



CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Helping students from diverse backgrounds pursue graduate school is an important educational goal. Important research questions include why do students fail to persist a higher degree, what are the challenges they are faced with, and what can faculty and other family members do to encourage students to continue to succeed? Most research is focused on retention and departure of students at the undergraduate level as to what causes an individual to persist to graduation (Braxton et al., 2000).

Tinto's interactionist theory of college student departure can be used to study why students don't finish their degree (Braxton, 2004). Tinto stated that individual characteristics such as family background, individual attributes, and precollege schooling experiences can directly influence the individual's decision to leave that institution. Using the theory of planned behavior proposed by psychologist Icek Ajzen, Alas et al. (2016) found that family was an influential factor in terms of encouraging students to study at a university. They suggested that subjective norms such as perceived social pressure can affect a student's intention to perform a certain behavior, whether it be to continue in school or not.

In this study the potential factors influencing aspirations to pursuing graduate school will be explored. The two clusters this author is concerned with are personal/family traits and institutional characteristics. The primary goal of this research is to see what drives a student to pursue graduate school. Previous research suggests that both personal and university characteristics play a role in an individual's decision (Braxton, 2004). To get a better understanding this author will look at six different components that can affect an individual's aspirations. Three of these components will be based off on personal attributions and the other three will be on university characteristics.

Methods

Participants

The participants of this study will be recruited from Central Washington University.

Instruments

- **Mentor Scale (Gloria & Kurplus, 1996):** The Mentor scale will be used to measure the accessibility to a mentor. "
- **University Environment Scale (UES; Gloria & Kurplus):** These questions will be based on the university's environment and the students' feelings towards the institution.
- **Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992):** The academic motivation scale will be used to see how motivated students are to fulfill their aspirations and what kind of motivation they are driven by.
- **Additional questions:** Additional questions will be asked related to financial aid, family support, and proximity. Demographics such as gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, income level, and marital status will be obtained.

Procedure

Email invitations will be sent out to a random sample of 2,000 Central Washington University students inviting them to participate in the study. Participants will click on a link that will take them to the survey on the CWU Qualtrics web survey system. The Qualtrics system will be set to deliver a follow-up requests one week after the initial distribution to those who have not responded.

The Aspirations and Barriers of Diverse Students for Graduate School

Principal Investigator: Yecenia Ramirez

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Heath Marrs

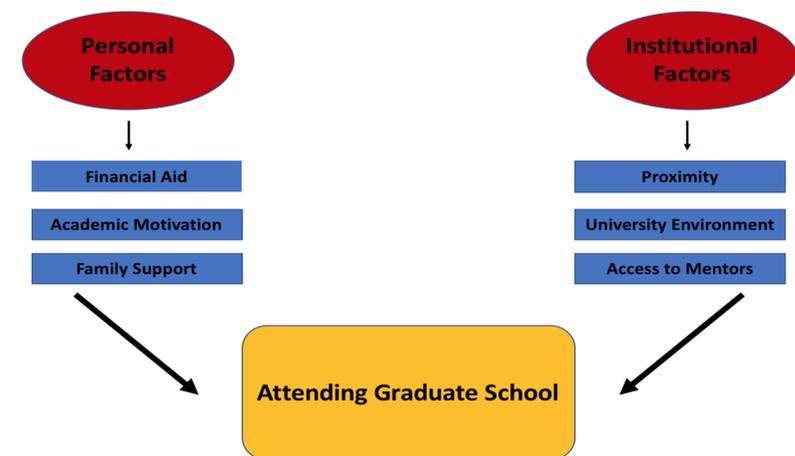
Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the challenges Central Washington University students face in pursuing graduate school?

Research Question 2: What factors play the biggest role in an individual's decision to pursue a higher degree?

Research Question 3: Do the associated factors vary by race/ethnicity?



References

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