

On the Relationship Between Student Experiences and Student Achievement

During the Spring 2020 semester, 885 of ARC's African American, Latinx, and Native American students were surveyed about their experiences and perceptions at ARC. This survey (*The Student Experience Survey*) was developed and administered by ARC's African American, Latinx, and Native American Disproportionate Impact Project Teams.

The preliminary results, presented at [ARC's Fall 2020 convocation](#), revealed that most of ARC's African American, Latinx, and Native American students had positive student experiences at ARC. As examples, the majority of students indicated agreement or strong agreement about "seeing themselves as part of the college community", "feeling socially accepted", "being able to find the academic support they need", and "feeling that the college is committed to fostering an environment where students of color can be successful."

However, the survey also identified areas for improvement. As examples, the majority of students indicated agreement or strong agreement that "people of my cultural, ethnic, or racial (or Native American) group are more likely to experience discrimination on campus than others", and "In my daily experience at ARC, I regularly worry about my financial circumstances (e.g. personal income)." In addition, 1 in 5 students agreed or strongly agreed that they "sense cultural, ethnic, or racial tensions on campus."

Key Finding:

Further analyses have since revealed that ***for ARC's African American, Latinx, and Native American students', their experiences and perceptions are reflected in their student achievement outcomes. Specifically, ARC's African American, Latinx, and Native American students' experiences and perceptions (as measured on the survey) were significantly associated and predictive of their actual student achievement outcomes, including their course success rates, course drop rates, and persistence rates (continued enrollment from Spring 2020 to Fall 2020) (all p's < .05).***

For example, students who agreed that "I see myself as a part of the college community" had a higher average success rate (A, B, C, Credit, Pass) in their classes than students who did not agree (81% vs 70%) and were more likely to persist to the Fall 2020 semester (72% vs 60%). Students who agreed that "I have at least one professor who cares about my academic success at ARC", had a higher average success rate (81% vs 73%), a lower average drop (withdrawal) rate (10% vs 17%), and were more likely to persist to the Fall 2020 semester (71% vs 48%) than students who did not agree.

By contrast, a different pattern emerged on less positive topics. For example, students who agreed that "people of my cultural, ethnic, or racial (or Native American) group are more likely to experience discrimination on campus than others" had a lower average success rate (78% vs 83%) and a higher average drop rate (12% vs 9%) than students who did not agree. For African American students (n = 229), the differences regarding this specific topic were even greater. African American students who agreed that they their group was more likely to experience discrimination had a lower average success rate (70% vs 90%) and a higher average drop rate (15% vs 8%) than African American students who did not agree. Similar results were obtained regarding "worries about financial circumstances."

Limitations and Implications:

Importantly, these analyses are correlational—they do not prove cause and effect between student experiences and student achievement. Another caveat is that the African American, Latinx, and Native American survey respondents included a higher proportion of successful students compared to the African American, Latinx, and Native American students in the Spring 2020 cohort, suggesting an oversampling of higher achievers. Lastly, the success and drop metrics were computed per individual over their career at ARC, rather than per course or section within a term, so they differ from those typically reported as college statistics and are not directly comparable.

However, even with these caveats, these results suggest that student experiences and perceptions may play a role in and can predict student achievement outcomes. In addition to documenting a connection between student experiences and student achievement, these significant associations help support the case for the relationship between professional development efforts at the college to promote equity and social justice (e.g., to improve sense of belonging, to promote

authentic care, to build a more equitable and inclusive campus, to reduce discrimination) and the college's goal of achieving more equitable outcomes for ARC's traditionally disproportionately impacted students.