

We CARE: College Retention Programs and Self-Efficacy among Black Students attending a PWI

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Introduction

Abstract

Research has shown that student self-efficacy is closely tied to academic achievement, particularly for college and university students. Self-efficacy in academic settings relates to students' confidence in their ability to successfully accomplish college-related tasks. With self-efficacy being an integral feature of student academic success, college retention programs designed to promote and support successful academic outcomes should include curriculum and strategy to enhance self-efficacy. This is especially true for programs enrolling Black, first-generation college students at predominantly white institutions.

Aims of the Research

The purpose of this study is to take a closer look at self-efficacy among college students from disenfranchised and underprivileged communities who participated in their university's college retention program. More specifically, the goal is to explore whether Black first-generation students feel as though their self-efficacy was increased through their participation in the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE) program at Florida State University.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

- Does CARE increase the self-efficacy of Black first-gen college students?
- What program elements of CARE specifically target self-efficacy?
- Do students feel as though their participation in CARE increased their self-efficacy?
- To what degree do students feel as though CARE contributed to their academic success?

Method

Research Design

Before conducting this mixed methods study, all components of the proposed study were submitted for approval by the University Institutional Review Board. A recruitment letter was distributed to members of the university's college retention program whose demographic information met inclusion criteria for participation in this study. A link to the Qualtrics survey and informed consent were provided in the letter. The interviews were recorded and transcribed via the video communications platform, Zoom. Proper procedure was followed to ensure security of the recordings, transcriptions, and privacy of the participants. The recordings of the interviews and transcriptions were saved on a secure device for analysis. The phenomenon of interest that I will be exploring is the psychological construct of self-efficacy. I will be looking for themes and patterns in shared sentiments across responses from the participants. Inductive coding will be used in analyzing the data.

Participants

Participants were selected for participation based on their racial identity, enrollment and graduation status, and their student classification. The participants must identify as racially Black, be currently or previously enrolled in the CARE program at Florida State University and must be recognized by the university as a first-generation college student.

I interviewed four Black, first-generation college students who are currently participating in the CARE program at Florida State University. I received 14 responses to the Qualtrics surveys and questionnaire.

Instruments

General Self-Efficacy Scale (10-item)

- Measures optimistic self-beliefs to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life.
- Rated on a 4-point, Likert-like scale with response options ranging from "1= Not true at all to 4= Exactly True".
- Clinical Scales: optimism and personal agency

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale for Students (11-items)

- Measures students' opinions about their ability to perform well on academic tasks.
- Rated on a 5-point, Likert-like scale with response options ranging from "No confidence at all" to "Complete confidence".

Findings

Preliminary Findings

This is an ongoing project, and the results are preliminary. The following are some basic data that have been collected as of Fall 2022.

- Students reported obstacles of being first-generation college students.
- Students emphasized comparisons to non-Black, and/or, no-first-generation college students.
- Student involvement in services like workshops, tutoring, and coaching impacted their experience in CARE.
- The importance of representation of academically successful Black students was significant to students.

Implications of Study

This study has several implications for diverse audiences including higher education administrators who serve Black students and clinicians. For instance, this study may be significant to the program coordinators and interested departments involved in the development and maintenance of services and resources provided to students participating in their universities' college retention program. Additionally, the possible outcome of this study may have important clinical implications for identifying and understanding factors that support or inhibit self-efficacy development in Black, first-generation students attending predominantly white institutions.

Key References

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The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305B210014 to Florida State University. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.



PURPOSE

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