

You're Not Getting Older; You're Getting Better

Student Characteristics and Academic Achievement

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This is a condensed version of a paper presented at the Conference on Human Development last April. Full text and statistical results are available from the authors.

While research on academic achievement in higher education often has examined the relationship between performance (GPA) and ability (SAT), few studies have investigated differences in student motivation and academic success. This gap in research may be particularly noteworthy given the demographic changes in the student population.

Anecdotal evidence across many institutions indicates that adult learners generally are more serious about their studies than traditional-age students. Adults are more committed to the learning process and have greater appreciation for the value of education than their younger classmates.

In a study of 410 traditional and non-traditional students, respondents were asked to complete an

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tion requests are already coming in, so I have great hopes for good attendance at this first, and perhaps annual, event on this topic here.

For anyone considering a teaching conference at KSC, the support systems available here are terrific. I have been able to talk to experienced planners in English, nursing and psychology to tap their expertise. The conference office of Continuing Education has been unflagging in its support, especially on the complicated local arrangements. I encourage anyone with an inkling to take the plunge, because the help you need is available.

instrument that assesses differences in learning orientation (LO) and grade orientation (GO). Past research indicated that LO students are eager for the college experience to enhance their personal and intellectual development. GO students engage in academic work primarily for grades.

Results indicated that the strongest effect is due to age, with increasing age associated with higher GPA. Women were more likely to have a higher GPA than men. When all of the predictors were considered, LO and GO scores did not contribute to predicting GPA.

As was expected, the greater number of hours a students works,

the lower the GPA. In our sample, students worked an average of 24 hours per week, reflecting the nature of our campus, where the mean age is 26.5.

Adult learners are often burdened by the demands of a full-time job and family responsibilities in addition to their studies.

Nevertheless, the good news is that with increasing age comes greater maturity. Adult learners generally are more successful academically in spite of greater obstacles as they pursue their educational goals. So relax; they're getting older, but they're getting better.



REACTING

THROUGH TEACHING

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