ABSTRACT

Hispanic Student Perceptions of College Preparedness: December 2015

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The educational community perceives college and career readiness as a crucial issue facing our society. According to recent literature, Texas trails many other states in the United States in college retention and graduation rates. This phenomenon occurs due to inadequate preparation of high school students for post-secondary education. The educational prospects of the Hispanic community in Texas may continue to suffer if Hispanic students do not graduate from high school prepared for college coursework. Evidence of this problem is apparent in the overrepresentation of Hispanic students in developmental education programs in many community colleges and four-year universities. Recent studies reveal a lack of alignment between the learning activities undergone by students during high school and the learning activities students encounter in college causes students to enter college underprepared for success in credit-bearing coursework.

However, the passage of House Bill One, “The Advancement of College Readiness in Curriculum”, in 2005 increased the accountability of Texas High Schools for the college preparedness of high school students. In 2008, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board unanimously approved a set of college and career readiness standards to incorporate into the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Furthermore, the recently implemented State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams involve more higher-order thinking
and an increased level of academic rigor compared to previous Texas state exams. In addition, Texas high school students must pass certain STAAR End-of-Course exams in order to be considered college-ready. The researcher seeks to determine whether or not an increase in college preparedness has occurred following the inception of the College and Career Readiness Standards and the STAAR program.

According to recent literature, three main factors contributed to inadequate preparation for college in the past: lack of higher-order thinking activities in high school coursework, the writing requirements differ from high school to college, and the fact that the study habits required for success in college are often neglected in high school coursework. The researcher analyzed data related to these three factors.

The purpose of this study is to determine the correlation between the learning activities from the senior year of high school and the learning activities from the freshman year of college. The researcher analyzed quantitative data from the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) from two four-year universities that serve high percentages of Hispanic students. The BCSSE-NSSE Combined Report from 2012-2013 from Institution Number One, the BCSSE 2014 report from Institution Number Two, and the NSSE 2015 report from Institution Number Two were used for this study. Learning activities from the senior year of high school and learning activities undergone during the freshman year of college were compared. On the BCSSE surveys, incoming college freshmen answered questions regarding the learning activities undergone during their senior year of high school. These students also predicted the frequency in which they would engage in certain learning activities during their freshman year of college. The NSSE surveys were completed by students at the end of their freshman year. These students provided data about the
learning activities in which they participated during their freshman year of college. The learning activities that increase college readiness were examined. Recommendations for further research and practice will be made upon completion of the study.