

Abstract

Title – Hispanic First-Generation College Student Perceptions of University Support Programs

Program of Study – Education

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Abstract: The purpose of this case study was to understand the Hispanic first-generation student perspectives on provided support programs at universities across the United States. Only 54% of Hispanic students graduate from public universities within six years, and the rates are drastically lower at private for-profit schools. Additionally, for those Hispanic students who do graduate from college, the chances of continuing to graduate school are slim, with only ten percent of Hispanic students enrolling in graduate school, compared to 64% of white students. With statistics such as these, universities need to create useful and valuable support systems for Hispanic students that will lead to higher graduation rates and the encouragement to further their education. The central question of the study was: How valuable do Hispanic first-generation students see university-provided support programs to be? The self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017) guided the study. The study used a qualitative design, specifically, a single case study design, with multiple units of analysis. Journal prompts targeting open-ended questions, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups obtained the data. To analyze the data, manual coding and explanation building were utilized. The findings of the study revealed that Hispanic first-generation students are receiving most, if not all, of their supports from school organizations. The findings also revealed that a school's orientation is a crucial support that is currently failing. Recommendations for future research include taking a closer look into the experience of students from underserved populations who attend a college that incorporates a valuable orientation process.

Christian worldview integration: My research was built around the desire to understand inequities in the educational setting with the hopes that the imbalances will be addressed and corrected. My desire for each student to be supported while enduring the obstacles of life, as well as have the ability to achieve their goals comes from my Christianity. I have a heart for service and a strong belief that we all need to protect one another and care for each other, as we are all made in His image and deserve joy. Currently, there is an imbalance in the educational setting, ranging from the elementary school environment to the university-level. Certain groups of students are more likely to achieve academic success, which directly alters their life path and their opportunities. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” I live by these words and these words are reflected in my research, as it aims to create equity for underserved populations. I do not stand for injustice and I want my research to be impactful within the culture at large by providing essential information about which support programs at the university-level are most impactful and could best support underserved populations, resulting in increased retention and commencement rates. The research design I selected, a qualitative case study design, allowed me to have numerous conversations with the participants, which allowed me to better understand not only their academic journey, but their goals and the potential hurdles that may be in the way. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these,” and therefore, it is our responsibility, my responsibility, to conduct research and find solutions that will allow others to prosper.