Campus Housing, Student Engagement and Persistence

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Agenda

- Research Presentation ~30 minutes
- Processing in Groups ~ 30 minutes
- Report Back ~ 15 minutes
Study Background

Has the impact of living on campus changed?

Living on-campus was “the single most consistent within-college determinant of the impact of college.”
- Pascarella and Terenzini (1991)

Direct effect
Study Background

Has the impact of living on campus changed?

More current research suggests the efficacy of residence life is conditional on increasing student engagement.
Study Design

- ~44,000 first-year students and sophomores attending 75 institutions
- Spring to Fall persistence
- Living arrangement: on campus, off campus (not at home), off campus at home
- Engagement: overall & within the residence hall
- Student and institutional characteristics
- Structural Equation Modeling
Persistence

Persistence Rate (Unadjusted)

First-year students
- On-campus: 92%
- Off-campus: 90%
- W/ Family: 91%

Sophomores
- On-campus: 95%
- Off-campus: 93%
- W/ Family: 92%
Engagement Factors

Residential Learning Activities

Belongingness & Safety

Supportive Environment

Financial Well-Being
Engagement Factors

Residential Learning Activities

Which have you done in your place of residence?

- Attended a class
- Met with a faculty member or an advisor
- Used academic support services
- Studied or worked on a project with other students
- Attended social, co-curricular, diversity-related, or health/wellness activities
Engagement Factors

Belongingness & Safety

In the place where you live, to what extent do you feel…?

- Physically safe
- Free from harassment and discrimination
- Comfortable being myself
- Valued
- Sense of community
- Can resolve conflicts
Engagement Factors

Supportive Environment

How much does your institution emphasize…?

- Academic support
- Using learning support services
- Encouraging diverse contacts
- Social opportunities
- Support for your well-being
- Helping w/non-academic responsibilities
- Campus activities/events and events that address important issues
Engagement Factors

Financial Well-Being

This year, how often have you?

- Worried about having enough money for regular expenses
- Worried about paying for college
- Chosen not to participate in an activity due to lack of money
- Chosen not to purchase required academic materials due to cost
- Skipped meals
We classified students into three groups:

1. Living on campus (reference group)
2. Living off campus – not with family
3. Living off campus – with family
Before we begin...

- Students who persisted are those who were enrolled in the spring term and re-enrolled at the same institution in the fall.

- Thus, our persistence rates are higher than most national estimates that operate on a fall to fall definition.

- Small changes matter. The average first-year student at a 4-year institution accumulates about $6,000 in debt (NCES).
Our Model

Goodness-of-Fit
RMSEA: FY=.04, Soph=.05
CFI: FY=.96, Soph=.97
TLI: FY=.96, Soph=.96
Our Model  First-Year Students

- Demographic and Background
- Financial Well-Being
- Belongingness and Safety
- Residental Learning Activities
- Supportive Environment
- Living Off – NOT With Family
  - Total Effects: -.036**
  - Total Indirect: -.025***
- Living Off – With Family
  - Total Effects: -.007
  - Total Indirect: -.016

Solid lines = pos. effect
Dashed lines = neg. effect

Total Effects:
- .036**
- .025***

** p<.01; ***p<.001
(Coefficients are standardized)
Relative to on-campus students:

- Students who lived *with family* persisted at equivalent rates
- Students who lived off campus *without family* persisted at a lower rate
- The difference was largely attributable to less engagement in residential learning activities

Results confirm the more modern notion that the effectiveness of living on campus is conditional and due to the quality of student engagement.
Relative to on-campus students:

- Students who lived off campus with and without their families persisted at a lower rate
- Nearly all the estimates were directly attributable to the location of residence, not engagement

Results mirror the older understanding that living on campus has a direct influence on persistence
Takeaways/Early Conclusions

First-Year Students

1. On-campus housing works to the extent where students engage in learning activities within their residence hall.

2. While students who live with their family perceive greater belongingness and safety in their home, their decreased engagement in learning activities washes out this benefit.

3. Focus staff resources on first-year students.

4. Emphasize programming for all students to have opportunities to engage in academic, social, and co-curricular learning activities in their place of residence.
Takeaways/Early Conclusions

1. Encourage sophomores to live on campus
2. Offering housing to sophomores if it is not available on your campus
3. While residential learning activities are beneficial for sophomores, they are more effective for first-year students. Thus, in situations with scarce resources, programming should prioritize first-year students over sophomores
4. Making the housing experiences distinct for sophomores
NSSE Processing Questions

“Finding-Specific” Questions

• Do any of these findings change the way you think about campus housing operations? Which one(s) and how so?

• When you consider stakeholders on campus, who do you believe needs to hear these findings first? Why?

“So What Now” Questions

• The direct effect of living-on for sophomore student persistence and the indirect effect of living-on for first-year students (i.e., what they do/are engaged in when they live-on makes the difference) are compelling findings for institutional philosophies around housing and resource allocation. What do you make of this and how do you think findings like these might impact your work?

• In what ways should we communicate these findings to the field? To other stakeholders?

• What do these findings mean for the ongoing training and preparation of staff? What can the Association do to support these efforts?

• In what ways are you concerned about these findings? What findings are most compelling for you? Why?

• All research studies have limitations and should be interpreted with caution. Some results may be misinterpreted (e.g., “Are first-year students just as well off when they live with their parents?”). How do we share these findings in such a way that we capture the nuances and communicate the ways that HRL contributes to student success?

• What additional questions do you have that may be answered from this study or from similar research that could benefit your professional work in HRL?

• How will the findings impact your ability to sell the impact of campus housing to stakeholders (internally/externally)?
Thank you

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View our ongoing work at http://go.iu.edu/2dLT