Inves8gate whether academic mo8va8on influenced the perceived enhanced abilities of first-year students living in the same residential college within and across time. The primary finding was that academic motivation of first-year college students who lived in a residential college was significantly related to perceived enhanced abilities. As indicated in previous research, the major implication is that living-learning programs might be better designed if they extended beyond the first semester of the freshman year.

### Abstract

As part of a larger project, the purpose of the current study was to investigate whether academic motivation influenced the perceived enhanced abilities of first-year students living in the same residential college within and across time. The primary finding was that academic motivation of first-year college students who lived in a residential college was significantly related to perceived enhanced abilities. As indicated in previous research, the major implication is that living-learning programs might be better designed if they extended beyond the first semester of the freshman year.

### Purpose

Investigate whether academic motivation influenced the perceived enhanced abilities of first-year students living in the same residential college within and across time.

### Method

At the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year, the ARC cohort was 113 students. On the first day of class, students completed a pre-survey that included an assessment of their academic motivation. Ninety-eight percent of the ARC students completed the pre-survey. During the last class period of their fall course, students completed a similar survey. Seventy-three percent of the ARC students completed post-survey1. At the end of the second semester, 60 percent of ARC students completed another similar survey, post-survey2, which also included an assessment of their “perceived enhanced abilities.”

Academic motivation was measured by an adapted version of Vallerand et al.’s (1992) Academic Motivation Scale, with a 16-item assessment. Perceived enhanced abilities was measured by adapted versions of other similar assessments and included abilities specific to the student learning outcomes of ARC with a 15-item assessment. Four variables were computed by summing the scores of all items of each assessment from each wave of data collection. Following frequency analyses, Pearson Product Moment correlational and ordinary least squares regression analyses were conducted.

### Findings

The mean and standard deviation of students’ academic motivation from the pre-survey (August) were 68.41 and 8.66. The mean and standard deviation of students’ academic motivation from the post-survey1 (December) were 70.85 and 9.37. The mean and standard deviation of students’ academic motivation from the post-survey2 (May) were 72.45 and 10.04. The mean and standard deviation of students’ perceived enhanced abilities from post-survey2 were 57.32 and 14.61.

Correlations between academic motivation and perceived enhanced abilities were significant statistically. More specifically, the correlation between academic motivation at the beginning of the academic year and perceived enhanced abilities at the end of the academic year was .326 (p<.01). The correlation between academic motivation at the end of the first semester of the first academic year and perceived enhanced abilities at the end of the academic year was .469 (p<.01). The correlation between academic motivation at the end of the first academic year and perceived enhanced abilities at the end of the academic year was .559 (p<.01).

The results of the regression analyses were also significant statistically. Ten percent of the variance in perceived enhanced abilities was explained by students’ initial academic motivation with a t-test of 2.73 (p<.01). Twenty percent of the variance in perceived enhanced abilities was explained by students’ mid-year academic motivation with a t-test of 3.86 (p<.01). Thirty-one percent of the variance in perceived enhanced abilities was explained by students’ end of the year academic motivation with a t-test of 5.30 (p<.01).

### Discussion and Conclusions

Students’ academic motivation influenced their perceived enhanced abilities both within and across time. A major implication is strategies and programs that increase academic motivation might also enhance their perceived abilities. As we have indicated elsewhere, practitioners might design living-learning programs that extend beyond the first semester of the freshman year.

Results should be interpreted with caution. First, the data only included students from one academic year. Second, although all of the living-learning students lived on the same wing of the residence hall, the hall that housed the living-learning program students was shared with non-living-learning program students. Third, students with lower motivation might have opted out of the residential college program or did not regularly attend class during the spring semester.

Future research should include more years of data with more cohort and control groups. Are agriculture students similar to students from other majors in their perception of the role of their living-learning community on their own academic motivation and enhanced abilities? And finally, do differences exist in student assessment of the role of their living-learning community as a source of their academic motivation and enhanced abilities? Future research should also continue to investigate the relationships across time among academic motivation, perceived abilities and academic achievement, including persistence, particularly within learning-living communities.

### Reference


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