

7-25-2013

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ACADEMIC HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF ACT 101 STUDENTS:
WHO SEEKS HELP? WHO IS RELUCTANT?

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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May 2013

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The college retention and graduation rates of low-income students have continued to lag behind the success of students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds enrolled in higher education (Choy & Bobbitt, 2000; Gladieux & Swail, 2000; Hebel, 2007; Horn & Carroll, 2006; Terenzini, Cabrera, & Bernal, 2001; Tinto, 2012). This significant college retention and achievement gap has continued to be a concern for college and university administrators. Unfortunately, despite academic programming efforts, many students have failed to seek academic help and therefore have placed their college dreams at risk. The purpose of this quantitative study was to investigate the predictive variables associated with the academic help-seeking behavior of academically and financially disadvantaged Act 101 students across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This study intended to pinpoint predictors of academic help seeking that could influence the ability of college and university administrators to close the achievement gap and to improve college retention of academically and financially disadvantaged students.

By examining archival Act 101 performance data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the researcher determined the statistical significance between the dependent variables of counseling incidents, tutoring incidents, and academic help-seeking incidents in relationship to the independent variables of gender, race/ethnicity, college major, Scholastic Aptitude Test

(SAT) or ACT scores, cumulative non-remedial grade point average, and cumulative credits earned.

Multiple regression analysis was selected to uncover the relationship between multiple independent variables and academic help-seeking behaviors of Act 101 students as measured by counseling and tutoring participation frequencies of these students. The findings suggested that race/ethnicity, cumulative non-remedial credits earned, cumulative non-remedial grade point average, and college major were statistically significant in relation to predicting academic help-seeking behavior.