

THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC
FACTORS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

By

MARK ERIC BARBER

Submitted to the Graduate School

Appalachian State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2009

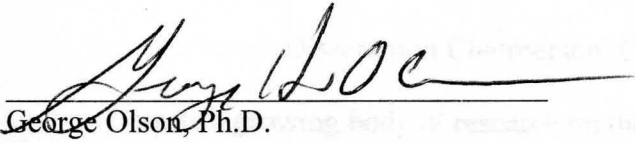
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
Reich College of Education

THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC
FACTORS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

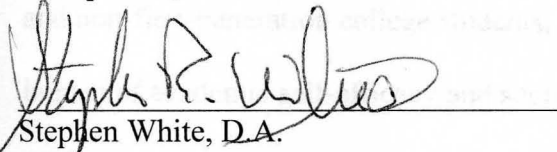
MARK ERIC BARBER

May 2009

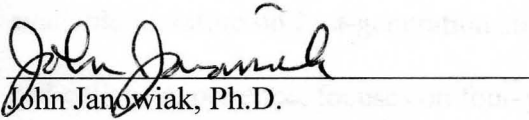
Approved by:



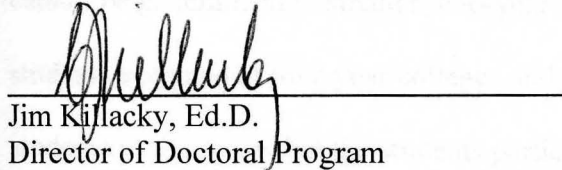
George Olson, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee



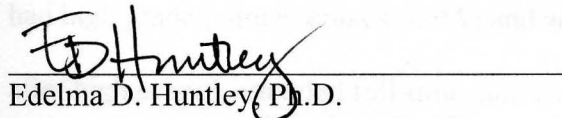
Stephen White, D.A.
Member, Dissertation Committee



John Janowiak, Ph.D.
Member, Dissertation Committee



Jim Killacky, Ed.D.
Director of Doctoral Program



Edelma D. Huntley, Ph.D.
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS (May, 2009)

Mark Eric Barber, B.S. University of South Carolina at Coastal Carolina College

M.A. Webster University

Dissertation Chairperson: George Olson, Ph.D.

Despite a growing body of research on the differences between first-generation and non-first-generation college students, little is known about the relative effect and the impact of academic self-efficacy and socio-demographic factors on academic achievement of first-generation students attending community colleges. Much of the available literature on first-generation students, defined as neither of the student's parents had college experience, focuses on four-year colleges and universities, and therefore cannot be generalized to smaller, two-year colleges. In fact, first-generation college students accepted at four-year colleges and universities probably resemble traditional students in the sense that the students participated in a rigorous high school curriculum, had high grade point averages (GPA) and admission test scores, enrolled immediately after high school, attended full-time, and lived on-campus.

This study focused on the overarching question: What are the relative effects and the impact of academic self-efficacy and socio-demographic factors on academic

achievement, as determined by first-semester GPA, on first-generation community college students? To address this question, descriptive statistics were used in the preliminary analysis on data collected from the surveys along with correlation, *t*-test, *z*-test, chi-square test, and relative risk ratios to explore differences among students.

Research literature suggests first-generation college students face a myriad of complexities that puts them at a higher risk of not succeeding in college, particularly those students possessing multiple risk factors. For the purpose of this study, a risk factor is defined as a characteristic or variable that puts a student at greater risk for not being academically successful. Not only are they disproportionately overrepresented in the most disadvantaged groups relative to enrollment and graduation rates, first-generation students differ from their peers in many respects that reduce the likelihood that they will be academically successful in college.

The findings in this study support the point of view that academic self-efficacy appears to be a significant factor contributing to academic achievement in that higher levels of academic self-efficacy lead to higher first-semester GPA between first-generation and non-first-generation community college students. On the other hand, socio-demographic risk factors did not appear to appreciably influence academic achievement, specifically first-semester GPA, of students in this particular study.

Therefore, this study adds to the limited body of knowledge and addresses the gap in literature regarding differences in factors relating to academic achievement of first-generation and non-first-generation college students at community colleges. The findings should have important implications for research and instruction within the community college environment due to the large percentage of first-generation students.