Student Interactions, Connectedness, and Retention in an Online MBA Program: An Exploratory Study

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Introduction, problem statement, significance of study

Methods

Findings

Interpretation of findings and recommendations for future research

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Significance of Study

Online MBA Market
Retention Rates
Professional Network
Type and Quality of Connections

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Conceptual Framework:

Online Student Connectedness

- Social Constructivist Theory
- Adult Learning Theory

Comprehensive Connectedness: 
- Comfort
- Community
- Facilitation
- Interaction & Collaboration

Satisfaction:
- Student Satisfaction

Retention:
- Retention Rates

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1. To what extent do current students and did alumni feel connected in their Online MBA Program at William & Mary?

2. How, and to what extent, did opportunities for students and/or alumni to connect with other in the program influence their intention to persist in a course or the program?
Surveys:
• Online Student Connectedness
• Faculty

Interviews:
• Faculty
• Students / Alumni

Assignments:
• 4 courses

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Connectedness: Students

All scores based on 5-Point Likert Scale (1=least, 5=most)

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Most Connected

Moderately Connected

Least Connected

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Connectedness: Faculty

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Participant Profiles: Faculty

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To what extent do current students and did alumni feel connected in their Online MBA Program at William & Mary?
Average Connectedness Score

Moderately High
4.00

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Qualitative Data Analysis

Chain of evidence (Yin, 2014)

Reflexive journal (Bazeley, 2014)

A prior codes and “lean coding” (Creswell, 2013)

Dedoose

Excel
Comfort
Community
Facilitation

Interaction and collaboration
• Pooled
• Serial
• Reciprocal

Retention

A Priori Codes

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To what extent do current students and did alumni feel connected in their Online MBA Program at William & Mary?

RQ1

“I’ve never felt comfortable with asking somebody a specific question outside of the professor.”

“I feel like I'm going to have connections for life that I made in this program.”

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What in the students’ experience of those learning activities were consequential to them that made them feel connected?
How and to what extent did collaborative work and other learning activities influence student connectedness in the Online MBA Program?
How and to what extent did opportunities for students and/or alumni to connect with others in the program influence their intention to persist in a course or the program?
Thematic Network:
Online Student Connectedness

Connectedness
- Comfort
- Community

Management of Expectations
Support from Others
Connection to Institution

Retention

Collaborative Work & Learning Activities
- Collaborative Work Structure
- Collaborative Tool Options
- Instructor Presence
- Information Sharing
- Collaborative & Group Work
Conceptual Framework: The Intersection of Online Student Connectedness & Community of Inquiry

- **Social Presence**: Comfort & Community
- **Cognitive Presence**: Interaction & Collaboration
- **Educational Experience**: Facilitation of Learning
- **Teaching Presence**: 

**Outcomes**
- Learning
- Student Satisfaction
- Retention Rates

**Theories**
- Social Constructivist Theory
- Adult Learning Theory
Implications for Practice

Program administrators and educational leaders

Course developers and instructional designers

Course facilitators

Students
Future Research

Longitudinal study

Expanded study

Personality study

Optional collaborative work study

Mixed methods study – quantitative focus

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