

*Found My Place:
The Importance of Faculty
Relationships for Seniors' Sense
of Belonging*

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Literature on sense of belonging largely centers first-year and historically disadvantaged students
- Focus is on factors contributing to establishing sense of belonging, but little is known/published about maintaining sense of belonging for students beyond the first year
- Sense of belonging for seniors critical as junior to senior year is time wherein students have the most to lose from attrition due to time and money invested and inability to recoup earnings foregone up until this point



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Student Engagement

- Student engagement, defined as student involvement in educationally purposeful activities (Kuh, 2001)
- Student engagement through faculty interactions increased sense of belonging (e.g., Booker, 2007, Freeman et al., 2007; Kim & Sax, 2009; Fechheimer et al., 2011; Haave & Audet, 2013)

High-Impact Practices

- Educationally purposeful activities:
 - help increase learning, development and persistence (Kuh, 2008)
 - work to shape perceptions of campus climate including sense of belonging and institutional interactions (Hurtado et al., 1998)
- Student-faculty research programs are HIPs that:
 - develop “job values and life goals” (Jones et al., 2010, p. 87)
 - socialize students into the discipline’s community of practice (Hunter et al., 2007)



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sense of Belonging

- Multifaceted construct: psychological and subjective variable (e.g. Hoffman et al., 2002, Hausmann et al., 2009)
- Students perceptions of:
 - their value to the campus community
 - connection with the university (Nunez, 2009)
 - quality of social ties (Nunez, 2009)

Purpose of current study: explore whether faculty-related engagement influences seniors' sense of belonging



DATA SOURCE

- National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
- In 2014, appended experimental item set: 8,939 seniors at 44 institutions (variety of size, type, etc.)
- Experimental set yielded 2 sense of belonging subscales: Peer Belonging and Institutional Acceptance
- Engagement Indicators and High-Impact Practices from core survey: Student-Faculty Interaction, Effective Teaching Practices, Research with Faculty
- Other demographic and institutional characteristics



OLS MODEL

Student demographics

First-generation

Age

Gender

Race/Ethnicity

College experiences

Enrollment status

Took all courses online

Major- STEM

College grades

Greek affiliation

Lives on campus

Institutional context

Control

Minority-serving

Selectivity

Carnegie classification

*Engagement

Student-Faculty Interaction

Effective Teaching Practices

Research with Faculty Participation

DV: Institutional Acceptance



RESULTS

	β	Sig.
First-generation	-.069	**
Traditionally-aged	-.060	*
Female	-.003	
Asian, Asian American	.030	
Black, African American	.097	*
Latino or Hispanic	-.065	
Unknown/Other race	-.013	
Full-time enrollment	.041	
Took all courses online	.026	
Major-STEM	.024	
Grades-mostly B's	-.229	***
Grades-mostly C's	-.375	***
Greek affiliation	.119	***

	β	Sig.
Lives on campus	.088	***
Private	.165	***
MSI	-.039	
Selectivity	-.009	
Carnegie type-Research	-.642	***
Carnegie type-Master's	-.146	***
Carnegie type-Other	.003	
Student-Faculty Interaction	.015	***
Effective Teaching Practices	.020	***
Research with Faculty Participation	.053	*

*Adjusted R² = .378****



DISCUSSION

- Sense of belonging for Black students and nontraditionally aged students
- Institutional interactions versus peer relations and interactions
- Impact of residential living and Greek life on sense of belonging
- Role of institutional type
- Benefits of classroom engagement and faculty interactions



SUPPORTING FACULTY

- Classroom and faculty engagement is essential for senior students
 - Faculty course load
 - Professional development opportunities
 - Incentives and rewards
 - Service credit for mentorship
 - Course credit for research participation



OVERALL

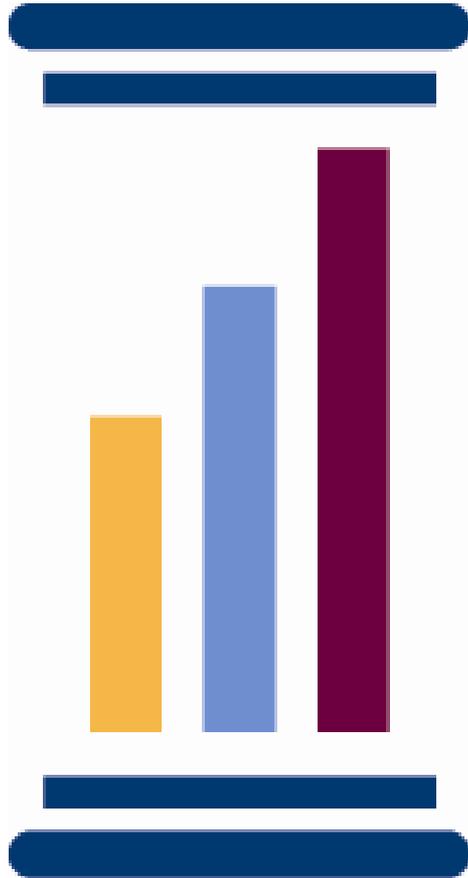
- Focus on the campus climate
- Focus on historically underrepresented populations
- Influence of high impact practices



POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS

- Institutional representation in NSSE
- Correlational, not causal design
- Self-reported data

Questions & Comments?



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*References and full paper available upon request