

Engagement and a Sense of Belonging in Kinesiology Undergraduate Students

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ABSTRACT

A student's sense of belonging may promote success and retention during their undergraduate experience and could be influenced by co-curricular engagement (participation in community events organized by the home department). Even more important, an institution with a satellite "branch" campus offering less co-curricular events may see less sense of belonging in those particular students. **PURPOSE:** To assess undergraduate student sense of belonging based on co-curricular engagement and college campus and to investigate the findings in Kinesiology (KINE) students. **METHODS:** Public university students (18+ years) in California were recruited for an IRB approved Qualtrics survey in Spring 2023. Participants were asked to complete demographic questions (age, gender identity, undergraduate major) in addition to eleven questions for sense of belonging (two domains; valued competence and social acceptance) using a 6-point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree. Statistical analysis software (IBM SPSS v.28) was used to assess the differences (p -value of 0.05 for significance), for sense of belonging across two campuses and for those engaged in department organized community events. **RESULTS:** Undergraduate student respondents ($N=149$, age; 24.3 ± 5.7 years, gender identification; $n=1$ other, $n=111$ female, and $n=37$ male, and KINE, $n=83$ or other majors, $n=59$) indicated they participated in department organized community events (yes=77, no=72, and KINE yes=42, no=41) or identified with either the main ($n=98$, KINE $n=58$) or branch campus ($n=52$, KINE $n=26$). Based on the Independent T-Test, sense of belonging was significantly different ($p<0.05$) for all students (greater sense of belonging for both domains in those that participated in the department organized community events) but not for KINE students ($p>0.05$) and no significant differences across the two campuses ($p>0.05$) were found. **CONCLUSION:** Undergraduate students' sense of belonging was significantly greater when they participated in department organized community events which was not seen in KINE students or based on campus. University administrators should be aware of the relationship between participation in department organized community events and a student's sense of belonging as that may play a role in their retention and success.