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To What Extent Do the Benefits of Academic Coaching Endure?

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HIGHLIGHTS

▪ Among students who already are participating in academic coaching, more sessions with an academic coach is associated with greater odds of program completion
  ▪ When students from the matched sample (all of whom have had 0 academic coaching sessions) are added, this relationship is no longer statistically significant

▪ The previously observed relationship between participation in academic coaching and persistence in online graduate students (Lehan, Hussey, & Shriner, 2018) does not seem to endure through program completion

▪ Students who are already engaging with an academic coach might be encouraged to continue to do so if the goal is to increase their odds of completion
  ▪ A “booster” coaching session might be helpful
As more students enroll in online programs, they continue to struggle to a greater extent than their peers in face-to-face settings (Britto & Rush, 2013).

Faculty members report having insufficient time to complete all their job requirements optimally (Berebitsky & Ellis, 2018).

- Academic coaches might represent an opportunity to promote (1) learning, (2) engagement, and (3) persistence and retention (Bettinger & Baker, 2011; Lehan et al., 2018).

- If higher education institutions provide academic coaching as a persistence, retention, and/or completion initiative, it is critical that they evaluate under what conditions they are effective and use the findings to make continuous improvements (Robinson, 2015).
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- In the model of institutional departure, in addition to formal and informal social systems, Tinto (1993) argued that students must integrate into formal and informal academic systems to learn and persist.

- Researchers (e.g., Kuh, 2005) have found that one of the most important factors in students’ persistence is their ability to make a meaningful connection with at least one person at the institution.

- Chambliss and Takacs (2014) argued that developing relationships with staff members, such as academic coaches, can positively impact student success.
  - Outcomes and impacts associated with academic coaching have been examined to a limited extent, especially among graduate and online students.
**SETTING & PRACTICE**

- Completely online university that primarily grants graduate degrees
  - Certified part-time academic coaches with graduate degrees are available to provide personalized academic support to students in groups and one-on-one

- Focus is on the enhancement of student competence in 2 institutional learning outcomes (written communication and quantitative reasoning), rather than the completion of coursework or development of broader skills, such as time management
  - Also aim to help students to become more self-directed in their learning
METHODOLOGY

- 160 graduate students (123 doctoral) were selected randomly from all students who participated in one-on-one academic coaching from 10/1/15-12/31/15
  - Matched sample of students was created by an individual who was external to the research team with no knowledge of the study’s purpose
- In both samples, 60 (37.5%) students were in the School of Business and Technology Management, 59 (36.9%) were in the School of Education, 26 (16.3%) were in the School of Psychology, and 15 (9.4%) were in the School of Marriage and Family Sciences
- Among the students in the academic coaching sample, ranging from 1 to 208, their average number of academic coaching sessions was 16.9 (SD = 30.4)
  - Mode number of sessions was 1 (n = 27)
PRELIMINARY ANALYSES

Alt text: Balanced scale above the words no significant difference
Several of the potential predictor variables were found to be significantly related to program completion in bivariate analyses:

- Number of months since program enrollment \( (r_s = .416, p < .01, n = 320) \)
- Number of years since attainment of the last degree \( (r_s = .295, p < .01, n = 320) \)
- GPA for content courses \( (r_s = .521, p < .01, n = 320) \)
- History of program dismissal due to not making satisfactory academic progress or other reasons \( (r_s = -.579, p < .01, n = 320) \)
- Age \( (r_s = .143, p < .01, n = 320) \)
- Financial aid status \( (r_p = -.199, p < .01, n = 320) \)
Number of academic coaching sessions (a ratio-level variable) was found to be significantly related to program completion in the academic coaching sample \((r_s = .170, p = .03, n = 160)\).

- The relationship between working with an academic coach and program completion was no longer statistically significant when the matched sample was added to the analysis.

- This was true, regardless of whether participation in academic coaching was measured as a categorical (yes/no) \((r_s = .069, p = .219, n = 320)\) or an interval (number of sessions) \((r_s = .069, p = .220, n = 320)\) variable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B(SE)</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>-5.176 (1.82)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Months Since Enrollment</strong></td>
<td>.051* (.01)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years Since Last Degree</strong></td>
<td>.005 (.02)</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GPA for Content Courses</strong></td>
<td>.930 (.49)</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Dismissal</strong></td>
<td>-3.239* (.47)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>-.001 (.02)</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Aid</strong></td>
<td>-.791 (.41)</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( R^2 = .48 \) (Cox & Shell), \( .59 \) (Nagelkerke). Model \( \chi^2(6) = 189.53, p < .001 \).
MAIN FINDINGS

- When holding the values of age, years since last degree, GPA for content courses, and financial aid status constant, the odds of program completion increased 1.05 times for each month since enrollment and decreased .04 times for each program dismissal.

  - Although these effect sizes are low, overall, the model correctly predicted whether a student graduated 82% of the time.
FUTURE RESEARCH

- Examine under what conditions students chose to engage in academic coaching to promote understanding of the extent to which those conditions influence the relationship between academic coaching and outcomes, including program completion.

- Investigate under what conditions students do and do not continue to participate in academic coaching.

- Explore to what extent the relationship with an academic coach and/or the instructional strategies that are used to assist students in their learning are associated with persistence.


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