

LIBRARY BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S DISTANCE LEARNERS

CANTRELL JOHNSON

Abstract:

Over 1,200 community colleges nationwide enroll over ten million students each year, with more than one in four of these students taking some of their courses at a distance. Many of these post-secondary institutions also struggle to retain and graduate students enrolled as distance learners. In a continuing effort to address college completion gaps, research attempts to identify barriers to success and provide insights on how to decrease college completion gaps. Given post-secondary education's increased focus on students' use of resources beyond the classroom, a logical line of exploration is the link between academic library usage and library aptitudes and attitudes. This study sought to examine the library behaviors and perceptions of a community college's distance learners. Of interest is the relationship among inexperience, apathy, and anxiety in general as well as differences, if any, among demographic variables of gender, race/ethnicity, and distance from their college. Ninety-two distance learners completed an abbreviated thirty-item version of the Multidimensional Library Scale developed by D. J. Van Kampen-Breit in 2016. Results were analyzed using well Pearson's r , independent sample t -tests, and ANOVA using the composite factors of inexperience, apathy, and anxiety. The most compelling finding in relation to race and to the study was that White students were significantly more experienced than Asian students. The average rating across all participants suggests that students are not particularly inexperienced or anxious or apathetic in terms of their attitudes toward use of the library. Correlations suggest that as student becomes more experienced with how to use the library and its resources, anxiety in and apathy toward using the library will decrease.