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## Who Participates in Academic Services?

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WHO PARTICIPATES IN ACADEMIC SEERVICES?

by

Richard G. Colón

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Sociology  
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## **Abstract**

Throughout the years the admission of Hispanic students to colleges and universities has risen dramatically. An HSI (Hispanic Serving Institute) was created to start to give higher education students the ability to have equal opportunities in support and funding; meaning that at least 25% of the student population of a university is Hispanic. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the awareness of academic services and the participation of those services among Hispanic, and first-generation students. For this study 309 University of Central Florida students were asked to fill out a survey to further understand the awareness and participation of academic services at the University of Central Florida. I hypothesized that Hispanic or first-generation students, once they are made to be aware of these academic services, are more likely to participate and continue to engage in these services that are being offered to them. The findings indicated that there were no significant differences in awareness and participation of academic services by ethnicity or generational status. These students are just as likely to be aware of a specific academic service, as they are to participate in them, as all those who are non-Hispanic and or non-first generation. The implications of this research depict a situation where the resources offered by the university for the students are being disbursed better than initially thought.

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## **Introduction**

The Hispanic population in the United States has been growing steadily over the past decade. There has been an increase of about 2.7% from 15.4% (year) to 18.1% (year) of the population being of Hispanic or Latin origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Alongside the general growth rate is the increasing enrollment rate of Hispanic individuals into college. In the 2007-2008 academic year 2,702,479 Hispanic undergraduate students were enrolled into a Title IV institution (a designation of the Higher Education Act of 1998 that allows institutions to apply for federal funds to improve the higher education of Hispanic students in the US); in the 2017-2018 academic year 4,228,631 Hispanic undergraduate students were enrolled into a Title IV institution. This is a 59% increase overall (National Center for Education Statistics 2020). This research explored the relationship between the awareness of services or programs and participation in academic and engagement programs at the University of Central Florida (UCF). UCF is a Hispanic Serving Institution and has large numbers of first-generation students at 12,644 students as of the Spring 2020 term. As well as the undergraduate Hispanic population at 16,148 students (Institutional Knowledge Management 2020). Hispanic Serving institutions are defined as colleges or universities that have a Hispanic population of at least 25% of the student body. They must be full or part-time students that are currently enrolled in a college or university (De Leon, 2016).

This research included the following services and programs: UCF Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP), First Year Advising and Exploration (FYAE), and the McNairs Scholars program. These were targeted since they have an emphasis on Hispanic, Latinx, or first-generation students.

## Literature Review

### **Models of peer mentoring programs**

Peer mentoring programs are programs that are created to assist students with their academic studies by using other students that are similar in age and possibly major. Past research has explored how first-generation students and Hispanic students sought out academic information through services and whether they participated in a peer mentoring program. These studies have found model programs for peer mentoring that were created to show other universities how to create a peer mentoring program, and of programs that were evaluated to create models of student participation rates. For example, in their study titled *A Model of First-Generation Latino/a College Students' Approach to Seeking Academic Information*, Torres, Reiser, LePeau, Davis, & Ruder (2016) concluded that most of the students went to their peers, friends, or other staff to find out information rather than going to go seek out the information directly. The model that was based on first-generation Hispanic students had initially conducted interviews on 60 students but focused on 24 students and found that a student's main way of searching for information regarding academic services is through friends and not through advising (Torres et al., 2006).

Rios-Ellis et al. (2012) sought to find a solution to the issues that arose in the previously mentioned study about the peer mentoring program. Here, they created a peer mentoring program that would bring in first-generation Hispanic students that needed help academically and would pair them with a mentor that would work with them for at least an hour a week (Rios-Ellis et al., 2012). This does differ from other research that has been conducted through rather than studying the student and understanding where they go to acquire information, the students

are recruited to join the peer mentoring program. However, they are only recruited if the students have a GPA of less than 2.49 or below. Thus, excluding students that are doing better than the required GPA to receive the information that they need (Rios-Ellis et al., 2012).

### **Analysis of student engagement**

A case study was conducted with Ana Gomez, a first-generation student. Researchers used her experience to understand the difficulties of being a Hispanic student in a predominantly white school (Pyne, & Means, 2013). One of the major findings showed how much of an impact going seeing an academic advisor or other professor can have on a student's academic achievement in college. For example, in one of the narratives, Ana had spoken on how going to her economics and biology professors for help in the classes and in other areas of academia, had helped her tremendously in understanding the material of the classes. The case study also presents an in-depth analysis of the difficulties that she and other Hispanic first-generation students faced once they entered college. Difficulties included not being as aware or prepared for certain classes or programs such as an introductory course to economics that Ana had taken (Pyne & Means, 2013). The literature provided an insightful look on how Hispanic first-generation students seek help within academia.

In another study, Vuong and Tracz (2010) conducted an in-depth analysis of first-generation college students across five different schools in California to study the association between self-efficacy of first-generation students and academic achievement. The authors defined self-efficacy as how someone understands and believes that they can complete a task for a certain goal based off their own knowledge and talents, like self-confidence. The study found that higher self-efficacy levels were correlated with higher overall academic performance and

confidence. Implications from this research point to avenues to help students become more aware of the academic services that are available to them, as well as means to increase participation in those services.

Awareness and participation in peer mentoring programs have been shown to greatly increase overall academic achievement and engagement in other university programs. For example, at Humboldt University a peer mentoring program was implemented and monitored for three semesters (Made, Hasan, Burgess, Tuttle, & Soetaret, 2019). According to Made et al., (2019) study indicated that Under Represented Group (URG) students participated in these mentoring programs managed to outscore non-URG students. These findings suggest that awareness and eventual participation in this service increased academic performance even against those that are not first-generation students. The study also mentioned that participation in these services increased self-efficacy levels to a point that was higher than those that were not in an URG, the overall failure rate in classes for non-URGs was 20% compared to those in an URG at 10% (Made et al., 2019). This study is consistent with the previous literature because URG students had a higher success rate through the participation of this service.

In a study similar to the research of self-efficacy, Bohon, Johnson, and Gorman (2006) utilized a national study which used a questionnaire that was administered to select schools across the country to understand Hispanic students' aspirations for attending college. The questionnaire was given to adolescent students. The study drew upon the *National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health* to aid their research of college aspirations. The research had identified that many of the students had roadblocks to being able to attend college. Roadblocks included their SES (socioeconomic status), being a first-generation student, and their

family income (Bohon, et al., 2006). These roadblocks were highest amongst Mexican American and Puerto Rican students. Most of the students were of poorer families than their Cuban counterparts who were usually of middle class or higher; aspirations for college were significantly lower than Cubans across the entire U.S. (Bohon et al., 2006). Through these issues many of the students that can make it into a university are completely unaware of any services that may be available to them. Creating lower participation rates and a lower academic performance rate. These are all boundaries that first-generation Hispanic students face once they come into the college atmosphere.

Living learning programs are similar to mentoring programs as both are a service that allows for students a chance to excel in a university. Living learning programs differ because they are designed for first year students to make their social and academic transition into college easier as opposed to mentoring programs which are meant for most students in college. Research conducted by Inkelas, Daver, Vogt & Leonard (2007) had analyzed the *National Study of Living-Learning Programs* in the Spring of 2004. However, the authors only used 33 of the 34 schools in the study. 33 of the post-secondary schools and universities had first-generation respondents. A comparison group comprised of first-generation students living in traditional residence halls was used to compare to the group of first-generations students the participated in the living learning programs. The students living in these communities had shared academic and social goals (Inkelas et al., 2007). Students that stayed in the program had an easier perceived transition into college life academically and socially. Out of the 1,335 students that had participated and those that remained in the program, had higher success rates in academia than those that did not participate amongst the first-generation students that had been studied. This rate of success was

measured through the students college GPA, time spent on attending classes and studying, involvement in social and co-curricular environments, faculty and peer interactions, financial status, student background characteristics such SAT score and high school GPA, and pre-tests on confidence on the students ability to successfully complete course work in college (Inkelas et al., 2007). Through this research it was shown that first-generation students may need a more structured life than those that are not first-generation and don't participate in the living/learning program. Through this service the students became more aware of other services and had higher participation, because their self-confidence was higher.

### **Analysis of group engagement**

Advisors and mentors are important to students in not only providing information on their academic careers, but to provide information that will help them beyond academic careers in college. A study conducted by Torres and Hernandez (2009) used a sample of Latino students from 3 urban universities: the universities being two HSI universities and a predominantly white university. According to Torres and Hernandez (2009), having an academic advisor/mentor was extremely beneficial to Hispanic first-generation students as their institutional commitment and academic integration levels increased which also increased levels of self-confidence in their academic and social lives. Awareness of services through an academic advisor increased retention rates of university students. Hispanic first-generation students that were able to attain an academic advisor/mentor in their first year were more likely to have one next year and so on. The percentages of students that had an advisor/mentor had steadily increased. Whether through retaining that advisor or gaining a new advisor at about 10-12% of those that had an advisor in their first year. Allowing for these students to also have higher

academic performances and awareness in their classes and programs (Torress, & Hernandez, 2009).

Schueths and Carranza (2012) studied students from Pre-K all the way until their professional careers to see if mentoring leads to any major success in academic life in college. They conducted a content review on 51 articles about mentoring first-generation Hispanic students. The major findings were that if a mentoring program is going to be implemented at any level, it does not necessarily mean that student success will increase. In fact, it can decrease if the environment for the mentoring programs are indifferent towards students. If the mentoring, whether informal or formal, is well done, then it can advance the success rates of students and can increase awareness and preparedness of the students once they enter college.

Prior research has shown how awareness and participation in academic services, such as mentoring programs or obtaining an academic advisor/mentor, can increase academic achievement and success socially within a university amongst first-generation Hispanic students. However, through the prior research and literature, there has been limited research conducted on how the awareness of a service can increase participation in those services, amongst first-generation and/or Hispanic students in college. The current research will examine how awareness of an academic service will increase participation in those academic services and whether participation in those services will increase the overall academic performance of a student. Possible implications through this research will be to create new policies that will help students become more aware and have easier access to these services if they are unable or are unwilling to participate in the academic services.

## **Theoretical Argument**

This research is guided on Critical Race Theory (CRT) elements. Critical Race Theory relies on the idea that race is socially constructed and is not a biological difference between people. Critical Race Theory states that racial tension and discrimination is created through socioeconomic status, legal differences, and social differences between white people and people of color. It states that white supremacy uses the idea of race to help keep their ideologies above others (Yao et al., 2019).

CRT relates to the research project in that the researcher used the theory to analyze the difference between the rest of the population at UCF v. the Hispanic and first-generation populations on campus. The theory gave the researcher the ability to understand how each of the racial populations on campus differ from the Hispanic and first-generation population on awareness of services and participation in those services. CRT helped explain the different lived experiences that someone who is Hispanic may have, versus someone who is white or of another race. This also applies for those of first-generation status; someone who is of a minority status, their experience at the university may differ because they may be more disadvantaged in terms of understanding the college life compared to someone of the majority.

CRT being founded on the notion that minorities may have more difficulty or may view their daily life through a different lens is what prompted the researchers initial thought process to create this study. These difficulties may make it more challenging for Hispanic and or First-Generation students to be aware of and participate in the academic services available to them. Based off CRT and preconceived notions of ideology, the researcher had hypothesized that the

previously mentioned student type may have a more of a disadvantage or struggle in terms of either being aware of this information or having access to it.

## **Hypothesis**

Based on the review of the literature and guided by Critical Race Theory the following hypothesis will be tested in this study.

H1. First-generation and Hispanic students are less likely to be aware and participate in academic services compared to other students at the University of Central Florida.

## Methodology

### **Data**

This is a quantitative study that used an online survey to collect data from UCF students to understand the relationship between the awareness of academic services and their participation in those services. The survey had 29 questions and took an estimated five-to-seven minutes to complete. It was given through the online surveying system Qualtrics, all responses were anonymous. The survey was distributed from January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Respondents had the option to take and stop the survey at any time should they have chosen to. A link to the survey was distributed through several means including social media, specifically Instagram, Facebook, and Reddit and was texted to colleagues, and eventually shared to their colleagues. It was also distributed to the faculty and staff of UCF to share with their students for further data collection. This research was used for a class project and thus was exempt from IRB approval.

Survey question types include five-to-seven-point Likert scales, matrix questions, multiple-choice single answer questions, and multiple-choice multiple answer questions. The Likert scale questions were used to determine awareness levels, participation rates, and whether students believe that the services are successful in assisting students in their academic careers. The matrix table questions were used to measure awareness of specific services, such as first year advising, and academic and engagement programs. It was used to figure out why students are unable or are unwilling to participate in the academic services that are available to them. Most of the multiple-choice single answer questions are used to find out how many of the students go to their advisors and how many times they visit their advisor during the semester. It

is used for how they go about finding out information aside from their own academic advisors to help them succeed in their academic careers. The multiple-choice multiple answer question is being used to determine how students find out information to assist them in school.

The research design being used is a cross-sectional study. The researcher has observed a sample of UCF students and collected data on their awareness levels and participation rates of academic services at one point in time.

### **Sample**

The sample was attained through snowball sampling and convenience sampling. The sample consists of 309 UCF students, primarily those of Hispanic and/or Latin origin, as well as first generation students were used for the study. However, 27 cases were removed because they either left all or some questions unanswered deemed important by the researcher of the study. The goal was to have at least 50% of the sample be Hispanic and first-generation students. However, only around 1/3 (99 students) of the respondents were Hispanic. 82 of the respondents were of first-generation status and only 38 of the respondents were of first-generation Hispanic status. Data from all races was collected and used to compare awareness levels and participation rates amongst the student body. This research solely measures the awareness and participation rates of academic services among the respondents. All participants must have been 18 years old and above to take the survey and enrolled at the University of Central Florida.

### **Variables**

The principal independent variable that was measured is students of Hispanic or Latin origin and/or are first-generations students. This variable was measured using demographic

questions asked at the end of the survey. Specifically, participants were asked if they are of Hispanic origin, (ex. Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, etc.). There were two questions asking what year (freshman, sophomore...) the participant is and whether they are a first-generation student or not. These questions were multiple-choice questions single response answer choices or multiple answer questions in order to collect the most accurate amount of information.

The control variables that can alter or affect participation in academic services were measured through multiple-choice single answer and open-ended questions. Questions such as what the participants age is, what is their gender, and what is their major, were used to determine whether these variables will change the outcome of the study based on the previously mentioned hypothesis.

The dependent variable is awareness levels of academic services by UCF students and their participation in those services. Awareness was measured by asking participants how many services they were aware of, ranging from 0 to 4. Respondents participation was measured using five-to-seven-point Likert scale questions. The responses from those who participate in the survey were measured from extremely unlikely to extremely likely or, not at all successful to extremely successful when talking about the impact that the services had on the participant or their perception of success of the service amongst the student body. Each question was tailored to the measurement of each service through three main sections, awareness levels, participation rates in the academic services, and how students collect information to assist their academic careers. These three sections were chosen as they were seen to be the best way to measure awareness and participation of academic services.

The programs in the survey were First Year Advising and Exploration (FYAE), the UCF Research and Mentoring Program (RAMP) Program, McNairs Scholars Program, and overall awareness of Academic and Engagement Programs. FYAE is the essential advising office for first time in college students (FTIC): it is used to help explain to first year students important UCF policies, guides students through building their curriculum for the year. This program was chosen for the research as it is one of the primary resources that are first introduced to students when they arrive. Thus, depicting a resource that most, if not all students entering UCF should be aware of. UCF RAMP is a program that gives all students the opportunity to gain research experience while working closely with a seasoned faculty member. The RAMP program was chosen because if a student were aware of the program and chose to participate, it would connect them to not only resources in the level of higher education, but also to resources outside of the university. The McNairs Scholars program was created to give an opportunity to underrepresented and minority students (ex. First-Generation, Hispanic...), the resources to engage in the eventual pursuit of a doctoral degree. Students of this program receive assistance through funding or advising for their research; they participate in courses and seminars in preparation for the pursuit of graduate schooling. This program was chosen to showcase another service that may assist students in furthering their academic and professional careers, as well as displaying an emphasis on assisting those in the minority communities.

## **Data Analysis**

To test the study hypothesis a series of statistical tests were analyzed utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program (SPSS). Analyses include a series of univariate and bivariate tables were created from the data.

## **Results**

Initially there were 309 respondents to the survey, however, 27 cases were removed as they only answered some or no questions besides the question of consent or a few other questions not necessarily important to the study.

### **Univariate Analysis**

An analysis of frequencies was created to depict overall awareness of academic services among the sample. Overall awareness is shown in Table 1. Awareness of at least one academic service is the highest percentage among the sample at 35.8%, no services is the second highest percentage at 27.3%. There were fewer students that stated they were aware of more than two academic services resulting in smaller percentages (two services at 20.6%, three services at 7.4%, four services at 8.9%). These percentages were used to gauge awareness of four example services that were used by the researcher in another question. It was then combined into one single variable to measure overall awareness.

*Table 1 Frequency of Awareness of rates (N= 282)*

<b>Awareness of Amount of Services</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
No Services	77	27.3%
1 Service	101	35.8%
2 Services	58	20.6%
3 Services	21	7.4%
4 Services	25	8.9%

Note: Skip logic was used for those that stated that they are not aware of any of mentioned academic services. Which accounted for 77 respondents that stated they were not aware of any service.

These frequencies were used to understand how the sample interacted with academic services before being split up into separate groups based on ethnicity and generational status. A frequency of participation in whichever academic service the respondents chose was

then analyzed. Of those that answered this question within the survey, only 34.0% of people participate in an academic service. While 35.8% of the people within the sample do not participate in any sort of academic service. However, this is not representative of the University of Central Florida as there are over 66,000 students attending. Within those that answered this question, 85 respondents were missing cases which comprises 30.1% of the sample.

*Table 2 Frequency of Participation Rates (N= 282)*

<b>Participates in Services*</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Participation	96	48.7%
No Participation	101	51.3%

Note: 85 missing cases, data is partially missing. Accounts for 30.1% cases. Percentages are Valid percentages. Skip logic was used for those that stated that they do not participate in academic services which accounts for missing cases.

The independent variables were used to measure the dependent variables of awareness and participation rates of academic services were if a respondent was first-generation, non-first generation Hispanic, non-Hispanic, first-generation Hispanic, and Non-first-generation Hispanic (Table 3). This sample consisted of 56% of first-generation students and 29.1% of it was. From the respondents that had answered this question, 42 of the cases were missing cases that accounted for 14.9% (Table 3). 35.1% of the sample was Hispanic and 48.9% were not. There were 45 missing cases which accounted for 16% of cases (Table 3). There were 99 respondents who were first-generation Hispanic and non-first generation Hispanic. 38.4% of respondents were first-generation Hispanic and 58.6% of respondents were not. There were 3 missing cases which accounted for 3% of cases (Table 3). Frequency tables were created to show what type of and how many respondents engaged in the survey.

Table 3 Descriptive of Independent Variables (N= 282)

<b>Variables*</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Generational Status</b>			
First-Generation	0-1	.34	82
Non-First Generation			158
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Hispanic	0-1	.42	99
Non-Hispanic			138
<b>Generational/Ethnicity Status (N=99)</b>			
First-Generation Hispanic	0-1	.40	38
Non-First-Generation Hispanic			58

Note: First-Generation and Non-First Generation has 42 missing cases accounting for 14.9% of cases. Hispanic and Non-Hispanic has 45 missing cases accounting for 16% of cases. First-Generation Hispanic and Non-First-Generation Hispanic has 3 missing cases accounting for 3% of cases. Figures are percentages. Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding errors

## **Bivariate Analysis**

Bivariate Analyses were conducted after the univariate analyses were completed. The bivariate analysis was used to test the hypothesis of whether Hispanic and or first-generation students were less likely to be aware of and participate in academic services. A cross-tabulation (Table 4) was used to compare the rates at which Hispanic, Non-Hispanic, first-generation, non-first generation, first-generation Hispanic, and non-first-generation Hispanic students had participated in any academic services. The significance level of .785 for first-generation students, .496 for Hispanic students, and .542 for first-generation Hispanic students. According to these statistics, there is no significant difference between those who are Hispanic and or first-generation to those who are not. They are equally as likely to participate in services as all those

who are not Hispanic and or first-generation students according to this sample. This result is similar to the next series of tests.

*Table 4. Cross-Tabulation-Overall Participation in Academic Services among First-Generation Students vs. Non-First-Generation Students; Hispanic Students vs. Non-Hispanic Students; First-Generation Hispanic Student vs. Non-First-Generation Hispanic Students*

Variable*	Participation	No Participation	$\chi^2$	Sig.
	Frequency (Percent)	Frequency (Percent)		
First-Generation Non-First Generation	27 (48.2) 59 (50.4)	29 (51.8) 58 (49.6)	.074	.785
Hispanic Non-Hispanic	35 (47.3) 52 (52.5)	39 (52.7) 47 (47.5)	.463	.496
First-Generation Hispanic Non-First-Generation Hispanic	14 (51.9) 20 (44.4)	13 (48.1) 25 (55.6)	.372	.542

Note: Figures are percentages. Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding errors

Lastly, to test the final dependent variable of awareness, an Independent Sample T-Test was used to measure overall awareness of academic services. This variable was recoded from being aware of four example services (McNairs Scholars Program, UCF RAMP Program, First Year Advising and Exploration, and Academic and Engagement Programs) overall, to then being combined into one variable that would measure how many services a respondent was aware of. Through measuring the impact of these groups awareness levels, it resulted in there being no significant difference between those of Hispanic and or first-generation origin, and those who are not, according to this sample. The significance for overall awareness of academic services first-generation students is .680; the rate of insignificance is applied to those who are Hispanic at .383, and .777 for those who are first-generation Hispanics. Indicating that once

again, Hispanic and or first-generation students are equally as likely to be aware of the academic services that are provided by UCF.

*Table 5 Independent Sample T-Test-Overall Awareness of Academic Services among First-Generation Students vs. Non-First-Generation Students; Hispanic Students vs. Non-Hispanic Students; First-Generation Hispanic Students vs. Non-First-Generation Hispanic Students*

<b>Variable*</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Awareness of Services						
First-Generation Student	82	1.2805	1.23002	-.413	238	.680
Non-First-Generation Student	158	1.3481	1.18873			
Hispanic Student	99	1.2727	1.12321	-.874	235	.383
Non-Hispanic Student	138	1.4130	1.28284			
First-Generation Hispanic Student	38	1.2895	1.25004	.284	94	.777
Non-First-Generation Hispanic Student	58	1.2241	.99195			

\*Note: Index of overall awareness of services measured as additive sum; 1= awareness of 1 service; 2= awareness of 2 services; 3= awareness of 3 services; 4= awareness of 4 services.

## **Discussion**

After analyzing the data from the survey in SPSS, the initial hypothesis was not supported. The results depict in this scenario that ethnicity and generational status does not affect how likely you are to participate or how aware a student may be of the academic services that are provided by UCF. The analyses states that there are no significant differences between ethnicity and generational status when compared to the rest of the sample. Through the analysis, it is also shown that it is relatively the same in terms of participation rates in any sort of academic service. This being mostly in part the percentages for those that answered the survey. According to the literature, a possible explanation of this could be that students' academic advisors are helping them with being aware of certain academic or social services that will propel the student forward into participating or retaining their knowledge of academic services (Torres & Hernandez 2009). Going through the literature is what prompted the initial hypothesis, however, after the analyzation process, and realizing that the majority of the variables were tested were insignificant, (all at higher than  $P < 0.05$ ), it became difficult to prove a relationship between lower awareness and participation levels among Hispanic and first-generation students. Thus, indicating no relationship between them.

The results might also suggest that UCF is getting better at making their students aware of the services available to them, especially to the underrepresented groups of the school. UCF, being an HSI, may also play a bigger role in assisting Hispanic and first-generation students with advertising what they have to offer to the student body. This may then influence, or, may not cause any sort of change in awareness and participation among the student body because of how they inform them. In relation to this, UCF Global is a major promoter of academic services to the

clubs and programs or Hispanic and first-generation organizations on campus. This also applies to all organizations on campus. UCF now has 26.7% or 18,592 students that are Hispanic/Latino (UCF Facts 2019-2020). Based on the results of the study, and Critical Race Theory, it would appear that race, ethnicity, and generational status do not have as much of an impact when regarding levels of awareness and participation for academic services. Indicating that because UCF is an HSI, and soon becoming a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) as well, the university would have less difficulties dispersing information regarding academic services, as a primarily white serving institution may have. It might also suggest that the impact of race is lessened in a context where there are ample programs and opportunities for students to succeed while taking into account their lived experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, and generational status.

Although it is evident that because UCF is an HSI, it contributes to their success with handling the increasing demographical changes. However, there may be other reasons that contribute to their success. UCF for some time now has been able to assist students with their academic success through their emphasis on getting as many students to graduate as possible; because of this, UCF has placed a focus on utilizing their first year advising program to garner student's awareness of academic services, regardless of their ethnicity or generational status. Alongside their focus on overall graduation rates is their attentiveness on retention rates. The significance of implementing these programs, emphasis on advising and retention, is not only to assist students with their academic careers, but to also meet potential quotas set by the university. According to the UCF Institutional Knowledge Management Performance Based Funding Metrics, Metric 5 depicts the academic progress rate and states that UCF has an excellence of 8 (measured on 10-point scale) (UCF IKM 2019). What this may explain, is through the

implementation of these academic programs the university is steadily increasing its retention rate. Thus, helping all students throughout the process. Further research evidence would need to be provided to make a more factual statement regarding the initial hypothesis and results of this study.

However, there are a few limitations to this research that if another researcher were to conduct a similar study, they may get different results. The first of these being that the researcher had to initially get rid of 27 cases or respondents as they did not answer most of the questions that were necessary to the research. Following this, another 40 or so had been placed into the missing cases category as respondents did answer some of the dependent variable questions, but not the questions that were related to the independent variable that were grouped with the demographics at the end of the survey. Another possible limitation to the research, could be that UCF is getting better at making their students aware of the services available to them, especially to the minority groups of the school. This also applies to all organizations on campus, possibly creating a skew within the results of this sample. As technology is becoming more advanced and able to connect people to one another more, UCF has begun to create social media pages on all platforms to facilitate more engagement. UCF is becoming aware of the fact that a majority of the student body has some form of social media. This transition may also be a key factor or limitation in why the results were insignificant.

## **Conclusion**

Future research on this topic should use a bigger sample of the UCF student body and should try to get a bigger representation of Hispanic and first-generation students. This may issue different results. The sample that was used was significantly smaller than the student body at less than 1% of the now 66,000+ students at the university. Future research should also gather more information on the individual academic services that are offered by the university. This can possibly be used to gauge how students are becoming aware of services and how they go about participating in them.

However, this research does depict how well UCF has been responding to its demographical changes over the years. Due to the research indicating no significant difference in ethnic and generational and racial status for awareness and participation of academic services, UCF may be better equipped to handle the growing minority population.

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