

# DISSERTATIONS IN BRIEF

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS BY WKU EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DOCTORAL PROGRAM GRADUATES

### FIRST YEAR BACCALAUREATE NURSING PROGRAM OUTCOMES: EFFECTS OF PREREQUISITE COURSES AND PREADMISSION TESTING

BY SONYA HOUSE

Chair: Stephen K. Miller

Committee: Kyong Hee Chon, Aaron W. Hughey, Beverly Siegrist

Defense Date: January 24, 2013

Schools of Nursing are faced with the difficult task of selecting students for admission into nursing programs. This responsibility is challenging as the number of students applying to programs typically outweighs the number of students who can be admitted. As a result, faculty must identify methods for selecting students who have the greatest likelihood of being successful. As noted in the literature, attrition that occurs as the result of being academically underprepared is found in the beginning of nursing programs (Murray, Merriman, & Adamson, 2008). The central research question represents the purpose of the study: To what extent do prerequisite grades and HESI A2 subscores predict success in the first year of a baccalaureate nursing program?

This study utilized quantitative analysis to explore the relationship of different combinations of prerequisite coursework (prerequisite science and math courses, science block, cumulative undergraduate work) and HESI A2 subscores (Reading Comprehension, Anatomy and Physiology, and Math) on the four dependent variables (1st semester nursing GPA, 2nd semester nursing GPA, grade in Nursing 324--Pathophysiology, and grade in Nursing 341--Medical Surgical Nursing I). All data were preexisting and gathered from electronic records of a BSN program at a regional university in south central Kentucky and the program's online Evolve account.

Population parameters were calculated for all variables, independent and dependent alike. Simultaneous and hierarchical regressions were used to explore each research question. The results of the study indicate the greatest amount of explained variance for the 1st semester nursing GPA, 2nd semester nursing

GPA, and the grade earned in Nursing 324, with Adjusted R2 values of .34, .30, and .24, respectively, was the combination of cumulative undergraduate work (CUGW) and HESI A2 subscores. The predictor with the greatest explained variance for the final outcome, Nursing 341, was the CUGW alone with an Adjusted R2 of .18. The study also found that a one credit hour Microbiology lab was significant with each of the four outcomes variables. These findings indicate that programs of nursing should use both cumulative undergraduate GPA at time of application and preadmission test scores when making admission decisions.

### A CASE STUDY ON PHARMACY TO EXPLORE THE PERCEPTIONS OF PHARMACY LEADERS AND POLICY MAKERS ON THE BENEFITS, RISKS, AND ALTERNATIVES OF THE DOCTORATE AS THE ENTRY LEVEL DEGREE IN HEALTH PROFESSIONS

BY HEIDI CROCKER

Chair: Stephan K. Miller

Committee: Beverly Siegrist, Grace Lartey, Judy Davison

Defense Date: April 01, 2013

The clinical doctorate is an emergent trend in many health profession disciplines. Collier (2008) projects continued momentum toward higher degrees for entry into practice and advancing the field in health professions. There has been minimal research on how the trend of doctoral education in health professions will affect health professions education, delivery of services, and interdisciplinary relationship among health care providers, or the wider society (Freburger, King, & Slifkin, 2008). This research focused on the transition to the clinical doctorate in one profession, Pharmacy, retrospectively examining the inception and enactment phase of the Pharm.D. The study provides important insight into the perceptions of the leaders and policy makers who were involved in the changes that led to the Doctor of Pharmacy as the entry-level

degree for the practice of pharmacy. The qualitative methods of data collection, primarily 14 high-quality interviews, allowed the researcher to search for commonalities and patterns related to this policy mandate: development and implementation phases in both the educational institutions and the practice of pharmacy. The findings from this research provide evidence that these leaders are confident that establishing the Pharm.D. as the sole entry into pharmacy practice was the right decision for the profession, but acknowledge that requiring the Pharm.D. was only the starting block, that more work remains to maximize the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the Doctor of Pharmacy in the U.S. healthcare delivery system. The discovery of 18 patterns and 71 attendant themes documented the implementation of the Pharm.D., with major changes at four levels: health professions education, delivery of services, interdisciplinary relationships, and society as a whole. Decisions at each level acted as building blocks for modifications at the next level, but in a non-linear fashion. Changes that resulted at each step necessitated constant reflection and on-going improvements, but the profession continues to move forward. Recommendations derived from this empirical investigation provide extensive guidance to leaders in other healthcare disciplines who are contemplating the clinical doctorate as the entry-level degree into practice. Many of the anticipated outcomes at the time of the mandate were inaccurate, and numerous findings were unanticipated.

### **THE EFFECT OF MOTIVATION ON STUDENT SUCCESS IN A FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COURSE**

**BY KIMBERLY CUNNINGHAM**

Chair: Tuesdi Helbig

Committee: Linda Gonzales, James McCaslin, Tony Norman

Defense Date: March 5, 2013

Research on factors involved in freshman retention suggested that conditionally-admitted college students who failed to pass a less academically challenging course, such as freshman orientation, tended to have significantly lower rates of college persistence, and also suggested that failure of such courses may be attributed to motivation factors rather than academic ability. This study examined the relationship between motivation and academic success of conditionally-admitted college freshmen in a first-year experience course to determine whether motivation played a significant role in student achievement in this course.

The population of this study consisted of 309 conditionally-admitted students at a comprehensive university located in the Midwestern United States. Motivation was assessed using a segment of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) comprised of the following five motivation subscales: intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, task value, control of learning beliefs, and self-efficacy for learning. Students enrolled in the first-year experience course were administered the MSLQ during the second week of the fall 2012 semester. Correlation analyses were performed to determine the relationship between motivation subscale scores and academic success, as measured by final grade in the course. Multiple regression analyses were used to determine how the motivation subscales were related to academic success, controlling for certain demographic and pre-college variables. Because some students were absent from class on the day of the MSLQ administration, chi-square analyses of independence and a t-test were performed to determine whether a difference was found in final grade, demographic, and pre-college characteristics for students who took the MSLQ versus those who did not.

The analyses revealed only slight support for the assertion that motivation is related to success in the university experience course. However, evaluating the motivation subscale scores controlling for demographic and pre-college variables yielded a significant, but weak, relationship with first-year seminar final grade. Given the unfortunate selection bias of the study, it still suggests that the motivational assessment could be used as a tool to predict performance in first-year experience courses, and interventions could be designed to increase success for conditionally-admitted students.

### **AN EXAMINATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BEHAVIORS AMONG MEMBERS OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES**

**BY GARY WISER**

Chair: Aaron Hughey

Committee: Monika Burke, Ashley Chance Fox, Karl Laves

Defense Date: February 6, 2012

The integration of civic engagement learning outcomes into institutional missions has been a core focus of college and

university presidents since the beginning of the 21st century. Civic engagement is a core value of fraternities and sororities. However, social organizations sponsor more philanthropic-based projects, whereas cultural organizations promote more hands-on community service projects with a social justice focus. The purpose of this study was to analyze the differences in civic engagement behaviors among members of social and cultural fraternities and sororities. The central research question for this study was: Are there significant differences as measured by the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) in civic engagement knowledge, skills, and dispositions among members of social versus cultural fraternities and sororities?

The design for this research was a non-experimental quantitative study based on ex post facto or casual-comparative research. The population for this study consisted of 12,857 participants of the 2009 administration of the MSL who identified as a member of either a social or cultural fraternity or sorority. The scales used for this study were the SRLS Citizenship Scale, Social Change Behaviors Scale, and the Socio-Cultural Discussions Scale. A two-way ANOVA was performed to determine if there were significant differences in mean scores for the three scales based on gender, membership, and the interaction of the variables. Post hoc testing was also conducted to determine effect size of the mean scores and simple effects of the interaction of gender and membership.

The data analysis procedures revealed significant differences in gender and membership type main effects or gender X membership type interaction effects for each question in the SRLS Citizenship Scale, Social Change Behaviors Scale, and the Socio-Cultural Discussions Scale. However, post-hoc testing indicated that gender and membership type were not strong enough predictors of civic engagement behaviors. Additional research should be conducted to determine additional factors that predict civic engagement behaviors among members of social and cultural fraternities and sororities.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF KENTUCKY SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ABOUT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: A COMPARISON OF SCHOOLS WITH AND WITHOUT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**BY ANDY MOORE**

Chair: David Coffey

Committee: Linda Gonzales, Terry Wilson

Defense Date: April 1, 2013

Countless research suggests that secondary agricultural education programs could benefit all students regardless of school characteristics and geographic location, yet many secondary schools have yet to include agricultural education as part of their curricular offerings. In response, numerous studies have been conducted in recent years throughout the United States regarding how secondary agricultural education programs are perceived by school leaders. For the first time, this study sought to shed light on how secondary principals in Kentucky perceived agricultural education programs. Considered in this study, were how secondary principals with agricultural education in their schools perceived those programs differently than secondary principals without agricultural education in their schools. Secondary principals in Kentucky were selected to participate in this study based on the population of Kentucky counties that had at least one secondary school with agricultural education and at least one secondary school without agricultural education (N = 95). This quantitative descriptive study measured how participants perceived secondary agricultural education programs by utilizing a survey with Likert-type and demographic questions. Four constructs guided the survey items to measure how secondary principals perceived agricultural education based upon overall program success, the courses offered in agricultural education programs, the quality of agriculture teachers, and personal familiarity with the FFA. Results indicated that secondary principals with agricultural education in their schools have significantly higher perceptions of such programs than do secondary principals without agricultural education in their schools. Furthermore, results revealed that all constructs included in this study have predictive variables of one's overall perception of secondary agricultural education programs. Additional research is necessary to further examine how secondary principals nationwide perceive agricultural education programs and to what extent their perceptions are valued regarding decision making for program implementation.

**BY TAMELA SMITH**

Defense Date: April, 2013

Videoconferencing technologies are being increasingly utilized in today's business and educational environments. However, implementation rates continue to be lower than projected, and user perceptions on the level of collaborative environment provided by videoconferencing rooms vary widely, depending on room design. This study found that, while few videoconferencing professional characteristics impact the level of collaborative environment designed for end-users, the perceived closeness levels provided to end-users significantly impacted their perceptions on the technology. The study also found that videoconferencing professionals' views and end-users' views on the level of collaboration within videoconferencing environments vary significantly. By shifting the design of videoconferencing rooms from a technology-centric view to a more collaborative-centric view, end-user satisfaction improves. For business and educational applications, improved levels of collaboration will result in more productive and meaningful communications.

