

Abstract

As colleges actively recruit and bring in more students, college readiness begins to be a growing factor of consideration. Currently, most research focuses on college readiness from the institutional perspective. The college faculty perspective, however, has largely been ignored. This study seeks to remedy that gap. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction effect between college (e.g., business, education) and position (Tenured, Tenure-Track, Non-Tenure Track) of perceived incoming student readiness. While this was not supported, further analyses indicated that the individual main effects did have differences, and post hoc tests parsed out these differences. Implications for college readiness are discussed, as well as potential future research avenues.

Introduction

In recent years, an overwhelming emphasis has been placed on the migration of students from high school to universities. As society has shifted to offer greater opportunity to attend college (Kim & Rury, 2007), more and more emerging adults are flocking to higher education institutions. Because students are coming into college from a wide range of high schools taught at various degrees of academic rigor, college readiness has become a recent research focus (Arnold, Lu, & Armstrong, 2012a). This is because of its power to predict many outcomes, from academic success to mental well-being.

The thought behind college readiness initiatives is that it is better to be prepared for college than be overwhelmed upon arrival. Over the past decade, initiatives have sought to create more opportunity for not only average students, but also students with disabilities or those from lower socio-economic standing (Morningstar, Zagona, Uyanik, Xie, & Mahal, 2017; Klasik & Strayhorn, 2018; Lombardi, Freeman, & Rifenburg, 2018). Although the vast majority of college readiness research focuses on the students or the university level, there is a third party which should also be acknowledged: the professors. Few studies have sought to look at college readiness from this perspective, and this study seeks to fill that gap.

The current study sought to add to the understanding of higher education institutions by addressing the college faculty perspective on college readiness. Specifically, the current research hypothesizes that there will be a difference between the combined effects of college affiliation (e.g., education, humanities) and type of professor (Tenured, Tenure Track, Non-Tenure Track) on perceived incoming student readiness.

Methodology

Comprehensive Literature Review

□ **Keywords:** College readiness, college faculty, faculty perceptions/attitudes/beliefs

Procedure

- Participants, specifically employed faculty, were recruited via email. Graduate students and other teaching staff were excluded.
- Data were collected through a survey that was sent to 42 randomly selected universities across the US.
- The universities were selected from the list of research universities laid out by the 2010 Carnegie Classifications (Doctoral Research Universities, High Research Activity Universities and Very High Research Activity Universities).

Data collection

Demographics

- Faculty classification: N = 1498; Non-Tenure Track = 352, Tenure Track = 427, Tenured = 631, Other = 88.

Materials

- To assess faculty perceptions of students, the 4-item Student Interaction Items (Barnes, Agago, & Coombs, 1998) was used.
- The survey contained a battery of other measures for constructs such as job satisfaction, burnout, and social support.

Statistical Analysis

- In order to determine if there is an interaction effect between position and academic department (Independent Variables) on perception of students (Dependent Variable), a 3 (position description: Non-Tenure Track, Tenure Track, Tenured) x 9 (College: Humanities/Arts and Letters, Business, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Sciences, Other) Omnibus ANOVA was conducted.
- Furthermore, post hoc tests were conducted to parse out any differences.

Tables

Source	n	Mean	SE	95 % Confidence Interval	
				Min	Max
Humanities/Arts and Letters	313	13.07 _a	0.19	12.70	13.43
Business	86	12.57 _{abcd}	0.36	11.86	13.28
Education	124	11.96 _b	0.30	11.37	12.54
Engineering	109	12.51 _{ab}	0.32	11.89	13.14
Health Sciences	157	12.05 _{bc}	0.27	11.52	12.57
Social Sciences	215	13.26 _a	0.23	12.81	13.71
Life Sciences	90	13.10 _{ab}	0.35	12.41	13.79
Sciences	158	13.88 _a	0.27	13.36	14.40
Other	128	13.56 _d	0.30	12.98	14.14

Note: Means having the same subscript are not significantly different from each other according to Tukey's HSD.

Table 1. Means and significant post hoc effects for College.

Result

A frequency distribution revealed that one group (job status = "other": n = 88) was too small in comparison to the other three groups; as such, any subsequent analysis would be in question, so this group was removed from further analyses.

A 3 x 9 factorial ANOVA was conducted to determine if an interaction effect on professor's perceptions of student's college readiness exists. Results found no significant interaction effect, $F(16, 1353) = 0.63, p = .858$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$. However, both position, $F(2, 1377) = 13.41, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .019$ and college, $F(8, 1371) = 5.56, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .031$ significantly predicted scores on the SII.

Tukey's post hoc tests were then conducted for both position and college to determine where the differences lie. Results revealed that professors on the Non-Tenure track ($M = 12.14, SD = 3.31$) scored significantly lower than Tenure-Track professors ($M = 13.30, SD = 3.39, p < .001$) and Tenured professors ($M = 13.16, SD = 3.34, p < .001$). But Tenure-Track professors did not differ from Tenure professors ($p = .779$). Tukey's post hoc tests for college indicated a number of differences (see Table 1). It should be noted that the faculty from Education had the lowest mean score on the SII ($M = 11.96$), while the Sciences had the highest mean score ($M = 13.88$), and this difference was significant at the $p < .001$ level.

Discussion

While no significant interaction was found, the main effects still shed valuable light into how professors view their students. While not surprising, the difference between Non-Tenure Track professors and their tenure focused counterparts reveals that Non-Tenure Track professors are slightly less critical of incoming students.

Likewise, professors in the college of science have the most critical views of incoming students. Despite their focus on understanding individuals and their differences, professors in the social sciences also scored highly on the SII, indicating a critical view of incoming student's college readiness. Lastly, professors in the college of education scored lowest on the SII, indicating forgiving views of incoming freshman and their ability to perform well in classes.

Results from this study shed light on a demographic that has remained largely in the shadows when discussing college readiness: college faculty. The findings lay the groundwork for future studies that could dive further into research questions that this study has opened up.

Selected References

- Arnold, K. D., Lu, E. C., & Armstrong, K. J. (2012a). The Case for a Comprehensive Model of College Readiness. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 38(5), 1–10.
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- Contact info:** jball011@odu.edu; **Web:** <http://www.omegalab-padilla.org/>