

Student Success among First Generation College Students at a Small Liberal Arts College

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Abstract:

The present study examined school-related anxiety and self-efficacy among first-generation college students at a small liberal arts college. Prior research shows that first-generation students encounter unique academic barriers and may be at heightened risk for school-related anxiety. Students completed the LASSI Anxiety scale, the Revised Test Anxiety Scale, and a self-efficacy measure. Independent-samples t tests and correlations were conducted to compare first-generation and continuing-generation students. First-generation students reported significantly higher levels of general school-related anxiety on the LASSI measure, although groups did not differ on test anxiety. The two anxiety measures were strongly correlated, but only LASSI Anxiety was associated with first-generation status, suggesting that first-generation students in this sample experience broader academic anxiety rather than test-specific anxiety. Self-efficacy did not differ by generation status, though higher self-efficacy was correlated with lower anxiety across all students. These findings indicate that first-generation students at small liberal arts institutions may experience elevated general academic anxiety but may be buffered from self-efficacy deficits often reported at larger institutions.