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## ANNOTATION

Occhiogrosso, Gabrielle. “College Student Involvement and Leadership: Studying Learning and Living Communities at Lasallian Institutions.” EdD dissertation, Fordham University, 2014. 135 pp.

The introduction of the study states that many colleges in the United States are focusing not only on a student’s academic success, but also on the needs of students “holistically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially” (2). The author observes that the cost of college is rising and institutions are striving to increase student retention efforts and cultivate student involvement on and off campus [i.e., in hopes of increasing retention] (2). The purpose of this study was to “discover roles – specifically, behaviors and leadership – and relationships of students within learning and living communities at Lasallian colleges” (2). The author referenced Zhao and Kuh’s 2004 research on learning communities as well as research completed by Ebbers (1999) when referencing various forms of learning communities: curricular learning, classroom learning, residential learning, and student-type learning communities (3). The author stated that each type of community is unique and colleges use various methods to “cultivate the development of the student while also retaining the student at the college” (3).

The author of the dissertation goes on to define retention and how the use of the American College Testing (ACT) survey can be used to “augment the quality of programs in efforts of enhancing student success” (4). Previously, the National Study of Living-Learning Programs specifically assessed a learning community’s impact on students (5). The author defined the Lasallian mission (6) and the specific need for this study to focus on how students within learning and living communities at Lasallian colleges were “involved, the leadership opportunity they obtained, and their satisfaction with their student life staff” (7).

The study used an original survey, “Assessing Community Conduct Education Service Satisfaction (ACCESS),” and focused on “student activity and student life programming, relationships, leadership, and satisfaction with staff” (8). A correlation analysis was completed to answer ten specific questions focusing on participation, leadership, relationships, satisfaction, effectiveness, and planned retention (8). The purpose of the quantitative study was to “discover outcomes of learning and living communities at Lasallian institutions – specifically the satisfaction of the students, the effectiveness of the program, and the planned retention of the students” (12).

The author referenced various theories and research – specifically Durkhiem’s 1961 structural functionalism concept and Tinto’s 2003 research on student departure theory – to frame the study (13) and a list of terms were defined (15). An extensive literature review focused on conceptual frameworks (19), retention (21), Lasallian institutions (25), student affairs development (27), learning and living communities (28), student development (38), leadership theory (41), residence life function (43), student life programming (47), and student conduct (51). According to the author, even though literature is available on the topic there is still a gap in research as it relates to

Lasallian colleges and particularly as it relates to students residing in learning and living communities, campus involvement, leadership opportunities, and satisfaction with student life staff (53).

The purpose and rationale for the study was stated [to discover outcomes of learning and living communities at Lasallian colleges] (54), as well as the ten survey questions (58). The research design was a quantitative study (58) and included several independent variables and dependent variables using a correlation analysis (59). Constructs of participation, leadership, and relationships were chosen because of the gap in literature. Grouping variables were the demographics of the subjects, and three major constructs (the independent variables of role participation, role leadership, and relationships) were explored and compared to constructs (dependent variables) of satisfaction, effectiveness, and planned retention (59).

The study entailed the administering of the ACCESS survey to three Lasallian colleges in the United States [a total of six institutions were invited to participate but one declined and two never responded] (61). The survey was electronic, sent via PsychData (an online survey tool) and created by the researcher (63). The survey was sent to 212 undergraduate students who had “completed a year in the learning and living community, regardless of whether it was the students’ first, second, third, or fourth year at the institution” (63).

The survey was tested for validity and reliability prior to administering the survey. Ten nonrelated subjects were asked to review the survey, rate the intent to measure, indicate if the survey was appropriate for college students, and ensured the questions were clear (64). A statistician was hired to analyze the data. The statistician used both descriptive and comparative statistics as well as a correlation analyses [between the independent and dependent variables] (65). Limitations were listed (65); and the results of the study were “used to provide feedback to the Lasallian institutions, as well as to add to the body of knowledge on learning and living communities” (67).

From the three Lasallian institutions that participated in the study, a total of 74 students responded [out of the 212 students the survey was sent to] (68). The sample indicated 56.8% were female, 77% were first year students, 37.8% were majoring in the fine arts, 74.8% were Caucasian, 58.1% attended public high schools, and 72% lived in a formal learning and living community [academic and residential] (70). The author found the strongest correlation was between the relationships of students in the learning and living communities and overall satisfaction within the community, the residence hall, and the college. A very strong correlation was found to be the relationship students had with each other. It was also found that the greater the participation of a student in the learning and living community the higher retention of the student in the program and at the college (97). The “strongest correlations found were between participation and satisfaction of the students in the learning and living communities. Students who had higher participation in the learning and living community, the residence hall, and the college had higher satisfaction within all three components”; and these students were thus found to be retained more by the college (98).

Within the discussion section of the dissertation, the author again referenced the purpose and problem under consideration in the study (101). The study found “college students in learning and living communities were satisfied, the communities were effective, and the students were likely to return to the community and the college.” Recommendations for future research were listed (104)

as well as recommendations for future practice (106). The conclusion of the study stated a summary of the research as well as the reference that the author's goal of "adding to the body of literature about the topic . . . and to be inspired to continue to strive for success in the field of education" was obtained (108). References were listed (110), appendices shared (117), and the author's curriculum vitae was made available (135).