Recreation Center Participation and Its Relationship to Academic Success

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RECREATION CENTER PARTICIPATION AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Many colleges and universities are engaged in developing enrollment strategies in higher education that focus on student retention. Using concepts based on Astin’s (1993) theory of involvement and Tinto’s (1975) theory of social interaction, this study focused on how participation in recreation center activities is related to the academic success (GPA) and retention of undergraduate students. Astin argues that students learn from becoming involved, and Tinto’s retention model places great importance on the social interaction of students. Students who are involved in more activities will be less likely to drop out of school, and higher levels of recreation center participation should positively relate to higher grades and retention rates. Previous studies indicate that students who use a campus recreation facility score higher on GPA and retention measures than non-users (Belch, Gebel, & Mass, 2001). This study builds upon past research and evaluates whether this pattern holds true for the study’s institution; in addition, it contributes to the field by offering information regarding how entry time of day or consistency of entry time affects GPA and retention.

Information collected from the study’s recreation center main entry turn styles, university housing, university employment, and students’ academic records was entered into an SPSS file where the following statistical analysis occurred: descriptive statistics,
linear regression on GPA, logistic regression on retention, and cross validation between
two successive semesters. The linear regression analysis on GPA was divided into two
parts. First, the predictor variables for GPA were: REC Center Use, Gender, Race,
Employment Status, and Residence. The second part used Total Number of Visits, Rate
of Use, Consistency of Entry Time, Entry Time Groups, Gender, Race, Employment
Status, and Residence to predict GPA among REC center users. The retention study used
the same predictor variables plus GPA.

REC Center Usage was a statistically significant predictor for both GPA and
retention in the fall and spring semester. The Consistency of Entry Time variable failed
to reach significant levels for GPA or retention. Entry Time Groups were not significant
predictors in the fall semester but did reach significant levels for predicting GPA during
the spring semester.