

Title of Grant: Rural, Suburban and Urban Community College Perspectives

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Abstract:

While much research centers on student recruitment, retention and success, a need existed to replicate these studies within the VCCS, taking into account the variables of rural, urban and suburban localities. Three community colleges researchers studied student perceptions on college affordability, persistence and college choice, comparing and contrasting students' perceptions based on the college type.

Actual Outcomes:

This research provided information on the similarities and differences among community colleges in Virginia. Some of the similarities were in the reasons students decided to attend a community college and the involvement level within the community college. Differences included the need for financial aid services depending on the type of college attended.

Other Colleges:

This project did not incorporate any type of event, it involved a study.

Discussion and Critique:

This project gave the researchers a framework to begin formulating additional research. With additional resources, more focus group and surveys would be conducted to include more community colleges in the state.

Evaluation:

This project was evaluated using the quantitative and qualitative data collected. Because of only conducting one focus group per campus and a survey that yielded 1600 responses, the researchers realized that this was not a study that yielded results that could be easily generalized for colleges throughout Virginia and community colleges in general.

Dissemination:

We submitted a proposal for New Horizons Conference in April 2008 but the proposal was not accepted. A proposal was also submitted for Noel Levitz's (a national recruitment/retention consultant) National Conference and it was accepted. The study was presented at this conference on July 16, 2008 in Chicago, Illinois. In addition, further research on this topic is warranted and a future project may include additional focus groups and surveys so that a publication can be created filling a large gap in the literature on this topic.