

Assessing the Needs of Master's Degree Students in Transition to Graduate School

Joshua T. Alexander

Michelle A. Maher

University of South Carolina

Study Origin and Conceptual Framework

- Thesis topic derived from personal/peer experience
- Literature on Student Transitional Needs
 - Research on department, program, university
- Literature on Delayed-Entry Student Needs
 - Research on financial, family needs, academic assistance
- Institutional Response
 - Orientations, mentoring, etc.

Study Questions

- What are current transitional difficulties?
 - Direct vs. Delayed Graduate Students
- How are programs/services provided by individual graduate programs perceived?
 - Direct vs. Delayed Graduate Students
- What recommendations do graduate students have for current/future peers and universities?

Study Method

- Developed Masters Degree Student Experiential Survey
 - Student anxieties prior to enrollment
 - Student transitional difficulties in first semester
 - Reaction to department transitional programs
 - Student recommendations

Study Method (Cont.)

- Participant Demographics
 - 42 (20.7%) male, 161 (79.3%) female
 - 92 (45.3%) direct-entry, 111 (54.7%) delayed-entry
 - 80 (39.4%) UNC, 119 (58.6%) USC, 4 (2.0%) Other
- Results Compiled through flashlightonline software and analyzed with SPSS

Study Findings

- Greatest anxieties of graduate students
 - Adjustment to academic demands, work/school balance, finances
- Little difference between direct- and delayed-entry graduate students
 - Direct-entry students much more likely to be anxious about peer/faculty interaction
- Departmental programs, when available, were helpful

Study Findings (cont.)

- Student recommendations included:
 - Need stronger institutional support
 - Need more than “one shot” programs
 - More awareness of available campus resources
 - Orientation programs for graduate student administrative needs
 - Increased awareness of available financial assistance
 - More social opportunities for incoming graduate students

- For more information, please contact us at:
 - Michelle Maher, Ph.D.
 - Department of Ed. Leadership and Policies
 - University of South Carolina
 - mmaher@gwm.sc.edu
 - (803) 777-3084