ABSTRACT

A QUANTITATIVE CAUSAL PREDICTIVE RESEARCH: PREDICTION OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF ACADEMIC PERSISTENCE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN STUDENTS IN A LIVING-LEARNING COMMUNITY AT A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY IN TEXAS

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As leaders of institutions of higher learning seek to find innovative ways to improve the persistence, retention, progression, graduation rates, and academic success of their students, they begin to pursue various channels for students to become more engaged in their educational and social experiences. One such outlet is Living-Learning Communities (LLC). The graduation and persistence rates of students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)
are among the lowest in the nation. It is no secret that legislatures, students, and parents are demanding accountability from colleges and universities. HBCUs are not immune from this demand. In fact, because of their low retention and graduation rates, the mandate for higher academic accountability may be even more applicable to HBCUs than their tertiary institutional counterparts. State appropriations and corresponding cutbacks are looming in the background and will affect the academic success of colleges and universities—particularly HBCUs as in some cases state funding is tied to graduation and persistence rates. Thus, these institutions must be proactive in determining innovative ways to ensure that their students persist and achieve academically at high levels. To that end, some HBCUs have embraced the concept of and implemented Living-Learning Communities.

Throughout the nation, one of the most successful educational innovations being implemented, at a significant number of colleges and universities, is the creation of living-learning communities. A living-learning community is simply a group of students who choose to live together and learn together, who share a common interest, passion or major (Millikin University, n.d). Formally designed in the 1920s as a method to increase student engagement and retention, living-learning communities have expanded to include students of all majors in colleges and universities of all sizes. There is no doubt that, in most cases, the concept of LLCs would be a success if all students were high academic achievers. However, the researcher seeks to develop concise knowledge that will inform educational leaders of the ability of LLCs to assist in the persistence and academic achievement of a cohort of students who had various GPAs, test scores, and interests.

The purpose of this study is to determine if academic success can be predicted based on the relationship of academic persistence and academic achievement of first-time freshmen inside
and outside a living-learning community. With this in mind, the researcher seeks to investigate the concept of living-learning communities while controlling specific variables to an identified cohort of students at a HBCU in Texas. The independent variables in this study are LLC participation, ACT scores, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and ethnicity. The dependent variables are academic persistence and academic achievement (GPA).

Given the purpose of this quantitative causal predictive research study, the following research questions are proposed:

**RQ1:** Can first-time freshmen students’ academic achievement (GPA) be predicted from LLC participation, ACT scores, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and ethnicity?

**RQ2:** Can first-time freshmen students’ academic persistence be predicted from LLC participation, ACT scores, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and ethnicity?

The literature is lacking extensive quantitative analysis measures of the combination of living-learning communities and the academic success of first-time freshmen at HBCUs. Predicting the relationships of academic persistence and academic achievement (GPA) through LLC participation, ACT scores, gender, and ethnicity will contribute to the growing body of knowledge about living-learning communities. By using this study as an educational tool, the researcher will add a new element to the body of knowledge specifically relating to living-learning communities at HBCUs.

**Date:** May 31, 2015  
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