survey which found that "49% of full-time college students ages 18-22 drank alcohol in the past month".

College-age students are at pivotal developmental crossroads as they transition from late adolescence into young adulthood and begin to further formulate their self-identity, personal habits, decision-making skills, and moral values that will impact their future and, ultimately, the world's future (Mezirow, 2000). Campus drinking

cultures are formed by the established drinking patterns high school students bring with them as they transition to college (Smith & Goldman, 1994). Campus-wide approaches may positively impact the campus climate overall, but few, if any, are structured to identify the individual students who may be at risk for alcohol misuse. The Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2002) underscored the importance of developing strategies to delineate a comprehensive scope of intervention that begins with the individual student who may be at risk for alcohol misuse, as well as environmental efforts to enhance and reshape the campus culture with respect to alcohol consumption. Programs that identify alcohol expectancy, level of risk, and environmental factors may give promise of eradicating the misuse of alcohol across colleges and universities.

Social Learning Theory has a strong application in attempting to understand the drinking behaviors of college students. Chemers et al. (2001) study showed that low self-efficacy not only has a direct correlation with academic achievement but may also impact an individual's emotional stability as negative thoughts produce stress. It must be considered that individuals with low efficacy may experience greater levels of personal stress and look to alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism, as Pohorecky (1991) and Wagner (1993) document that life stressors significantly contribute to the initiation of alcohol use. Scharf (1998) further identified alcohol use as a maladaptive coping mechanism in response to stress. The relationship between self-efficacy, alcohol consumption, and coping mechanisms supports the assumption that these variables directly impact academic achievement. Broer (1996) examined a number of these variables, focusing on the relationship between problem-solving and coping. Biscaro et al. (2004) updated the original work of Broer and re-examined the importance of self-efficacy, alcohol expectancy, and problem-solving assessment as predictors of alcohol use in undergraduate college students. The study, which included 79 students from a Midwestern university, revealed that alcohol expectancy and gender arose as predictors for alcohol use. Although self-efficacy and problem-solving did not emerge as predictors of alcohol use, Broer et al. concluded that further studies of these variables were warranted and suggested that larger and more diverse college populations be included in the implementation of future research.

Drinking behavior, as explained through Social Learning Theory, follows that an individual learns through observation, imitation, and modeling of actions within a social setting (Bandura, 1977). The major premise is that cognitive processing allows the individual to convert the observed behavior into memory and to store the experience in conjunction with one's interpretation of the experience. Jones et al. (2001) determined that individuals who observe alcohol-related behaviors, either firsthand or on television, are more likely to replicate such alcohol-related behaviors as college students. Similarly, Johnston et al. (2002) found that behaviors associated

with drinking are formed during the period of late adolescence, noting that 75% of twelfth-grade students reported that they had engaged in drinking during their senior year in high school. Such awareness can impact an individual's future actions as one develops their intent to use alcohol and the anticipated rewards and consequences.

It has often been said that the college drinking culture and social norms support alcohol consumption as a rite of passage for students as they transition from late adolescence to young adulthood (CASA, 1994; Jessor & Jessor, 1975; National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2023). This culture is deeply entrenched in societal acceptance of alcohol consumption, as reportedly 80% of American youth admit to drinking alcohol prior to their twenty-first birthday (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000). In a study of 190 students, ages 18 to 22, enrolled at a private Midwestern university, who reported consuming alcohol, Crawford and Novak (2010) determined that many students viewed alcohol abuse as synonymous with the college experience. The study also revealed that a student's personal decision to consume alcohol is affected by his or her individual beliefs regarding alcohol, campus drinking norms, and college experience. Maggs and Schulenberg (2004), who reviewed the factors that motivate or inhibit college drinking from a developmental perspective, found that social influences greatly impacted alcohol use and determined that students who shared the perception that alcohol consumption was part of the normative college experience were more likely to consume alcohol.

At one time, college administrators believed that students would find ways to successfully navigate the phase of alcohol use and emerge unscathed (Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002). College administrators generally held the ubiquitous belief that students who experienced problems with alcohol consumption must have a familial history or a genetic predisposition toward alcohol use (Agrawal & Bierut, 2012). However, a wave of concern over student alcohol consumption emerged in the mid-1990s as universities became aware of strategies to help students who demonstrate a problem with alcohol. Student alcohol awareness programs designed to educate and remedy the problem were implemented (Brooks et al., 1985; Ellickson & Hays, 1991). Some twenty years later, we still are facing the same challenges surrounding alcohol use among college students in part because intervention programs primarily focused on raising awareness rather than on the implementation of evidence-based approaches to address student alcohol abuse and consumption (DeLong et al., 2009).

During the early years of alcohol awareness, researchers, often mindful of the differences between awareness, prevention, and interventions, conducted a number of studies to elucidate the relationship between alcohol use and academic achievement. The negative relationship between alcohol consumption and student level of academic achievement has been well documented as research supports the existence of an

inverse relationship between college students' grade point average (GPA) and patterns of alcohol consumption (Bloch et al., 1991; Donovan & Jessor, 1998; Schulenberg et al., 1994; Sutherland & Shepherd, 2001). Pullen (1994) conducted a study of 300 undergraduate students at a southern university to ascertain if there was a positive correlation between alcohol abuse in college students with student grade point average (GPA) and selected psychological and demographic variables. Pullen established that the most dominant predictors of alcohol consumption included family abuse of alcohol, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, and GPA. This research further supports the theory of alcohol expectancy and the impact of early exposure in the formulation of drinking behaviors.

More recently, as investigators became sophisticated in the development of assessment tools, data extraction, and interviewing techniques, the depth of understanding between the pre-disposing factors of alcohol consumption, with respect to self-efficacy, self-regulation, and alcohol expectancy became more apparent. Institutions that administer alcohol expectancy assessment tools to their student populations use the data to determine how significant alcohol consumption may be across the campus community and thereby support the academic mission of the university by addressing health and wellness issues, identifying students at risk, increasing student success, and ultimately increase student retention. (LaFountaine et al., 2006; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006).

Jeynes (2002) reviewed data that was gathered from 18,726 participants who completed the National Educational Longitudinal Survey in 1992 to determine if a relationship existed between the consumption of drugs and alcohol by adolescents and their levels of academic achievement. Measures of alcohol consumption included queries as to whether or not a student had ever been under the influence while at school and if the student had ever consumed five or more drinks in one setting. Jeynes documented that there was a relationship between substantial levels of alcohol consumption and lower academic achievement. Current research further lends support to these findings as Breitmeier et al. (2007) found that even low levels of blood alcohol concentrations of 0.03% impact cognitive psychomotor performance. This research demonstrates that minimal alcohol use and consumption have major effects on perception, visual processing, and one's overall health and well-being.

Prompted by the negative effects of alcohol abuse and the high levels of consumption behavior in college-age students, Young et al. (2005) studied 174 undergraduate university students to further understand the relationship between alcohol expectancy and drinking behavior. The current study utilized three survey tools: the alcohol expectancy questionnaire (AEQ), the drinking expectancy questionnaire (DEQ), and the drinking refusal self-efficacy questionnaire to predict the severity of

alcohol dependence, frequency of drinking, and the quantity of alcohol consumed per occasion. The results of the study demonstrated that positive alcohol expectancy factors were strongly correlated to student drinking. The researchers further noted that alcohol expectancy should be incorporated to enhance alcohol prevention and educational programming.

Similarly, Patrick et al. (2009) sought to determine the predictive power of alcohol expectancies vis-à-vis alcohol use and problems from adolescence to midlife and utilized data collected from 2146 participants of an ongoing, longitudinal, British Cohort Study in 1970. The results of the study concluded that participants who evidenced positive alcohol expectancies at age 16 reported greater levels of alcohol consumption and misuse at age 35, coupled with noted increases in alcohol quantity relative to their peers. These findings are significant as alcohol expectancy is noted as a strong predictor of alcohol use and misuse across the lifespan. This evidence supports the belief that measures of alcohol expectancy can be used as a reliable, predictive tool to assess first-year students at risk for problematic levels of alcohol consumption.

Leivia (2007) considered gender as a variable in researching the social and drinking behavior of college women, which has been reported to have significantly increased over the last 30 years. This study sought to determine specific motivators of women's drinking behavior through the use of ethnographic methods with 15 upper-level female students. The theoretical basis of the study was formulated with the Feminist Standpoint Theory, which supports the need to better understand experiences surrounding the female gender. Leivia (2007) alludes to the impact of social expectations as a key factor in impacting women's college drinking.

The prevalence of alcohol consumption and the potential for negative consequences on the lives of college students supports the necessity to search for effective remedies to reduce college drinking. It is imperative that the field of higher education acquires a means to identify students at risk for alcohol usage, determine the psychosocial elements that contribute to student alcohol consumption at epidemic proportions, and encourage a milieu that guides, supports, and enhances the development of the whole person.

The Impact of the Collegiate Environment on Academic Achievement

John Dewey, an American philosopher and educator, highlighted the role of experiences in the learning process, defining reflective thinking as that which incorporates one's experiences as a basis for learning. According to Dewey, "We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work or whether we design environments for the

purpose makes a great difference” (Dewey, 1916, p. 35). Dewey’s model of learning directs those experiences to provide the individual with the opportunity to reflect and deliberate on an event and thereby grow from the experience. This process culminates in young adulthood in correlation with the physiological development of the frontal lobe, which allows for enhanced executive functioning and higher-level thinking (Luna et al., 2001).

Brain development and the college social environment provide the necessary ingredients to enhance the development of reflective thinking as students increase their proficiency in applying such skills to life problems and challenges. Integrating new knowledge about brain function with Dewey’s position on progressive education serves to underscore the link between educational purpose and development but also serves to highlight an opportunity in the realm of higher education for administrators to provide students with occasions to enhance such growth.

Lewin (1935) would argue that academic achievement or “behavior evolves as a function of the interplay between a person and his or her environment” (p.73), concluding that ecological variables impact a student’s academic success in relationship to the environmental factors present across institutions of higher education. The conceptual basis of understanding differences in student academic achievement rests with Bronfenbrenner (1979), who believed that understanding human development necessitates a broadened perspective that examines the individual in relation to their environment:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as the process is affected by relations between these settings and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p. 21).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) defines the significance of the relationship between the individual and their environment in response to the individual’s changes and the environment, which is not static but responsive to the interaction between the individual and environment, which further impacts the development of behavior. In essence, Bronfenbrenner recognizes and validates the impact of the university system on the development of the individual student, who, in turn, changes the environment and shapes the campus culture.

Considerable research supporting the value and relevance of environmental factors emphasizes the interplay and impact of study skills, class attendance, housing, commuting to campus, and the level of student engagement in the campus community on student academic success and rates of attrition. The American College Testing

Service (ACT) Policy Report (2004) examined the role of academic and non-academic factors in increasing the retention rates of college students and found that retention programs that center on tutoring, study skill development, peer support, and incorporate faculty-mentors directly influence student academic success. The report also noted that institutions that implemented a model of retention based on Tinto's Theory of Student Departure (1975, 1973; as cited in ACT, 2004) demonstrated lower dropout and higher completion rates across the student body.

A study of 874 first-year students conducted by Lecompte et al. (1983) revealed that students who regularly attended class were less likely to withdraw from college than students who did not engage in regular class attendance. The study also found that students who were engaged with campus services and/or had regular interaction with faculty were less likely to leave the institution than those who avoided such contacts and interactions. In addition, a study conducted by Comeaux (2005) of 459 football and basketball players also found that faculty mentoring of students positively impacted student's academic success and desire to remain in college. Further, their study revealed that students who lived at home and commuted to campus were two times more likely to withdraw from the university. These findings highlight the importance of environmental factors in influencing academic success and, ultimately, student retention.

The institutional characteristics of class scheduling and class size were two other environmental variables identified as having an impact on student academic achievement. Toth and Montagna (2002) examined eight studies that inspected the role of class size in affecting student academic achievement and found that three of the eight studies reviewed demonstrated a negative relationship between class size and academic achievement, lending support to the premise that environmental factors indeed impact success.

Perception of barriers also plays an important role in motivation to succeed. Wirth and Padilla (2008) undertook a qualitative study of student perspectives on barriers to academic success within a community college setting. Data gathering occurred in the form of small focus groups whose participants completed matrixes regarding barriers to success and knowledge of strategies that successful students use to overcome such barriers. A process of taxonomic analysis was applied to the data with specific consideration of barriers to success, heuristic knowledge, and practices that successful students possess and implement in overcoming barriers. The major findings revealed that students who are successful indeed possess a deep understanding and knowledge of strategies to overcome barriers. Hence, the data revealed that student retention could be increased with the implementation of student assistance programs that help students develop such knowledge and coping strategies to enhance academic success.

Conclusion

As professionals in the field of higher education, we must understand the elements that impact academic success to support the educational mission of the university and to enhance the development of the whole person further. The predominant factors that influence student academic achievement include the construct of self-efficacy, the propensity of the student to consume alcohol, and a mirage of environmental factors correlated with academic success.

Similar to Dewey's (1916) model of the learning environment, Snyder (1995) introduced the Hope Theory as a cross-situational construct into the field of education to explain the elements of motivation and environment as key pieces that come together to effectuate one's achievement. According to Snyder (1995), the Hope Theory involves the formulation of goals by the individual, efficacious behavior and motivation toward the established goals, and the pathways or environment to achieve the goals. The basis of the process and the individual's ability to triumph is determined by one's level of self-efficacy and confidence in his or her abilities that provide the cognitive momentum toward success, while pathways or environmental factors either support or impede the achievement of academic goals. Therefore, in determining the variables that impact academic achievement, one must first acknowledge the basis and importance of self-efficacy as a psychological construct, which is necessary for goal formation and provides the underpinning of human achievement. Schroeder (1996), who identifies a model of educational intervention that extends beyond the classroom, fosters a partnership between academic and student affairs silos, and ultimately serves to enhance student development across the physical, social, and cognitive domains, recognizes the importance of the environmental variables as they serve to enable and further support or deter human success.

Blake (2007) gives credence to the value of a paradigm that is concerned with all aspects of a student's college experience and endorses the shifting role of the institution in impacting development. According to Blake, the direct engagement of students in the learning process is essential to both the individual student to foster human growth and development, which provides a positive return to the university through increased retention and graduation rates. Blake further recommends that program development should be in response to the assessed needs of students and complement the changing times of the world in which we live, emphasizing that one must be equally mindful of the student's needs in relation to the environment (Blake, 2007).

The field of higher education must embrace its mission— and make good on the promise to nurture the development of the whole person. Not only must universities impart knowledge, but they must foster an environment to enhance personal growth and positively influence

student development. Specifically, colleges must be proactive, deliberately enacting programming to address the notion of alcohol expectancy, providing an environment that builds student's sense of self-efficacy, and models healthy decision-making. Such can be accomplished as colleges and universities intentionally seek to operationalize institutional missions and, in so doing, inspire the development of the whole person.

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