FRESHMAN SEMINAR: OPTIONAL VS MANDATORY, WHICH STYLE IS MORE EFFECTIVE IN REGARDS TO GPA & RETENTION

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness between optional or mandatory freshmen seminar classes. At the institution studied, the class is optional for a first time student with the exception of three main groups that the class is mandatory for students to enroll. The three groups are as follows: students who have been admitted with conditions (AWC), honors students, and students involved in a learning community. I will compare the optional students with the three mandatory student groups by assessing the students' grade point average (GPA) and retention rates. After the assessment, I will be able to conclude which class is more effective in serving the student academically, cognitively, and socially. The results of this study will aid the first year experience office as well as the enrollment management offices at the institution studied. With the results, the offices can devise a master plan and budget for creating the ideal experience for first time students. For this study, I will be using a pre-existing data set that will highlight the GPA’s and retention rates of the students for the academic year of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

According to Gardner (1991), “Research clearly indicates that the freshman year is a critical period during which students are most likely to withdraw from higher education” (p. 5). At least one half of all students who drop out of college will do so during their freshman year (Noel, 1985; Terenzini, 1986). With this knowledge, institutions have been creating various programs to prevent high attrition rates for over thirty years. Examples of these programs include: learning communities, orientation sessions, and freshmen seminars. These programs are typically housed out of the offices of orientation and advising. Each office needs to collaborate together in a comprehensive manner in order to ensure a student’s success. The partnership of these offices was highlighted as a source for a higher graduation rate in a study completed by Forrest (1985). “With entering student academic ability taken into account, Forrest found that a group of nine institutions with the most comprehensive set of orientation and advising programs had a graduation rate nine percent higher than that of a group of nine institutions with the least comprehensive programs” (p.385). Comprehensive programs allow the most contact hours with a student which creates relationships to sustain the student.

Fostering relationships has been a standard within various institutional missions across the United States. Students are learning to navigate a new territory within the first three months of their college career. According to William Perry’s (1970) model of intellectual and ethical development, students move through four stages of growth
during the college years. The first stage is called “dualism” which is described as “students viewing knowledge and life in absolute, concrete terms or categories” (Thoma, 1993, Journal of Economic Education). The second stage is defined as “multiplicity” which is described as “students recognizing not all knowledge is known and accept diversity of opinions and values in areas of uncertainty”. The third stage is called “relativism” which is described as “knowledge is seen as contextual and students are able to evaluate the validity of various viewpoints, including their own, depending on source, evidence, logical analysis”. The fourth stage is called “commitment in relativism” which is described as “students making a choice to affirm their roles and responsibilities within a relativistic world”. Each student will wonder through the stages and possibly revert back to a stage based upon the events in their lives. Within the first three stages, students decide important information about themselves that could sway a student to stay at the institution or transfer. Examples of those important items would be selecting a major, deciding to join an organization, determining to interview for a leadership position on campus, or selecting an internship opportunity. The collaboration of first year activities, which include freshmen seminar, will help shape and mold a young mind that is transitioning through the Perry model of intellectual and ethical development.

**Conceptual Underpinning**

Freshmen seminars have been researched and created numerous different ways over the past 40 years. The main argument for creating a freshmen seminar class is to help the students understand their civic responsibility and personal duty to themselves during the first 90 days of becoming a college student. The student will be enduring
various feelings, environment changes, anxiety about meeting new people and completing a degree. The student is paying the institution to help guide the student through various topics such as: advising, financial aid, drugs and alcohol temptations, career development, and help foster relationships. This study will focus on two main models for student development within the student’s first year. The first model focuses on the student’s nature, structure and processes that define individual growth. The second model focuses on the “environmental origins of student change or development, particularly on the sources of change that lie outside the individual” (Terenzini, 1987). There have been many theories that were created based upon these two factors.

This study will focus on Chickering’s (1969) seven vectors of student development. Chickering identified seven “vectors of development” that are in a “cycle of differentiation and integration” (Terenzini, 1987). The first three vectors are as follows: achieving competence, managing emotions, and developing autonomy. “Emerging competence in intellectual, physical and social areas, together with increasing control over emotions having both physiological and emotional origins, facilitates development of autonomy, independence from parents, but also the growing recognition of interdependence and the importance of others” (p.10). The first three vectors can happen within the first week or three months of attending college. The student can also cycle back through the vectors. The theory is not a step by step process, it is a cycle. The fourth vector which is “establishing identity” is a turning point in a student’s development. Once a student has established an identity within a student organization, sorority or fraternity, residence hall or on-campus job; the next three vectors will allow the student to build.
The final vectors are as follows: “freeing interpersonal relationships, developing purpose, and developing integrity” (p. 11). Freeing interpersonal relationships involves “increased tolerance and respect for those of different backgrounds, habits, values, and appearance, and a shift in the quality of relationships with intimates and close friends” (Chickering, 1969, p. 94). Once the student has developed an open mind to others, the student can focus on the last two vectors which focus on specific questions about ones’ self. While developing purpose, the student will ask themselves “What am I doing with my life?” and “Where am I?” After the answers of these questions are confronted, the final vector will be assessed. Developing integrity is “the clarification of a personally valid set of beliefs that have some internal consistency and that provide at least a tentative guide for behavior” (1969, p. 17). As stated before, the student will be cycling through this model multiple times as the environment in which the student lives in changes as well.

The freshmen year will be full of person progressions on identity and regressions of self. The first year seminar class highlights each vector with conversations, assignments, and textbook readings. For example, the chapters in the “Keys to Success” (2010) textbook dovetail nicely with the seven vectors. The first two chapters are focused on personal goals and missions. The third and fourth chapters focus on diversity and communication skills with others. The final chapters focus on career development, study skills, and creating a plan for life. Each freshmen seminar class can have supplemental readings and speakers to enforce the vectors.
Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study is based on freshmen seminar’s effect on a student’s GPA and retention rate. Institutions have created many different types of freshmen seminar such as: optional, mandatory, themed for specific groups such as athletes or honors classes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to find out if there is any difference between the topics that are covered in a freshmen seminar and the type of student that is taking the class.

Research Questions

R1: What are the summary statistics for this study?
R2: What is the difference between GPA among the groups?
R3: What is the difference between retention rates among the groups?
R4: Is there a relationship between GPA and retention rate?
R5: Is there a relationship between the mandatory and optional groups?
R6: Is there a difference between full time students and retention rate?

Null Hypothesis

H02: There is no difference between GPA among the groups.
H03: There is no difference between retention rates among the groups.
H04: There is no relationship between GPA and retention rate.
H05: There is no relationship between the mandatory and optional groups.
H06: There is no difference between students that are enrolled full time and retention rate.
Anticipated Benefits of the Study

The benefits of this study will be to focus future planning efforts and budget into creating a freshmen seminar class that will support the students GPA and retention. There are two main benefits for this study which include analyzing staffing and budgeting efforts for admitted with conditions freshmen seminar class and creating retention goals for a five to ten year strategic master plan. Benefits for the study would verify the effectiveness or highlight the ineffectiveness of the freshmen seminar class that is specialized only for admitted with conditions students (AWC). With this knowledge, administrators can adjust staffing and budgeting efforts accordingly. The study would add to conversations and planning efforts to create and update the retention goals for the five to ten year strategic master plan. After analyzing the data, there could be future recommendations that will add to the retention goals. With this information, administrators can create a positive classroom experience for the student, ample support services, and in return the student will matriculate.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations for this study will include two factors that cannot be changed no matter the attempts to intervene. When looking at a study simply based upon academic achievement (GPA) and retention rates, the study could be swayed due to the student’s transitions into college. The first factor is that typically a first time freshmen’s GPA will dip within the first semester because the classes are more challenging and time consuming compared to post-secondary class work. The second factor is the unknown indicators that cannot be changed which result in the student dropping out of the institution.
The first factor that cannot be changed is a students’ academic profile entering into the institution will be a good indicator of the success of the student. In 2004, the University of Maine at Farmington conducted a survey to the freshmen students concerning first-year seminar classes versus first-year programs such as the fall one-credit orientation course. The survey tested the effectiveness of both programs based on the retention rates, academic achievement (GPA), and the Perry scores for each student. About one-half of students that enrolled in a four credit first-year seminar class versus the first year programs proved to be more successful. According to the *Journal of General Education*, “First-year seminar students had higher SATs, higher high school rank, higher Perry intellectual development scores, and higher expectations for some major aspects of their upcoming college experience”. The students that were enrolling in the optional first-year experience class were better prepared for the transition because they were better students in general. Students that are not prepared for the course work will have a harder time transitioning and persisting through education. The institution studied is an open admission public institution which could have a lower GPA and ACT entrance from a student.

The second factor is a combination of unfortunate or unknown events that drive students to leave school. There are many other factors as to why student’s do not retain or maintain a good GPA. These factors could include something that has nothing to do with freshmen seminar and how it could have helped. Factors may include: financial burden, family or social issues, learning disabilities, etc. Some factors will be out of the control of the freshmen seminar class, while other factors could be remedied
by the class because of the resources that the class will provide on how to get the help
the student needs before it becomes too late and they fail out of school or worse.

Definition of Terms

This study contains the use of unique and specific terminology. These terms are
defined below.

Freshmen Seminar Class. A highly interactive, small enrollment seminar and course
designed to immediately bring freshmen into the intellectual life of the college. It allows
freshmen the opportunity for in-depth study of a current and relevant topic.

Optional Enrollment. Left to one's choice; not required or mandatory to enroll in
freshmen seminar.

Mandatory Enrollment. Permitting no option; not to be disregarded or modified. If the
student would like to participate in the admitted with conditions, honors, and learning
communities program; than they must enroll in the freshmen seminar class.

Admitted with Conditions Students. This is admission to the University with certain
conditions due to the high risk nature of your academic record based on your ACT
composite score and high school GPA. Enrolling as a part-time student is your
opportunity to strengthen basic academic skills and prove your ability to be successful
at the University level.

Honors Students. Students who wish to be considered for admission to the Honors
Program must possess a minimum ACT score of 26 and a minimum cumulative, high
school GPA of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Learning Communities Students. Learning Communities are comprised of small groups
of about 25 freshmen who each that take two or three courses together. Professors in
the classes coordinate the coursework so that students are constantly making connections between the classes. A learning community is a way to develop friendships and make connections with other students who have similar interests to you.

Summary

In conclusion, the study will prove to be useful while administrators are focusing on a progressive first year experience plan. Chickering’s seven vectors will be used as the conceptual underpinning due to the high volume of usability for students that are new to college life. The benefits and limitations will prove to be a large aid in assisting administrators to plan for the future.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The notion of a freshmen seminar class started in 1888 and grew into the class that is being studied today. There are three main topics that will be discussed within this chapter. The first topic focuses on the different types of a freshmen seminar class. The second topic focuses on the three main groups of students that are asked to enroll in the freshmen seminar class at the institution that is being studied. The final topic focuses on the challenges for the study.

History of Freshmen Seminar

Boston University was one of the first institutions to create a “Freshmen Seminar” which was designed to implement college survival skills to students in 1888. Reed College was the first institution to provide credit bearing seminars that were strictly for freshmen in 1911 (University of South Carolina, n.d.). Freshmen seminars popularity has fluctuated over the past decades for various reasons. In the 1960s, the baby boomers flooded college campuses and the administrators enjoyed the large enrollments which created a low need for a freshmen seminar class. By the 1970s and 1980s the enrollments were declining which brought a resurfacing interest in freshmen seminar classes in order to aid in retention (Cuseo, 1991). According to Fidler and Fidler (1991), freshmen seminar classes have been offered in a number of ways at a number of institutions. Examples of the different types of freshmen seminar include an eight week course that meets once a week for a staff member, a semester long course that meets two or three times a week with a faculty member, or a course that meets all
semester long with mandatory sessions or out of class meetings to improve the student’s knowledge of the campus. Each type of class has benefits and challenges that work for the institution.

There have been several studies that measure the success of a freshmen seminar class but the challenge is to find a curriculum and group of students that will succeed with the class within the institution the is being tested. The measurement of success to each institution can be described by the retention rate of the student (persist to graduation) and to promote a high academic profile or GPA.

Identification of the Three Mandatory Groups

The institution in this study has a freshmen seminar program that is optional for all incoming students except three select groups of students that the class is a part of their curriculum. The select group of students has a high range of academic ability. The three groups of students in this classification are as follows: honors students, admitted with conditions students, and students that have been placed in a learning community. The first group of students is the honors students. Students are required to have a 27 ACT and a 3.5 GPA. The second group of students has been admitted with conditions. Students are required to have a 17 ACT or below with a 2.0 GPA or below. The last group of students is a verity of academic achievers that are placed in freshmen seminar while also taking another class. This is commonly referred to as a learning community. The second class in the learning community can range from developmental English to Introduction to Business. The following paragraphs will highlight challenges and benefits for this study.
Challenges

There are three main concerns for this study. The first concern is locating a medium ground between the curriculums for the freshmen seminar class between the three classifications that were listed above. The second concern is overcoming the stigma that a freshmen seminar class is not academically challenging enough to require each student to enroll. The final concern is the lack of funds and manpower to promote a mandatory freshmen seminar class in an institution that currently serves the class as optional to the majority of incoming students. Each concern is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first concern is the fact that there is not a consistent curriculum for each type of student that is enrolling in freshmen seminar courses. All facets of the program need to be consistent for each course. There can be specialized sections of the course that are delivered differently based on the needs of the students but the foundation of the class needs to be the same. For example, there needs to be a set curriculum of topics to cover in each course, textbook, training for instructors, evaluation process, and key outcomes that each course has to adhere to. Currently, the institution that is being studied has four different people in charge of the freshmen seminar classes based upon the groupings of students. The course has a director for the honors students, admitted with conditions students, and the learning community’s students. There needs to be a hierarchy in which a director of the freshmen seminar oversees the direction and instruction of each classification of students. The course curriculum and outcomes need to be communicated and evaluated to each instructor to ensure that each student is getting an equal experience. According to Kuh (1991), student satisfaction is a direct
result of students’ feeling that they fit in, that they are part of an institution that cares about them and about their academic success. Students’ close interaction with and attention from their instructors in these purposefully small classes augments these feelings of familiarity and belonging (Chapman & Reed, 1987). Without strong leadership and curriculum in the freshmen seminar class, there will be little chance that each student is getting the necessary experience that is needed to create feeling of belonging.

The second concerns for optional freshmen seminar classes are that the class is not academically challenging enough which sways students to not enroll in the class because it is optional. If the administration does not deem the course as mandatory, as it conveys to a student that the class is not as important as other classes. Students and parents might think a perquisite course would be better money spent instead of a class that will help the student get acclimated to the transition of high school to college student. According to Schlossberg’s Theory, there are four sectors that will affect the student’s ability to transition from high school student to college student. The four sectors are situation, self, support, and strategies. Situation and self are about the student’s personal transition which includes demographic changes, personal relationships changing, and personal growth. The student is leaving the comfort of what they know and going to an unknown location named college. In order to cope with the transition to college, a student will seek support systems from new friends, organizations, or instructors. The student will look for a place to belong. The student will finally create strategies of coping such as directly joining an organization or attending an event or gathering information about an organization. Each sector would
be covered in the freshmen seminar course. Schlossberg believes that without attention to these four sectors, the student will not be able to identify themselves within the institution. The charge is upon the instructors and professionals of the institution to provide the correct information and experiences to the student.

The final concern for a mandatory freshmen seminar class would be the budget and manpower that is needed to sustain a program for over 1,200 students. Currently, the institution in this study which is a four-year public institution has an optional freshmen seminar program with approximately 450 students enrolled. This calls for only 20 instructors that teach classes of 30 or more students and multiple sections of this class. A similar sized four-year public institution, implements a mandatory freshmen seminar class. This class calls for over 1,200 students to be enrolled in this class which will need approximately 40 instructors that teach classes of 30 students or more.

Basically, the final decision is twofold in regards to logistical issues. If an institution decides to implement a mandatory format for freshmen seminar, is it better to have each student get the same information about the campus and transition into the institution but with spreading the faculty too thin which might make the students feel that the class is not worth the money? On the other hand, does the institution produce a class that is reaching 28% of the freshmen population but is manageable by the faculty and campus staff? These are questions that this study will answer.

Summary

This is a summary of the literature that has been reviewed by various institutions for over 2,000 years. The paragraphs above highlighted the different structures of the freshmen seminar class. There has not been a proven correct way to structure a
freshmen seminar class. Each institution has a structure that works for the type of student that is attending. The paragraphs above highlighted the three types of students that are asked to enroll in the freshmen seminar class for the institution that is being studied. The three groups have different challenges, and the structure of the class has different challenges that are also discussed. In conclusion, each institution must discuss the mission and goals for the freshmen seminar program. The institution must decide if the institution needs the class to be mandatory for all students, only specialized groups of students, or optional for all students.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Problem and Purposes Overview

The purpose of this study is to identify the effectiveness between optional or mandatory freshmen seminar classes. At the institution that is being studied, the class is optional for a first time student with the exception of three main groups that the class is mandatory for them to enroll. The three groups are as follows: students who have been admitted with conditions, honors students, and students involved in a learning community. I will compare the optional students with the three mandatory student groups by assessing the students’ GPA and retention rates that have spanned over two academic years. After the assessment, I will be able to conclude which class is more effective in serving the student academically, cognitively, and socially. The results of this study will aid the first year experience office as well as the enrollment management offices at the institution that is being studied. With the results, the offices can devise a master plan and budget for creating the ideal experience for first time students. For this study, I will be using a pre-existing data set that will highlight the GPA’s and retention rates of the students.

Research design

I will be assessing the cumulative grade point average (GPA) for the consecutive fall and spring semesters of the mandatory group of students that are admitted with conditions and the students that did not take the class. I am also focusing on the retention rate from the first fall semester to the following fall semester. I will be recording the number of students in each group that had a GPA that increased or stayed the same and a GPA that decreased. I will be recording the number of students in each
group that did not enroll for the consecutive semesters as well. I am comparing the different groups of students to see if making freshmen seminar mandatory or optional had any impact on the student's first year.

**Variables**

The independent variables used in this study were broken down into four groups of students that have had a mandatory and optional experience in freshmen seminar. The four student groups are as follows: admitted with conditions (mandatory), honors (mandatory), learning communities (mandatory), and students that did not fall into one of the above categories (optional). The dependent variables are GPA and retention rates for each group of students.

**Research Questions and Null Hypotheses**

R1: What are the summary statistics for this study?

R2: What is the difference between GPA among the groups?

R3: What is the difference between retention rates among the groups?

R4: Is there a relationship between GPA and retention rate?

R5: Is there a relationship between the mandatory and optional groups?

H02: There is no difference between GPA among the groups.

H03: There is no difference between retention rates among the groups.

H04: There is no relationship between GPA and retention rate.

H05: There is no relationship between the mandatory and optional groups.

**Study group**

I anticipate over 300 students from the age of 17 and above for each year of data. I plan on researching two academic years of GPA and retention rates for students
that have participated in the freshmen seminar course. I will be assessing the years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. The students are placed in the mandatory groups based on various criteria such as ACT score and high school GPA. The mandatory groups are learning communities, admitted with conditions, and honors students. Learning communities are two or more classes that are paired together. Students are placed in learning communities based on major selection. Admitted with conditions students are students that have an ACT score of 16 or below and a GPA below 2.0. Honors students are students that have an ACT score of 26 or above and a GPA of 3.0 or above. I will compare the mandatory groups of students with the voluntary students that enrolled in freshmen seminar.

*Data collection and instrumentation utilized*

I will be working with a research analyst from the institution that is being studied to collect the data. I will be protecting the privacy and confidentially of students by assigning each student a random number for identification purposes. For example, a student will be labeled “Student 1, Student 2”. The students will only be identified by the group of students that they have been categorized by, GPA, and enrolling in the following semesters. All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office which will not be accessible by non-investigators. In order to keep the identification of the students confidential, I will also be asking the research analyst to only pull the information that I will need for the study.

There will be less than minimal risk to this study due to the fact that the GPA and retention rates for the mandatory and optional groups in freshman seminar classes are public information. The students will be unidentifiable. A risk for the study is the fact that
different instructors will cover different topics within the class which might create better or worse GPAs. The benefits of this study will show the trends for two years in freshmen seminar. Comparing the three mandatory groups with the voluntary freshmen seminar students will increase the knowledge of the first year experience department and the planning for the freshmen seminar course.

Data analysis strategies

Using the SPSS software, a Chi Square analysis and T-test analysis will be conducted to determine if there is a difference between mandatory and optional freshmen seminar classes. The analysis will have a significance level equal to or less than 0.05 is established. With the nominal and scale data of the study, Chi Square and T-test analyses will be used to explain the different groups of students, GPA’s, and retention rates of the students.

Summary

The data that will be completed can be used to understand the difference between a mandatory freshmen seminar class versus an optional freshmen seminar class. There are 1,933 student GPA’s and retention rates that will be analyzed. The data will be examined with the research questions that have been previously discussed and analyzed by Chi Square and T-test analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Review of Research Design

The purpose for this study was to determine if there was a relationship between student’s mandatory or optional enrollment into a freshmen seminar class. The study is assessing the cumulative grade point average (GPA) for the consecutive fall and spring semesters of the mandatory group of students that are admitted with conditions and the students that did not take the class. The study will also be focusing on the retention rate from the first fall semester to the following fall semester. There will be a recording of the number of students in each group that had a GPA that increased or stayed the same and a GPA that decreased. There will also be a recording of the number of students in each group that did not enroll for the consecutive semesters. The study will be comparing the different groups of students to see if making freshmen seminar mandatory or optional had any impact on the student’s first year.

Presentation of Data Analysis, Findings & Interpretations

RQ1: What are the summary statistics for this study?

As shown in Table 1-6, there are 1,933 first-time full-time students that were enrolled or not enrolled in freshmen seminar from 2007-2009. Table 1, shows the GPA for students that did or did not enroll in freshmen seminar (UNV 101). Table 2, shows the GPA for students that did or did not enroll in the admitted with conditions freshmen seminar class (CED119). Table 3, shows the GPA for students that were retained or not retained for an academic year. Table 4, shows the correlation between retention rate for students that were enrolled or not enrolled in CED119. Table 5, shows the correlation between the retention rate for students that were enrolled or not enrolled in
UNV101. Table 6, shows the retention rate for students that were full-time versus not full-time.

Table 1
GPA for students that did or did not enroll in UNV 101

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNV 101</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>2.7354</td>
<td>0.9208</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>2.5307</td>
<td>0.93488</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2
GPA for students that did or did not enroll in CED 119

<table>
<thead>
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<th>CED119</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>GPA</td>
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<td>0.93137</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.3195</td>
<td>0.99184</td>
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Table 3
GPA for students that were retained or not retained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retained</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>1.9962</td>
<td>1.06561</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1381</td>
<td>2.9058</td>
<td>0.72592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Summary of Chi Square results for students that were retained/not retained and enrolled in CED 119

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retained</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CED 119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within CED 119</td>
<td>28.20%</td>
<td>71.80%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Retained</td>
<td>97.80%</td>
<td>99.50%</td>
<td>99.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>27.90%</td>
<td>71.10%</td>
<td>99.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within CED 119</td>
<td>63.20%</td>
<td>36.80%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Retained</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
<td>0.50%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within CED 119</td>
<td>28.60%</td>
<td>71.40%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Retained</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
<td>28.60%</td>
<td>71.40%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sign = or < 0.05
RQ2: What is the difference between GPA among the groups?

As shown in Table 7 and 8, there is a significant difference in GPA between students that enrolled in UNV101 and students that enrolled in CED119. The students enrolled in UNV101 have slightly higher GPA’s ($M = .204$, $SD = .042$) when compared to students enrolled in CED119 ($M = .329$, $SD = .214$). This information is consistent with the admissions requirements of the institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Chi Square results for students that were retained/not retained and enrolled in UNV101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNV101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within UNV101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within UNV101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within UNV101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sign = or < 0.05

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time students that were retained/not retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>0.908</td>
<td>0.341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>4.805</td>
<td>1799.144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance at 0.05

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>1.443</td>
<td>18.316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance at 0.05

RQ3: What is the difference between retention rates among the groups?

As shown in Table 9 and 10, the Chi Square test revealed a significant difference between students enrolled in CED119 (Chi Square = 11.261(1), p-value = .001) and students enrolled in UNV101 (Chi Square = 23.733(1), p-value = .000) with the frequency of retention rates.
Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Chi Square results that were retained/not retained and enrolled in CED119</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person Chi-Square</td>
<td>11.261</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>9.613</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>9.889</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>11.255</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sign = or < 0.05

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Chi Square results that were retained/not retained and enrolled in UNV101</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person Chi-Square</td>
<td>23.733</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity Correction</td>
<td>23.241</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>23.615</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher’s Exact Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>23.72</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sign = or < 0.05

RQ4: Is there a relationship between GPA and retention rate?

In Table 11, there is a significant difference in GPA of students that were retained (M = -0.909, SD = .042) versus students that were not retained (M = -0.909, SD = .049). A student with a higher GPA is more likely to return than a student with a lower GPA.
Table 11

*Descriptive and t-test analysis for the GPA and retention rates of students overall*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>178.589</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance at 0.05

**RQ5: Is there a relationship between the mandatory and optional groups?**

In Table 6 and 7, the Chi Square analysis shows a slight difference between students that enrolled in UNV101 and CED119 freshmen seminar classes and students that did not enroll in either class.

**RQ6: Is there a difference between full time students and retention rate?**

As shown in Table 12, there is a significant difference between students that enroll in full-time status (M = -1.084, SD = .11) and student retention rates (M = -1.084, SD = .123). A student that enrolls in more credit hours is more likely to return than a student that enrolls in the minimum credit hours.

Table 12

*Descriptive and t-test analysis for the full-time and retention rates of students overall*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>1.706</td>
<td>0.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Significance at 0.05
Null Hypothesis

H02: There is no difference between GPA among the groups.

HO3: There is no difference between retention rates among the groups.

HO4: There is no relationship between GPA and retention rate.

HO5: There is no relationship between the mandatory and optional groups.

HO6: There is no difference between students that are enrolled full time and retention rate.

Summary

This chapter analyzed the relationship between mandatory and optional freshmen seminar classes while utilizing GPA, retention rates, and full-time status as indicators. A comparison between the GPA of the mandatory and optional groups is not significant. The GPA was significantly different between the students enrolled in CED119 and the students enrolled in UNV101. This difference is to be expected due to the low admission guidelines for the CED119 students. A comparison between the retention rates of the mandatory and optional groups is significant. The groups of students that did enroll in UNV101 were slightly higher in GPA and retention rates. The numbers of students that did enroll in UNV101 were smaller than students that chose not to enroll in the course. A comparison between the full-time status of students and retention rates was significant. The Chi Square analysis and t-test descriptive analysis magnified issues and solutions for the freshmen seminar classes at the institution being studied.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEW LEARNING

Overview

The purpose for this study was to determine if there was a relationship between student’s mandatory or optional enrollment into a freshmen seminar class. The assessment focuses on the cumulative grade point average (GPA) for the consecutive fall and spring semesters of the mandatory group of students that are admitted with conditions and the students that did not take the class. The study also focuses on the retention rate from the first fall semester to the following fall semester. The benefit is to analyze the different groups of students to see if making freshmen seminar mandatory or optional had any impact on the student’s first year.

Discussion of Findings

The findings for this study were three fold. The first point of interest is the difference in GPA and retention rate for students enrolled in CED119 versus UNV101. Students enrolled in CED119 are admitted with conditions students which are typically low ability students. Therefore, the fact that the GPA's and retention rates are lower is not a surprise. It is a surprise that only 7 out of the 12 students that were enrolled in the CED119 class over the years of 2007-2009, have been retained. There is an abundance of services for this group of students such as: one-on-one tutoring, monthly meetings with advisors and peer mentors, and specialized speakers selected to speak at this class. Are the staff and financial resources being utilized efficiently if the students are going to not be retained or produce a degree with the low GPAs? The
second point of interest is the slightly higher retention rate and GPA for the students that did enroll in the UNV101 freshmen seminar. This is a positive point and proves that students are successful when enrolled in this class. Although, there was a significant amount of students who were enrolled in the class that were not retained at the institution studied. The reasons for not retaining are inconclusive at this time. The final point of interest is the positive GPAs and retention rates for first time full time students that were enrolled in 15 credit hours or more. Typically, 12 credit hours is the recommended amount of credit hours for a new student. The Chi Square test showed a large correlation between higher GPAs and retention rates for students that were enrolled in 15 to 16 credit hours a semester. This implication will be shared with enrollment services and academic affairs to encourage advisors to enroll students in more credit hours because the student might feel more of a responsibility or drive to graduate within four years.

Conclusions and Implications

In conclusion, there are various ways to conduct and invent a freshmen seminar class. The institution studied has an optional freshmen seminar class which has proven to be effective in students that are entering the institution with average GPAs and ACT scores. Unfortunately, the freshmen seminar class has not proven to be effective in students that are entering the institution with below the average GPAs and ACT scores. Students do however prosper when faced with taking 15 to 16 credit hours a semester. This study is similar to an onion in the regards of the different ways to test the subjects. In the next section, I will discuss the recommendations for future findings.
**Recommendations for Future Research**

There are three main recommendations for future research in this field. The first recommendation involves a possible study of the admitted with conditions student profile which would include GPA and retention rates over the past four years. The second recommendation involves an in-depth view into the specific mandatory groups GPA and retention rates. More specifically, the honors student group and learning communities' student group. The third recommendation is to magnify the study even further and gather data of gender, hometown, and high school GPA to pinpoint the students that would benefit the most from a freshmen seminar class.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES