

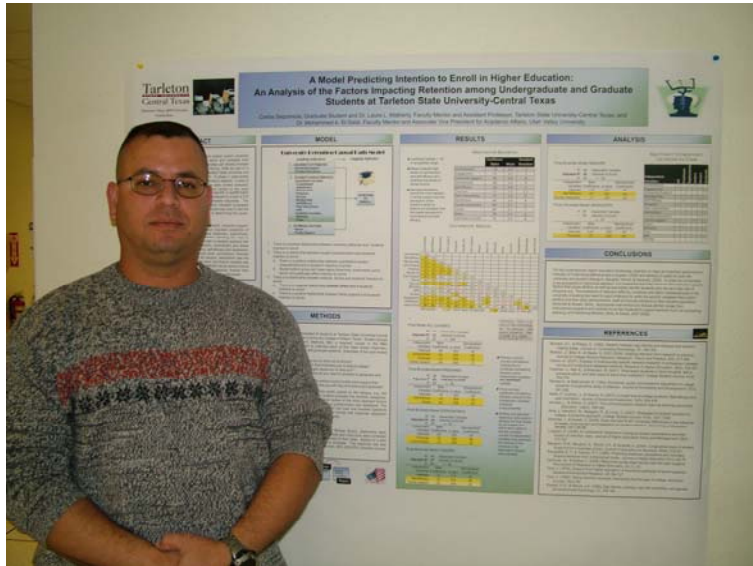
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A MODEL PREDICTING INTENTION TO ENROLL IN HIGHER EDUCATION



An Analysis of the Factors Impacting Retention among Undergraduate and Graduate Students at Tarleton State University – Central Texas. This empirical study explores the variables that predict current university students' intention to enroll in subsequent terms and complete their education. By improving retention rates, universities can directly increase enrollment. The research was conducted in Spring, 2008 as part of a graduate business research methods class at Tarleton State University and Central Texas Community College in Killeen, Texas. In Phase 1, open-ended focus group questions formed the basis of exploratory research. A total of forty students were interviewed and the results were content analyzed. Combining the interview results with a literature review of the most important factors predicting whether students will reenroll, a questionnaire was developed. In phase 2, the survey was administered to a total of 278 undergraduates and graduates resulting in 263 usable responses. The internal consistency calculated by coefficient alpha indicated acceptable reliability for all variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses and conceptual model with the aim of determining the cause-and-effect relationships among the variables.

The results indicate that for all students, commitment, university support, membership, self-efficacy and satisfaction were important predictors of intention to enroll. However, within class levels (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors) the significant predictors varied, indicating the need to assess each group's needs and interests in order to develop solutions that effectively address their issues. For freshmen, commitment and stress were significant predictors, while membership, self-efficacy and satisfaction were important to sophomores. At the junior level, commitment, finances and family support were significant, and for seniors, satisfaction was the only factor identified.

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