Students’ Well-being: Influences on Retention and Graduation

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Rothenberger Institute (RI)

Vision: to equip all college students—at the University of Minnesota and beyond—with knowledge and skills to live healthy* lives by providing evidence-informed, inclusive, and engaging online health and wellness curriculum.
RI Health & Wellness Courses

- Alcohol & College Life
- Financial Fitness*
- Sexuality Matters
- Sleep, Eat & Exercise
- Success Over Stress

Learn more @ www.ri.umn.edu
Presentation Outline

1. What is attrition, and what causes it?
2. What is institutional retention, and what factors contribute to student retention and graduation?
3. What does student well-being look like on the U of MN – TC campus? How is it measured? Does it matter?
4. Is enrollment in RI courses associated with students’ retention and graduation? Other positive outcomes?
5. What characteristics of RI courses potentially contribute to retention?
6. What does this mean for health promotion messages, strategies, services, and interventions on our campuses?
Students’ Retention and Graduation
What are some factors that influence students’ decisions to withdraw before graduation?
Causes of Early Attrition

Tinto, 1975
What is the average percentage of students who earn a baccalaureate degree in six years across the U.S.?
Student Retention Across the Nation

- Barely more than half of college entrants earn their four-year degrees within six years (59%)
- Students of color, first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds earn their degrees at significantly lower rates than their peers
- Student retention influenced by
  - Demographic background
  - Financial aid opportunities
  - Pre-college experiences
  - Attitudes, satisfaction, climate
  - Engagement and involvement
  - Social and family support
Why Do Retention and Graduation Rates Matter?

• Compared to their peers, college graduates are more likely to
  – Be employed
  – Earn higher incomes
  – Have health insurance and retirement plans
  – Be healthier overall (less likely to smoke, more likely to have a healthy diet, more likely to wear seat belts, less obese)
  – Vote, volunteer, and be civically engaged
  – Participate in school, community, service, civic, and religious organizations
  – Be happier and live longer
Why Do First-Year Students Withdraw from U of MN TC?

- Financial
- Personal
- Health and medical
- Wanted to be closer to home
- Not a good fit
- Could not get into first choice of major
- University is too big
U of MN TC Institutional Priorities

• Four-year graduation rate: 65% (currently at 63.3%)
• Six-year graduation rate: 82% (currently at 77.6%)
• Four-year graduation rate among Pell grant students: 54% (currently at 45.4%)

Given those goals, we were interested in discovering, among other things, whether enrollment in Rothenberger Institute courses was associated with students’ retention and success.
Well-being at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Campus Studies to Examine Student Outcomes

Boynton Health Services College Student Health Survey
- Administered since 1995
- Mental health
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Personal safety
- Sexual health
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Financial health
- Health insurance and health care utilization
Well-being at U of MN TC

Boynton Health Survey (2015):

- 32.7% report being diagnosed with at least one mental health concern within their lifetime, 15.2% within the last 12 months
- Anxiety (22%) and depression (21%) are the most frequently reported mental health conditions
- 22.6% of students report being diagnosed with two or more mental health conditions within their lifetime
- 12.6% of students report they are taking medication for a mental health condition
- 34.7% of students report being unable to manage their stress level

For more information: http://www.bhs.umn.edu/surveys/
Campus Studies to Examine Student Outcomes

Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey
  • Administered (almost yearly) since 2010
  • Census survey
  • Use of time
  • Academic engagement
  • Sense of belonging
  • Campus climate
Well-being at U of MN TC

Student Experience in the Research University Survey (2015):

- 44.1% of students reported that feeling depressed, stressed, or upset often to very often became an obstacle to their academic success
- 14.2% of students reported that physical illnesses or conditions often to very often became an obstacle to their academic success
- 67.5% of students report agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel like they belong on campus
Campus Studies to Examine Student Outcomes

Thriving Survey (first-year students only)

• students are fully engaged intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and are experiencing a sense of psychological well-being that contributes not only to their persistence to graduation, but also to success in life.
Well-being at U of MN TC
Thriving Survey (first-year students only, 2014)
Does Well-being Matter?
Well-being Matters!

Boynton Health Survey (2015):
There is an association between the number of stressors experienced in the last 12 months and various risk-taking behaviors.
Well-being Matters!

Thriving Survey (2014):

GPA

$r = .294, p < .001$
Well-being Matters!

Thriving Survey (2014):

I intend to re-enroll at this institution next year

- not even surviving: 3.00
- barely surviving: 4.74
- surviving: 5.03
- somewhat thriving: 5.29
- thriving most of the time: 5.57
- consistently thriving: 5.66
Well-being Matters!

Thriving Survey (2014):

One Year Retention

- not even surviving: 33.3%
- barely surviving: 74.4%
- surviving: 91.4%
- somewhat thriving: 96.4%
- thriving most of the time: 98.7%
- consistently thriving: 97.9%
Well-being Matters!

SERU (2015): Sense of belonging and GPA
Well-being Matters!

SERU (2015): Feeling depressed, stressed, or upset and GPA
Well-being Matters!

SERU (2015): Feeling depressed, stressed, or upset and sense of belonging
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC

SERU survey (2010, first-year students)
Do Campus Well-being Programs Affect Students’ Well-being and Retention?
Center for Spirituality & Healing

- Students in CSH classes have higher self-reported appreciation for other cultures.
- Students in CSH classes have higher self-reported growth in the SLOs of “can communicate effectively” and “have acquired skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning.”
- Students in CSH classes are more likely to believe that the University positively contributed to their career/academic wellbeing.

From 2014-15 SERU
Rothenberger Institute Courses

• Alcohol & College Life
• Financial Fitness*
• Sexuality Matters
• Sleep, Eat & Exercise
• Success Over Stress
Pre & Post Surveys, Spring 2014

- Administered by U’s Office of Measurement Services
- Students authenticated with x500
- Response rates:
  - ACL: 39 of 107 = 36%
  - SOS: 177 of 444 = 40%
  - SM: 93 of 224 = 42%
  - SEE: 173 of 403 = 43%
Significant increases in:

- Knowledge
- Awareness of campus resources
- Self-awareness of values & behaviors
- Confidence
Motivation & Behavior

- 97% agreed the course motivated them to be healthy
- 95% agreed the course helped them improve health-related behaviors
Alcohol & College Life

- 95% reported being confident in their ability to use alcohol safely and responsibly
  - Increased use of protective behaviors, such as:
    - Keep track of how many drinks you’re having
    - Have a friend let you know when you have had enough to drink
    - Drink slowly rather than gulping or chugging
    - Alternate non-alcoholic with alcoholic beverages
    - Stick with only one kind of alcohol when drinking
    - Avoid shots of liquor
    - Avoid drinking games
    - Avoid trying to “keep up with” or “out-drink” others
    - Determine in advance not to exceed a set number of drinks
    - Stop drinking at a predetermined time
    - Pace your drinks to 1 or fewer per hour
ACL, cont.

• Decrease in negative consequences, such as:
  – doing something they later regretted
  – passing out
  – experiencing memory loss
  – having a hangover

• More likely to:
  – call 911 if someone is passed out from too much alcohol or other drug use
  – talk to someone about their concerns regarding the other person’s alcohol or other drug use
  – intervene if they notice someone being taken advantage of sexually
  – seek help from a professional if they think they may have a substance abuse problem
ACL, cont.

• 90% reported being confident in their ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships
• 93% reported being confident in their ability to be successful academically
Sexuality Matters

• 94% reported being confident in their ability to make sexual decisions that align with their values, desires, and boundaries

• 91% reported being confident in their ability to communicate values, desires, or boundaries about sex with sexual partners

• 92% reported being confident in their ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships
SM, cont.

• Increased confidence in ability to intervene in a situation where:
  – someone is being taken advantage of sexually
  – there is verbal mistreatment/harassment based on gender identity or sexual orientation

• Increase in number of students who agreed with the statement, “I am respectful of others’ values and beliefs, even if they are different from my own.”

• Increased use of contraceptives and condoms/dental dams
Sleep, Eat & Exercise

• 95% reported improvement in their physical activity
• 96% reported improvement in their sleep behaviors
• 97% reported improvement in their nutrition
• 96% reported improvement in their time management
Success Over Stress

• 85% reported improvement in their ability to prevent stress
• 87% reported improvement in their ability to manage their stress
• Increased likelihood of using healthy coping mechanisms, such as:
  – Trying to change perception of situation
  – Trying to change the situation
  – Talking to someone
  – Asking for help
SOS, cont.

- 89% increase in awareness of personal coping styles
- Increase in number of students who:
  - would be likely to seek help from a mental health professional if having a problem that is really bothering them
  - agreed with the statement, “I am respectful of others’ values and beliefs, even if they are different from my own.”
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC

• Taking a RI course in the first-year matters:
  – Students are significantly more likely to be retained from first-year to second-year (among 2009-2010 and 2011-2012 cohorts)

• Taking a RI course matters—even beyond the first year:
  – Students are significantly more likely to graduate or remain enrolled in four-years
Key Characteristics of RI Courses

- Enhance student well-being
- Address attitudes and behaviors -- not just knowledge
- Apply behavior change theory
- Implement experiential learning
- Encourage self-reflection and values clarification
- Increase awareness of relevant campus resources & offer direct referral as appropriate
- Provide peer education and support
  - Safe space for honest reflection & disclosure
- Promote engagement
- Send message that the U cares about students, their well-being & their success
RI: Student Satisfaction

• 95% agreed they would recommend the course to others
• Over 5-year period, 28% of students who took one RI course took at least one more
• One-credit, online
• Relevant, inclusive, non-judgmental
• “I really liked how this class wasn’t a course that was determined on changing me, but rather a course that made me want to change myself.” (ACL Student, 2010)
• “This course played a very important part in the evolution of myself. This course forced me to address my values, and realign my actions to match those values…” (ACL Student, 2014)
• “It was eye opening...It definitely changed some of my behaviors towards alcohol and my college life (in a good way).” (ACL Student, 2012)
• “...It actually helped me improve myself, not just grow my intelligence.” (SOS Student, 2015)
• “This course is personalized for the life of a college student. Everything I learned in this class is applicable to my life and enhanced my well being.” (SEE Student, 2011)
• “By offering this class, the university is investing in students’ health and ultimately helps them succeed. I am a better, more capable person as a result of enrolling in this course and participating.” (SOS Student, 2014)
Questions?
Thank you!
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC
Rothenberger Institute Courses

- Students who enrolled in an RI course as a first-year student during the 2009-2010 academic year
- Propensity score matching on 604 first-year students
- Propensity score matching on 1,422 of the 5,400 took a class at some point
- Sex (more likely to be female)
- Race/ethnicity (more likely to be White)
- College of enrollment (more likely to be from CLA)
- Pell grant status (slightly more likely to be Pell recipients)
- First-generation (more likely to be first-gen)
- Greek life (more likely to be in Greek life)
- Residence on campus (more likely to live on campus)
- ACT score (more likely to have a higher ACT score)
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC
Rothenberger Institute Courses

• Results of logistic regression (controlling for propensity scores):
  – First-year students who registered for a Rothenberger Institute course were 1.77 times more likely to be retained from their first year to their second year
  – No significant effects for 4-year or 6-year graduation among those who only took a class in their first year
  – On the full sample, however, there were significant effects for 4-year graduation and enrollment (1.96x more likely to graduate, 1.76x more likely to remain enrolled) but not on 6-year graduation
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC

Rothenberger Institute Courses

• Students who enrolled in an RI course as a first-year student during the 2011-2012 academic year
• Propensity score matching on 489 first-year students
• Propensity score matching on 1,388 of the 5,368 took a class at some point
  • Sex (more likely to be female)
  • Race/ethnicity (more likely to be White)
  • College of enrollment (more likely to be from CLA)
  • Pell grant status (slightly more likely to be Pell recipients)
  • First-generation (more likely to be first-gen)
  • Greek life (more likely to be in Greek life)
  • Residence on campus (more likely to live on campus)
  • ACT score (more likely to have a higher ACT score)
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC

Rothenberger Institute Courses

• Results of logistic regression (controlling for propensity scores):
  – First-year students who registered for a Rothenberger Institute course were 1.25 times more likely to be retained from their first year to their second year
  – No significant effects for 4-year graduation or enrollment
  – On the full sample, however, there were significant and positive effects for 4-year graduation (1.821x) and 4-year enrollment (2.152x)
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at U of MN TC

Rothenberger Institute Courses

- Enrollment in a course during first year of study in the 2014-2015 academic year
- Propensity score matching on 133 first-year students
  - Sex
  - Age
  - Race/ethnicity
  - College of enrollment
  - Pell grant, Trio, or President’s Emerging Scholars program
  - Athlete, honors, freshman seminar
  - Lived in dorms
  - ACT score
Well-being, Retention, and Graduation at the U of MN

Rothenberger Institute Courses

• Results of logistic regression (controlling for propensity scores):
  – First-year students who registered for a Rothenberger Institute course were 2.46 times more likely to be retained from their first year to their second year