

# DISSERTATIONS IN BRIEF

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS BY WKU EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DOCTORAL PROGRAM GRADUATES

### **TYPE OF SCHOOL AND PARENTAL AWARENESS OF THE CLERY AND MINGER ACTS WHEN SELECTING A COLLEGE IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY**

**BY STEVEN R. BRIGGS**

Chair: Aaron Hughey

Committee: Monika Burke, Fred Gibbson, Karl Laves

Defense Date: April 15, 2014

College and university campuses are being scrutinized more stringently in regard to the issue of campus safety. While media reports and advocacy groups may suggest to parents that college campuses are becoming more dangerous, research continues to demonstrate that colleges are a relatively safe environment. A problem exists that, although the Clery Act and the Minger Act in the Commonwealth of Kentucky require colleges and universities to report campus crime rates in order that parents and students can make an informed decision on selecting a college based on campus safety, few parents tend to be familiar with this resource. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of campus safety for parents of three types of high school students in the Commonwealth of Kentucky as they assist their students in the college selection process. A key component to this research study was the parental awareness of the Clery Act and the Minger Act. The research design of this non-experimental study consisted of collecting the responses of 678 parents of three high school types (public high school, private high school, and home school). Literature on home schooling parents, in particular indicated that aspects for choosing this environment were related to safety. The instrument for this study, the Parental College Decision Inventory (PCDI), was created by the researcher. Frequency distribution analyses, as well as simple t-test procedures, were conducted in an effort to determine levels of awareness as well as importance of campus safety. Analyses indicated that a statistical significance existed for the level of awareness for the Clery Act for parents of private school environments. All types of parents indicated that the importance of campus safety was the top of ten factors when assisting their child in selecting a college or university to attend;

however, a vast majority of the parents lacked awareness of the Clery Act and the Minger Act. Recommendations for future research focused on the techniques utilized by colleges and universities in creating an environment designed to partner with prospective parents would contribute to the current body of literature on parental influence and campus safety.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP OF POST SECONDARY OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN KENTUCKY SCHOOLS**

**BY STEPHANIE DAWN CORNWELL**

Chair: Janet Applin

Committee: Nedra Atwell, Gail Kirby

Defense Date: October 28, 2014

In order to compare the postsecondary success rates of students with disabilities in rural areas to those in urban areas in Kentucky, data were accessed from the Kentucky Postsecondary Outcome Study, a longitudinal study created to monitor the employment and education status of students with disabilities during their final year of high school and one year after exiting high school. U.S. Census data were also utilized to determine various demographic information and rural or urban classification of selected areas. Results show that the geographic classification as rural and suburban has a strong relationship with the postsecondary outcome for students with disabilities in Kentucky. Those from urban classification areas were more likely to enroll in postsecondary training or school than students from rural and suburban classification areas.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF URBAN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS TRANSITIONING FROM TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTION TO BLENDED LEARNING**

**BY MICHAEL WAYNE HAMILTON**

Chair: Ric Keastor

Committee: Margarete Maxwell, Gary Houchens, Tony Kirchner

Defense Date: August 28, 2014

Increasing demands for technology integration at the K-12 level have led school districts to explore blended learning as an option for sustaining productive instructional strategies while increasing technology integration in the classroom. Furthermore, Disruptive Innovation Theory (Christensen, 1997) offers insights as to the potential impact of blended learning on the field of education. This phenomenological study attempted to capture the lived experiences of urban high school teachers who were transitioning to a blended learning instructional strategy. In addition, this study utilized the Stages of Concern (SoC) component of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) to isolate the phenomenon and provide additional insights regarding the implementation strategy used by the district. Ten participants responded to 12 questions in a virtual focus group. A content analysis of the collected data was conducted to address the SoC, as well as provide information regarding teacher perceptions of the implementation process. Phenomenological analysis was conducted using the modified Stevicki-Coloizzi-Keen Method (Creswell, 2013); and a textural narrative, structural narrative, and a narrative explaining the essence of the phenomenon were included in the results. The findings include concerns about student access and a need for blended learning examples. Recommendations include a need for increased support regarding student access and targeting specific training needs for teachers. Conclusions indicate that consideration of the needs of teachers while constructing implementation plans can be beneficial. Future research should explore concerns of students, facilitators, and administrators regarding blended learning.

## **TOWARD A MORE PERFECT DEFINITION OF LEARNING**

**BY SAMUEL J. HUNT**

Chair: Barbara Burch

Committee: Jie Zhang, Cheryl Davis

Defense Date: June 25, 2014

This study seeks to establish groundwork for a new definition of learning based on neurogenesis capable of guiding future educational policy and practice. The purpose of the research was to: (1) produce separate increases in neurogenesis and intelligence, (2) measure the changes in neurogenesis using protein biomarkers, and (3) correlate increases in levels of the protein biomarkers with increases in intelligence. The study employed a randomized pretest-posttest, control/comparison group research design. Thirty-eight fourth- and fifth-grade students with diverse academic needs were divided into three experimental groups: chess, exercise, and combined; with an additional control group. Pre-post measures included intelligence (RSPM) and two serum proteins (BDNF) and (VEGF). Multiple one-way ANOVAs between the groups with post-hoc Bonferroni pairwise correction discovered significant differences on post-IQ scores (1) between chess and control; (2) between those groups that received chess treatment and those that did not; and (3) between those groups that received chess and/or exercise treatment versus control. Paired sample t-tests found the exercise group and the combined group significantly increased BDNF pre-post. A Pearson Product Moment correlation revealed that the control group had the only significant post-test correlation between RSPM and BDNF ( $p = .049$ ). Chess and exercise treatment led to increases in intelligence and biomarker levels associated with neurogenesis, as evidenced by increased RSPM and BDNF measures. The results of this research suggest that a novel process whereby protein biomarkers such as BDNF and VEGF may be useful as a potential measure of neurogenesis in young children. This research successfully produced increases in protein biomarkers in an attempt to correlate neurogenesis to intelligence in human subjects. Exercise treatment initiated increases in protein biomarkers, while chess treatment increased intelligence. Both chess and exercise treatment may be beneficial to increase efficiency of neural networks associated with intelligence in a school-age population.

## **THE MINORITY ASSISTANTSHIP PROGRAM (MAP): GRADUATE OUTCOMES AND IMPACT**

**BY LAUREN MARTIN**

Chair: Antony D. Norman

Committee: Robert Reber, Loretta Dye

Defense Date: March 27, 2014

This study examined the impact of the Minority Assistantship Program on program participants at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in southcentral Kentucky. A total of 103 MAP participants, 524 African American (AA) Non-MAP students, and a random sample of 103 Non-AA Graduate Assistants were studied. The main research question sought to determine any significant differences in the characteristics of the MAP participants compared to Non-MAP AA students and Non-AA Graduate Assistants. A focus group also was used to gain deeper insight into the experiences of the AA MAP program participants. Data collected on the three groups revealed that MAP students were retained and graduated at significantly higher rates than both Non-MAP AA students and Non-AA Graduate Assistants. No significant differences were found in the GPA and Time to Graduation (TTG) between MAP and the comparison groups. Focus group questions were developed to provide insight into how current students benefit from the MAP program. Five current MAP program students participated. Content analysis of focus group answers yielded the following four themes: Program Awareness, Program Benefits, Program Components, and Program Resources. Implications and recommendations for the MAP program and similar programs were made based on the results from this study.

## **LIBRARY THE EFFECT OF STRESS AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT ON JOB SATISFACTION: A COMPARISON BETWEEN U.S. BORN AND FOREIGN BORN FACULTY**

**BY LISA OWEN**

Chair: Randy Capps

Committee: Cecile Garmon, Qin Zhao

Defense Date: October 24, 2014

Research indicates that academic work-stress is a significant and growing problem for faculty members. General work-stress

studies suggest that social support may buffer the negative impact of stress on faculty job satisfaction. To date, little research has been conducted in this area. Even fewer studies have examined the potential differences between U.S.-born and foreign-born faculty members regarding these variables. This quantitative, non-experimental multivariate study utilized a survey to assess academic stressors, perceived departmental social support, and job satisfaction at a large U.S. university. The surveyed institution consisted of 807 full-time faculty members. The three-week survey yielded a response rate of 35%, with 227 U.S.-born faculty and 55 foreign-born faculty participating in the fall semester of 2014. Results indicated that perceived departmental social support moderates the effect of stress on job satisfaction for U.S.-born faculty members, but not for foreign-born faculty members. Further research is needed to more fully examine the differences found in this study.

## **PASSPORT, GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP, AND BLACK STUDENT: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY UNCOVERING THE DISPOSITION OF UNDERGRADUATE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS REGARDING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP**

**BY JENAYA LEVON PERDUE**

Chair: Aaron Hughey

Committee: Sandra Ardrey, Blair Thomson

Defense Date: April 30, 2014

Global citizenship is an elusive concept that spans a multitude of disciplines and is coming to the forefront of conversations at institutions of higher learning, as colleges and universities grapple with training and shaping their student body into scholars useful and sensitive to the needs of our society and world in the 21st century. Morais and Ogden (2011) captured the essence of global citizenship in three tenets, which are social responsibility, global competence, and global civic engagement. Using the three tenets of Morais and Ogden (2009), as well as a definition developed based on research, this researcher sought to discover the dispositions of African American undergraduate students regarding global citizenship and how, if at all, this student population connects to the world at large. An exploratory research initiative, this researcher utilized qualitative methodology under the interpretive paradigm to charter new territory in this vein. Interviewing 15 undergraduate students who self-identified as African American or Black, six themes were uncovered through the constant comparative method of

analyzing data. Themes “Interconnectivity,” “Levels of Interest and Knowledge,” “Transforming the Black Image,” “Ripple Effect,” “Self and Others,” and “Connecting to Others,” helped to shed light on why participation and interest in global learning and global affairs is at such a low within this community of learners. This study and its findings are useful for multiple stakeholders within colleges and universities including administration, faculty, student services, international or global education practitioners, and formal and informal mentors to Black students. Although focused on Black students, the findings supersede boundaries of color and are helpful to those who have a passion for opening the eyes of any young scholar. At the conclusion of the study, suggestions are made on how to implement these findings into a university’s internationalization plan in order to expand the vision of creating the globally-minded and passionate scholar and graduate.

### **TRENDS SHAPING SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**BY NATHAN PHELPS**

Chair: Barbara Burch

*Committee:* Ric Keaster, Douglas McElroy

Defense Date: May 9, 2014

The world is changing quickly and in complex ways, and this study addresses some of the key implications of these changes for higher education leaders today. Many leaders are facing the difficult task of determining which developments in the larger society are most important and what they may mean for their institutions and for higher education as a whole. This study presents a broad analysis of trends shaping society, highlights patterns within these trends that are important, and offers a framework based on these patterns that leaders might use to help them clarify and evaluate the implications of these changes. The purpose of this project is to help higher education leaders identify germane insights for understanding and planning for the future.

### **PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: A STUDY OF SELF-THEORIES OF INTELLIGENCE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT WEB 2.0**

**BY LEE ANN SMITH**

Chair: Martha Day

*Committee:* Janet Applin, Jie Zhang

Defense Date: October 8, 2014

This study examined the relationship of pre-service teachers’ self-theories of intelligence (mindset) and their attitudes about Web 2.0. The research questions evaluate: (a) Whether a significant correlation exists between pre-service teachers’ mindsets and attitudes about Web 2.0 (social media), and (b) Whether significant differences exist between demographic groups (e.g., age, certification area, gender) and their attitudes about Web 2.0 (social media). Results of the study indicate that a weak correlation between pre-service teachers’ perceived mindsets and perceived attitudes about Web 2.0 was statistically significant. In addition, significant differences were found based upon certification area, gender, and age with the sample’s attitudes about Web 2.0 tools. Future research might include the manipulation of pre-service teachers’ mindsets to measure the affect on their attitudes toward Web 2.0. Analysis of pre-service teachers’ mindsets and attitudes about Web 2.0 on a more comprehensive scale (state or national), as opposed to regional, will provide greater insights into the affect of mindsets on attitudes about Web 2.0, particularly within specific demographics due to increasing the sample size. One possible outcome of this study is that pre-service teacher programs might better prepare their graduates to utilize Web 2.0 technologies by manipulating preservice teachers’ fixed mindsets toward growth mindsets. Ultimately, students will benefit, as utilizing Web 2.0 skills is a necessity for the 21st century (Wagner, 2008).

