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Does a Linked First-Year Seminar and Undergraduate Career Exploration Course Influence the Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy and Transitional Success of Undecided Traditional First-Year Students at Western Michigan University

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Does a Linked First-Year Seminar and Undergraduate Career Exploration Course Influence the Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy and Transitional Success of Undecided Traditional First-Year Students at Western Michigan University

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(First-Year Experience Programs)

Ms. Lauren Frye
(Research Assistant)
Acknowledgements

- Faculty Assessment Grant Committee
- Dr. Jeffrey Terpstra, Director of the Statistical Consultation Center at Western Michigan
- Students
  - Ms. Lauren Frye, Research Assistant
  - Ms. Samantha Harris, Student Assistant
Reason for the assessment study:

- To focus attention on the needs of undecided students
- To strengthen programming to facilitate increased transition (engagement) and ability (for undecided students) to make decisions about possible careers
- To further consider how best to impact undecided students’ persistence and retention rates at WMU
To determine the:

- Effectiveness of a FYS and UNIV 1020 course on the transition & career decision making self-efficacy of undecided first-year traditional college aged students at WMU
- Impact of a linked FYS and UNIV 1020 course has on the career decision-making self-efficacy and transition success in traditional first-year students at WMU, and
- To provide support for the development of an effective program that addresses needs of undecided incoming first-year traditional students at WMU
First-Year Experience (Seminar)  
**FYE 2100**
- FYE 2100 is a 16 week two-credit hour semester course
- The primary goal is to provide students with shared opportunity to successfully make academic/social transition

Career Exploration & Development  
**UNIV 1020**
- UNIV 1020 is a one-credit hour course offered to undergraduate students
- The primary goal is to provide students with an opportunity to learn a procedure for educational and career decision-making
Subjects

Subjects were recruited from sections of:

- UNIV 1020
  - N=10  N=4
- FYS 2100
  - N=18  N=11
- ENGL 1050
  - N=30  N=15
- Linked Course (FYS 2100 & Univ 1020)
  - N=37  N=27
Research Methodology & Procedures

- Obtained HSIRB approval before conducting the study

- Administered three instruments at two points in the semester (beginning and end)
  - Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Short Form
  - First Year Initiative (end only)
  - Demographic Questionnaire

- Involved a correlational design

- Participants included four different student groups (all first year students)
- Participation was voluntary and research assistant went into classrooms to recruit participants
Instrumentation

Used the Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Short Form (CDSE-SF) focused on & had 25 items

5 point Likert scale

- Self-appraisal
- Gathering occupational information
- Goal selection
- Making future plans
- Problem solving
Used the First-Year Initiative Survey (FYI) – designed to assess the perceptions of first year students about their overall experience related to transitional adjustment, specifically to the extent to which the course improved/increased:

- 7 point Likert scale
- Connections with faculty
- Connections with peers
- Out-of-class engagement
- Knowledge of campus policies
- Of academic services, and
- Assisted with students’ sense of belonging and acceptance
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Discussion

- No statistically significant differences between and within the groups of students on CDMSE and FYI
- Statistical significance in the mean scores of the first and second administration of the CDMSE
  - \( N=89 \quad M=3.36; \quad N=53 \quad M=3.48 \quad p < .001 \)
- Statistical significance in the mean scores of the academic goals
  - \( N=91 \quad M=2.09; \quad N=57 \quad M=2.60 \quad p < .001 \)
Discussion

- Progress towards academic goals was a predictor of career decision making self-efficacy. It accounted for 22% of the variance in career decision making self-efficacy.
- Career goals was a predictor of career decision making self-efficacy and it accounted for 32% of the variance in career decision making self-efficacy; statistically significant less than .001.
Discussion

- First Year transition was a predictor of career decision making self-efficacy.
- 18% of the variance in career decision making was attributed to first year transition; statistically significant at .001 level
**Results**

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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Some of the limitations or challenges included:

- In many instances students enrolled in ENGL 1050 students were also enrolled in FYS 2100
- The possible stigma attached to the use of the “undecided” terminology when presenting the opportunity for students to participate in the study
- Limited number of subjects participating in the study
- Limited subject post response rates
- Research design focused on differences in the classes at different points in the semester rather than pre and post design
While we could not establish differences in first year transition and career decision making within our sample, we discovered there was a strong relationship between career decision making and first year transition.

More research is needed to examine the impact this relationship has on retaining students.
Next Steps

- Utilize online survey administrations to strengthen data collection
- Better align FYS 2100 and UNIV 1020 courses via training/professional development
- Better educate subjects in linked courses about the goals/objectives of the study