

Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri–St. Louis, Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

Shanee Haynes

MS in Communications, October 2007, Lindenwood
University

BA in Mass Communications, December 2005 University
of Missouri–St. Louis

Kevin Wathen

MPA in Public Administration, May 2011, Southern Illinois
University Edwardsville

BS in Psychology, December 2000, Southern Illinois
University Edwardsville

Rayza Rolón-Nieves

MPA in Public Administration, May 2015, University of
Puerto Rico–Río Piedras

BA in Art History, December 2012, University of Puerto
Rico–Río Piedras

Jordan Watson

MEd in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, December
2014, University of Missouri–St. Louis

BA in Journalism, May 2011, Georgia State University

Student–faculty Engagement Solutions for Retention of Racially Minoritized Students

Date: March 5th, 2024

Time: 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Place: TLC Sigma-Aldrich Room

Abstract

This qualitative study examined the importance of student–faculty interaction for racially minoritized students. Persistent challenges in low retention rates for racially minoritized students has been a focal point of scholarly investigation for decades (Carey, 2004; Kinzie et al., 2008). Despite research indicating that engagement between students and faculty is crucial for improving student retention, these interactions are constrained (Cox et al., 2010). The presence of effective student–faculty engagement can foster students' persistence, while the absence of engagement can create a negative academic experience, especially for racially minoritized students. It was discovered that, although students have a desire to interact with professors, there were barriers that prevented them from being active participants.

Tinto's theory of student departure (1975, 1987, 1993) is one of the most relevant college impact theories to understand student retention. Tinto's work considers retention by accounting for multiple dynamic factors, as opposed to just academic performance or exclusively student-focused concerns (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Therefore, this study utilized this theory to develop research questions and interpret the data.

The purpose of this study was to identify strategies to increase student–faculty interactions by addressing the disparity between the limited interactions and the established benefits associated with such interactions. Understanding the causes of student attrition is crucial for universities to develop and implement successful retention strategies. In this study, a qualitative semistructured interview design was employed at a medium-sized public university in the Midwest. The researchers conducted a comprehensive exploration of student–faculty engagement with racially minoritized students who identified as first-time first-year college students. Through the participants' personal stories and examples, the researchers identified factors that deter student–faculty engagement and identified effective strategies to enhance such interactions.

The researchers discovered opportunities for professors to optimize their efforts in retaining students by providing them with the holistic support they require to be successful. Awareness of students' needs, coupled with intentional techniques on the professor's behalf, has the potential to be transformative for students' academic experiences. The recommendations of this study can serve as a framework for institutions seeking to enhance interactions between racially minoritized students and faculty, thereby contributing to improved retention.

Defense of Dissertation Committee

Gretchen Fricke, EdD, Chairperson

Kenton Mershon, PhD

Shawn Woodhouse, PhD