Dissertation Defense

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“Community College Student Performance: The Effects of a Remedial Intervention, Demographic Factors, and Psychological Factors on Student Achievement and Retention”

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Community colleges are integral to American education because they provide accessible education for all citizens (Jacobson, LaLonde, & Sullivan, 2005). There is a growing need, however, to improve upon the educational practices of these colleges so that more students can successfully earn degrees. Despite the many opportunities that higher education affords, a large percentage of students are underprepared for college-level coursework and are not able to complete degree requirements. Remedial coursework is available to those who need basic skills training, but the additional time and tuition required to complete these programs can actually deter student engagement and decrease their motivation to earn degrees. This three-paper dissertation, conducted with an urban community college student sample, utilizes archival and self-report data sets to investigate the impact of a college-wide intervention aimed at students in need of remedial classes, the impact of demographic factors on performance, and the effect of psychological factors on performance. In the first paper, I examine the effectiveness of a course designed to prepare students in remedial education courses for college work. In the second paper, I investigate the relationship between various demographic factors and student GPA and retention. In the third paper, I focus on the relationships between psychological factors and student GPA and retention. Results indicated that the metacognitive courses did not impact GPA or retention, yet demographic and psychological factors do impact these two outcome variables. These results aid in understanding the elements that contribute to community college student success so that education and organizational behavior researchers can develop interventions based on empirical evidence.