Academic Spree Day and Fall Fest

May 17th, 12:00 AM - 11:00 PM

Making the LEAP: Do First-Generation Students Feel Prepared for Experiential Learning?

Isabel Bleyer  
*Clark University*, ibleyer@clarku.edu

Hillary Plumb  
*Clark University*, hplumb@clarku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.clarku.edu/asdff


This Open Access Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conference Proceedings at Clark Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Spree Day and Fall Fest by an authorized administrator of Clark Digital Commons. For more information, please contact mkrikonis@clarku.edu, jodolan@clarku.edu, dlutz@clarku.edu.
Making the LEAP: Do First-Generation College Students Feel Prepared for Experiential Learning?'

Isabel Bleyer ’20 and Hillary Plumb ’20 (Sponsor: Professor Nancy Budwig)

Introduction

- Recently, there has been a shift in higher education to incorporate experiential applied learning into the undergraduate curriculum (Schneider, 2018).
- The LEAP Challenge (2015), organized by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), encourages all students to participate in project-based learning before graduating college, to enter the 21st century workforce and civic life with appropriate application skills.
- This project is part of a larger study which looks at how much experience with applied learning college first-years bring into higher education.

- Past work shows that first-generation status has an impact on participation in project-based learning (Finley & McNair, 2013).
- This poster focuses specifically on responses to two questions from the larger survey (Q2 & Q13) to answer the question: Does parent education level correlate with student reports of project-based learning in high school?

Methods

Participants
- 340 first-year college students responded to our Qualtrics survey.
- These students were recruited from 4 colleges that collaborated with the AAC&U.

Survey Tool
- The larger survey asked 23 questions about high school experiences and the transition to college.
- The questions we examined were:
  - The extent to which students had participated in a significant project in high school,
  - and the highest level of education that the participant’s parents completed.

Procedure and Analysis
- First-year college students were invited to participate in our survey online by a University official.
- Questions pertaining to parent education level and experience with project-based learning were examined and analyzed.
- Participant responses were coded for parent education level (less than a BA, a BA, or an Advanced Degree) and student’s experience with project-based learning (no such experience, half a semester or less experience, or more than half a semester).

Results

- Across all 4 schools, we found that most students (84%) reported having experience with significant project-based learning in high school. We found some subtle differences between the different schools.
- School I had more than twice the percentage (22%) of students that reported “no such experience” with project-based learning, compared to School IV (10%).
- Students at School I and School IV were more likely to have participated in project-based learning for less than half a semester, and students at School II and School III were more likely to participate in project-based learning for more than half a semester.

- Although more than 80% of students have had experience with project-based learning during high school, there were differences based on parent education level.
- The project-based experiences reported by first-generation students during high school were shorter than reported by students whose parents had a BA or Advanced Degree.

Discussion

Summary
- Most students in our sample reported having project-based learning experiences.
- We found some individual differences across the schools, as well as between parent education levels.

Next Steps
- A larger sample would be beneficial for this study.
- There is potential for a longitudinal study which could demonstrate whether participants found their high school experiences with project-based learning to be helpful in college.

Implications
- It is important for high school and college educators to understand how students prepare for the transition to higher education.
- Students arrive at college with different experiences and backgrounds; thus educators must provide equitable curricula to prepare them for society.

References

