SYE programs and academic development: Developing an assessment for program evaluation

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- Development of SYE theory and programs
- History and development of SYE program at research site
- Theoretical background of study
- Research design
- Analysis of data
- Findings
- Implications for future research and practice

Introduction

- Developed and coordinated Emory University's SYE program from 2005-2008
- Initiated several assessments of SYE program as part of divisional assessment team
- Pursued a doctorate with research focusing on second-year student development
- This study was developed as my dissertation from 2009-2011

A little bit about me...

- A majority of educational research has been focused on students' transition into and out of college

- Many student development theories (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, Schlossberg et al, 1995) offered insight into student's development between these two transitions

- Studies have found differences in student development across college classes (Casanova, 2008) as well as first-year students and the rest of the college population (Jones & Watt, 2001).

Second-Year Student Development Theory

- Lemons & Richmond (1987) one of the first to introduce the "sophomore slump" in the literature
- Sottile et al (1997) compared the experience of first and second-year students
- Schaller (2005) developed a grounded-theory qualitative study of sophomore student development
- Gansemer-Topf et al (2007) produced a similar study at a small, private, liberal arts college
- Juillerat's (2000) research on student satisfaction had several implications for second-year student populations

Second-Year Student Development Theory

	Friendships	Self	Academics
Stage 1 Random Exploration	Accepts friendships as they come, may be very unhealthy	Wanders through life choices, not sure of what to believe	Has not yet considered academic/major choice
Stage 2 Focus Exploration	Is disenchanted with friendships, frustrated with options	Recognizes problems within self, bothered but not clear what to do	Looking for major or career idea that might fit with self
Stage 3 Tentative Choices	Decides to keep some relationships and leave others	Begins to make statements about beliefs, desires, describes self	Found major or career, but still not clear how it will "work out"
Stage 4 Commitment	Makes healthy choices, "college buddies"	Firm in description of self, knows what wants	Sees how future will unfold, committed to career

Schaller's (2005) Sophomore Development Model

- While SYE programs are fairly new phenomena, there have been several interventions targeting second-year students over the years
  - University of Texas was producing SYE seminars in the 1980s
  - College of William & Mary had a sophomore programming board in the 1980s

Second-Year Experience Programs

- The NRC cites over 80 different institutional SYE initiatives today
- Some of the early leaders include Colgate University, the University of South Carolina, Beloit College, and Colorado College
- Tobolowsky and Cox (2007) found that only 29.5% of sophomore initiatives assessed those initiatives

Second-Year Experience Programs

Initiative	Number	Percentage
Career planning	89	74.2
Programs to assist with selection of major	79	65.3
Academic advising	75	61.0
Class events (e.g., trips, dinners, dances)	56	46.3
Peer mentoring by sophomores (i.e., sophomore students mentoring other students)	54	46.2
Student government (e.g., sophomore council)	46	38.7
Residence life (e.g., sophomore-specific living arrangements)	40	33.6
Community service / service-learning	38	32.8
Faculty and staff mentors for sophomore students	37	31.4
Credit-bearing course (e.g., Sophomore Seminar)	24	21.1
Opportunities to co-teach or assist in teaching a class	24	20.7
Financial aid (e.g., sophomore scholarships, loans)	23	19.3
Cultural enrichment (e.g., plays, musical events, multicultural fairs)	22	18.8
Curricular learning communities (i.e., linked courses)	20	17.7
Publications for sophomores (e.g., sophomore newsletter or web site)	20	16.8
Peer mentoring for sophomores (i.e., students mentoring sophomores)	18	15.4
Other Initiatives (n = 77)	22	28.6

Institutions With Initiatives Specifically or Intentionally Geared Toward Sophomores

Tobolowsky & Cox, 2007

- Pilot program started in Spring of 2005
- Originally a living-learning community of 380 students
- Expanded to serve the entire sophomore class
- Focuses on seven areas:
  - Academics
  - Leadership
  - Service & Involvement
  - Multiculturalism
  - Career Exploration and Development
  - Growth and wellness
  - Traditions

SYE program at research site...

- Previous research indicated students were more academically focused in second year of college
- Students noted that several environmental factors related to the SYE program had a positive effect on their ability to study and work with other students

SYE program at research site...

Kawczynski, 2009

- Many articles and presentations about "best practices"
- Large body of work in second-year student development and "sophomore slump"
- Research on SYE program typology
- Resources for practitioners looking to begin a program
- My experience left me with a need to determine a more in-depth and detailed assessment of an SYE program
  - A detailed description of program outcomes
  - Determine a more direct tie between program and retention
  - Data that can be utilized to review and update program
  - Validation for continuing or adding additional resources

As a practitioner...

The purpose of this study was to determine how second-year student characteristics and behaviors in an SYE program related to academic development.

Purpose of the Study

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

Does student participation in behaviors related to the outcomes of the SYE program correlate with academic development?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

Does frequency of student participation in behaviors related to the outcomes of the SYE program correlate with academic development?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What combination of behaviors, if any, do students participate in that are most likely to lead to overall academic development?

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What student demographic characteristics, if any, are associated with the relationship between participation and behaviors related to the outcomes of the SYC program and academic development?

- Students in their second full year of college
- The Class of 2012 (1,186 students)
  - Identified through housing records
  - Two-year live-on requirement
- Participants were given a $1 song download from amazon.com as an incentive to complete the questionnaire

Research Sample

- Quantitative survey questionnaire developed using the intended outcomes of the SYE program and components of the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment
- Survey administered via www.surveymonkey.com

Methodology

A BRIEF INTERLUDE

- Measures whether students have completed various developmental tasks, including Developing Autonomy and Establishing and Clarifying Purpose
- Based on Chickering & Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of student development and based on two previous versions, the Student Development Task Inventory (Winston et al, 1979), and the Student Development Task and Lifestyle Inventory (Winston et al, 1987)
- Two subtasks, Educational Involvement and Academic Autonomy, included in this study

The Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment

Winston, Miller, & Copper, 1999

- Published in 1999 as an assessment tool for practitioners to assess traditionally aged (17-24) college students
- Multiple studies have found the scale and subscale reliability scores and validity data to be sufficient (Hess & Winston, 1995; Winston, 1990; Winston & Miller, 1987; Wachs & Cooper, 2002)

The Student Development Task and Lifestyle Assessment

Winston, Miller, & Cooper, 1999

- Students are able to:
  - Give themselves structure
  - Organize time
  - Study without reassurance or direction from others
  - Work with ambiguity
  - Effective study plans
  - Satisfied with academic performance

Academic Autonomy (AA)

Winston, Miller, & Copper, 1999

- Students are able to:
  - Understand academic resources available
  - Actively involved in academic life of institution
  - Selected area of academic concentration
  - Regular contact with faculty and staff
  - Active learners

Educational Involvement (EI)

Winston, Miller, & Copper, 1999

BACK TO OUR REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAM...

- Questionnaire included 11 questions from the AA subtask and 14 questions from the EI subtask of the SDTLA
- Also included 5 questions related to students' behavior and involvement in the SYE program
- Questions based of off SDTLA were scored in the same way as the SDTLA, with a numerical value on a scale of 1 to 5
- Raw scores converted to t-scores and compared to sample

Methodology

- Questions related to the specifics of the SYE program included:
  - Major
  - How often they saw an academic advisor
  - How often they discussed academics with their support network
  - Participation in SYE events
  - Resume completion
  - Demographic information, including:
    - Gender
    - Race
    - Housing type

Methodology

- 248 participants completed the questionnaire in full, for a response rate of 20%
- Racial demographics closely matched that of population
- Several populations were over-represented
  - Women
  - Residence life staff
- Several were also under-represented
  - Men
  - Students living in fraternity or sorority housing

Participant Response

- Statistical analyses conducted using SPSS
- Significance level of .05
- Reliability tested using Cronbach's alpha
- Pearson correlation coefficients used to understand relationship between frequency of participation in SYE outcomes and EI and AA subtask scores

Data Analysis

- T-tests used to determine how overall participation related to EI and AA scores
- Multiple linear regression performed to illustrate which combinations of participation aspects in SYE program were more likely to be associated with higher EI or AA scores
- ANOVA and t-tests used to compare demographic data to EI and AA scores

Data Analysis

- EI scores correlated with
  - Resume completion*
  - Frequency of academic advisor interaction*
  - Frequency of discussions with staff*
  - Frequency of discussions with faculty, family, and peers^

- **AA scores correlated with:**
  - Frequency of academic advisor interaction^
  - Frequency of discussions with faculty, family, and peers^

Findings

* = moderate, ^ = small

- Multiple regression analysis found little relation between combination of variables and either AA or EI scores
- Participants who indicated they were first in the family to attend college were less likely to have completed a resume

Findings

- Demographic data was mostly insignificant, except for the relationship between
  - Race and resume completion, subtask scores, and academic discussions with peers
  - Proximity to SYE office and frequency of SYE participation
  - Gender and AA score

Findings

- No surprise that students who are more involved in the academic community are more likely to have a resume
- The lack of significant findings on the relation between SYE participation, particularly frequency of participation, and academic development raises questions about practitioner's focus on program attendance as a measure of effectiveness

Implications

- The SYE program's investment and focus on academic advising appears to be worthwhile
- The SYE program should continue to focus on promoting informal but academic discussions between students and faculty, staff, and their peers
- Consider what if any information should be communicated to parents and family about second-year students

Implications

- Regression analysis supports the broad focus of the SYE program
- Though race has not been found to be significant in the overall administration of the SDTLA, the findings indicate that individual subtasks should be examined for bias
- Gender differences consistent with previous findings on the SDTLA

Implications

Cooper, Dean, & Bell, 2007

- Research site
- Sample size
- Nature of self-reporting
- SYE-specific questions relatively untested
- Cost of SDTLA assessment

Limitations

- Consider the use of SDTLA subtask measurements in research on second-year student development
- Hopefully publishing this work as a journal article
- Development of survey questionnaire to be used longitudinally
- Development of an assessment that multiple campuses can use to assess their SYE program

Moving forward…

QUESTIONS?

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