



NSSE
National Survey of
Student Engagement


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Student expectations for academic performance

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Introduction


Many factors play an important role in student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Including, but not limited to:

- financial stress
- social and emotional adjustment
- academic adjustment
- first-generation status
- academic performance
- academic preparation



Introduction


- One factor that may help us to understand retention that has thus far received little attention is the difference between expected and actual academic performance.
- Students expectations are linked with many positive academic outcomes.
- As Konings, et al (2008) claimed, "Expectations affect students' motivation, engagement, and investment of effort in learning" (p. 536).
- Though researchers and educators have noted the deleterious effects of "unmet" expectations, the expectation for academic performance has received little attention as it relates to retention.



Introduction


Purpose

For this study, we investigate the relationships between first-year students' expected academic performance, their actual academic performance, and their persistence to the second year.



Data Source

- Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and institutional records of one institution that participated in BCSSE for years 2008 and 2009.
- BCSSE is administered in summer and early fall to incoming first-year students. Survey includes questions about recent high school experiences as well as expectations for first-year of college.
- A total of 2,234 first-year BCSSE respondents were matched with their institutional records.
- One item on the survey asks students to report their *expected overall grades for the coming year*. Response categories include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C- or lower.



Academic Expectations

- To determine "unmet" academic expectations, expected grades were compared to end-of-year cumulative first-year GPA.
- The GPA data were converted to ordinal categories that match the response categories from the BCSSE survey (A, A-, B+, etc).
- A change in ordinal grade categories by one unit represents 1/3 change in a full letter grade. For instance, B+ to a B- represents a change of one unit (1/3), whereas a change from B+ to C+ represents a change of 3 units (or one full letter grade).

Method

- For this study, only those first-year students that were academically –eligible to return for their second year were included in the study.
- A total of 9.3% of the incoming first-year class that completed BCSE did not return for a 2nd year of college.
- 83% of these students that did not return were academically eligible to return.

Enrollment during first three semesters

	Semester Enrolled (%)		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Male	35.2	35.1	35.2
Female	64.8	64.9	64.8
Asian Am	4.6	4.6	4.8
African Am	2.5	2.4	2.5
Caucasian	83.9	84.0	83.5
Hispanic	2.2	2.1	2.3
Other	6.8	6.9	6.9
First Gen No	77.6	78.1	79.1
First Gen Yes	22.4	21.9	20.9

How do expectations for grades compare to their recent high school experience?

	High School grades (%)					Expected FY grades (%)				
	A	A-	B+	B	< B	A	A-	B+	B	< B
Male	32.7	30.9	20.2	14.5	1.6					
Female	44.3	27.7	20.2	7.3	0.5					
Asian Am	41.5	30.9	14.9	11.7	1.1					
African Am	23.5	23.5	29.4	19.6	4.0					
Caucasian	40.4	29.6	20.1	9.2	0.7					
Hispanic	34.2	15.4	35.1	11.5	3.8					
Other	41.5	25.3	20.7	11.3	1.2					
First Gen No	40.4	29.4	19.7	9.5	1.0					
First Gen Yes	42.4	27.2	19.6	10.3	0.4					

How do expectations for grades compare to their recent high school experience?

	High School grades (%)					Expected FY grades (%)				
	A	A-	B+	B	< B	A	A-	B+	B	< B
Male	32.7	30.9	20.2	14.5	1.6					
Female	44.3	27.7	20.2	7.3	0.5					
Asian Am	41.5	30.9	14.9	11.7	1.1					
African Am	23.5	23.5	29.4	19.6	4.0					
Caucasian	40.4	29.6	20.1	9.2	0.7					
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Male	32.7	30.9	20.2	14.5	1.6	25.2	37.5	22.4	12.7	2.1
Female	44.3	27.7	20.2	7.3	0.5	20.3	39.6	25.2	12.9	2.1
Asian Am	41.5	30.9	14.9	11.7	1.1	34.0	42.6	12.8	10.6	0.0
African Am	23.5	23.5	29.4	19.6	4.0	17.6	35.3	31.4	11.8	3.9
Caucasian	40.4	29.6	20.1	9.2	0.7	21.7	38.5	24.7	13.0	2.1
Hispanic	34.2	15.4	35.1	11.5	3.8	9.0	41.0	36.8	12.0	1.3
Other	41.5	25.3	20.7	11.3	1.2	24.5	41.5	19.5	13.6	0.9
First Gen No	40.4	29.4	19.7	9.5	1.0	22.7	39.0	24.4	12.0	2.0
First Gen Yes	42.4	27.2	19.6	10.3	0.4	20.0	38.1	23.5	15.7	2.7

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	A	A-	B+	B	< B	A	A-	B+	B	< B
Male	32.7	30.9	20.2	14.5	1.6	25.2	37.5	22.4	12.7	2.1
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Caucasian	40.4	29.6	20.1	9.2	0.7	21.7	38.5	24.7	13.0	2.1
Hispanic	34.2	15.4	35.1	11.5	3.8	9.0	41.0	36.8	12.0	1.3
Other	41.5	25.3	20.7	11.3	1.2	24.5	41.5	19.5	13.6	0.9
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Male	32.7	30.9	20.2	14.5	1.6	25.2	37.5	22.4	12.7	2.1
Female	44.3	27.7	20.2	7.3	0.5	20.3	39.6	25.2	12.9	2.1
Asian Am	41.5	30.9	14.9	11.7	1.1	34.0	42.6	12.8	10.6	0.0
African Am	23.5	23.5	2	47.0	vs 52.9	17.6	35.3	31.4	11.8	3.9
Caucasian	40.4	29.6	2	70.0	vs 60.2	21.7	38.5	24.7	13.0	2.1
Hispanic	34.2	15.4	35.1	11.5	3.8	9.0	41.0	36.8	12.0	1.3
Other	41.5	25.3	20.7	11.3	1.2	24.5	41.5	19.5	13.6	0.9
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First Gen Yes	42.4	27.2	19.6	10.3	0.4	20.0	38.1	23.5	15.7	2.7

Overall how many students did not meet their first year grade expectations?

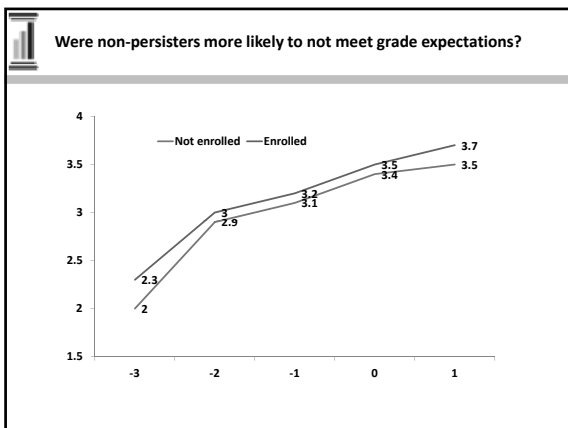
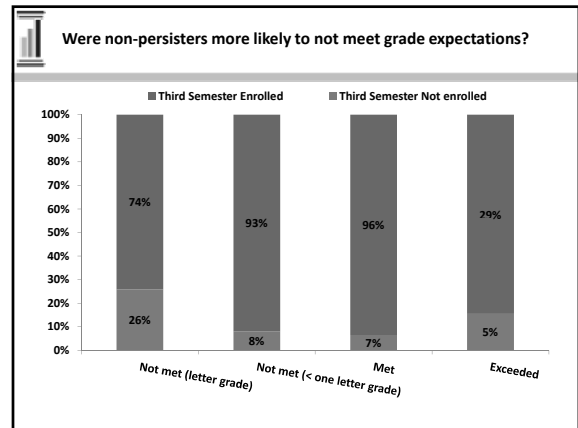
Grade expectations	Total (%)	Third Semester	
		Not enrolled ¹	Enrolled
Full letter grade below or more	11.5		
2/3 letter grade below	13.0		
1/3 letter grade below	21.5		
Met expectations	26.3		
1/3 letter grade above	19.6		
2/3 letter grade above	6.1		
Full letter grade above or more	1.9		

¹Columns proportions (z-test) with Bonferroni adjustment.
Each subscript letter denotes a subset of GradeDiff5r categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Were non-persisters more likely to not meet grade expectations?

Grade expectations	Total (%)	Third Semester	
		Not enrolled ¹	Enrolled
Full letter grade below or more	11.5	25.8 ^a	74.2
2/3 letter grade below	13.0	8.2 ^b	91.8
1/3 letter grade below	21.5	8.2 ^b	91.8
Met expectations	26.3	6.7 ^b	93.3
1/3 letter grade above	19.6	4.5 ^b	95.5
2/3 letter grade above	6.1	7.9 ^b	92.1
Full letter grade above or more	1.9	5.0 ^b	95.0

¹Columns proportions (z-test) with Bonferroni adjustment.
Each subscript letter denotes a subset of GradeDiff5r categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.



Does unmet grade expectations explain student departure?

DV: Enroll 3 rd semester	Unmet full letter grade		All Others	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Male				
Calculus				
Non-First Generation				
SAT/ACT (100)				
AP Courses				
HS Challenge				
High School Grades				
Intention to graduation from institution				
Expected Academic Difficulty				
Perceived Academic Preparation				
Difficulty paying for college				
Distance from home				
HS Engagement				
Expected FY Engagement				
Perceive Academic Perseverance				
Importance of Campus Support				
Expected STEM major				
GPA at departure				
Pseudo R sq (Cox & Snell; Nagelkerke)				

Does unmet grade expectations explain student departure?

DV: Enroll 3 rd semester	Unmet full letter grade		All Others	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Male	.248	2.107		
Calculus	.748	.819		
Non-First Generation	.001	8.810		
SAT/ACT (100)	.393	1.231		
AP Courses	.195	.778		
HS Challenge	.086	.637		
High School Grades	.205	1.459		
Intention to graduation from institution	.730	1.405		
Expected Academic Difficulty	.942	.988		
Perceived Academic Preparation	.014	1.610		
Difficulty paying for college	.130	.783		
Distance from home	.030	.617		
HS Engagement	.086	1.538		
Expected FY Engagement	.452	.865		
Perceive Academic Perseverance	.175	1.331		
Importance of Campus Support	.519	.889		
Expected STEM major	.149	2.905		
GPA at departure	.000	19.132		
Pseudo R sq (Cox & Snell; Nagelkerke)	.303; .466			

Does unmet grade expectations explain student departure?

DV: Enroll 3 rd semester	Unmet full letter grade		All Others	
	Sig.	Exp(B)	Sig.	Exp(B)
Male	.248	2.107	.752	1.098
Calculus	.748	.819	.063	1.796
Non-First Generation	.001	8.810	.224	1.463
SAT/ACT (100)	.393	1.231	.150	1.171
AP Courses	.195	.778	.964	1.004
HS Challenge	.086	.637	.887	.981
High School Grades	.205	1.459	.153	1.238
Intention to graduation from institution	.730	1.405	.018	2.734
Expected Academic Difficulty	.942	.988	.600	1.046
Perceived Academic Preparation	.014	1.610	.583	.938
Difficulty paying for college	.130	.783	.007	.786
Distance from home	.030	.617	.799	.973
HS Engagement	.086	1.538	.717	1.045
Expected FY Engagement	.452	.865	.899	1.014
Perceive Academic Perseverance	.175	1.331	.931	.990
Importance of Campus Support	.519	.889	.611	1.050
Expected STEM major	.149	2.905	.294	.690
GPA at departure	.000	19.132	.307	1.497
Pseudo R sq (Cox & Snell; Nagelkerke)	.303; .466		.035; .103	

- Conclusions**
- Most students, even those retained, earn grades lower than expected.
 - Students that earned at least one full letter grade lower than expected were much less likely to be retained.
 - Factors that predicted persistence to 2nd year for those that earned at least one full letter grade less were being non-first generation, higher perceived academic preparation at beginning of year, being closer to home, higher GPA.
 - Factors that predicted persistence to 2nd year for those that met, exceeded, or only slightly not-met expectations were significantly more likely to intend to graduate from institution at the start of their first year of college, and expressed less concern paying for college.

Student expectations for academic performance

Questions?
Comments?

Thank you!

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Feel free to contact me with any questions regarding NSSE.

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