

Higher education institutions consider a student's Grade Point Average, class rank, and ACT or SAT before accepting the student into the educational institution. These qualifications are considered predictors for academic success in higher education. The question has now arrived: Are these the only way to predict academic success?

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to identify characteristics of incoming freshmen and the retention status of their first semester within a college of agriculture at a western university using the Student Readiness Inventory (SRI).

Theoretical Framework

Longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure (Tinto, 1993)

The model describes student departure as a longitudinal process with six phases: pre-entry attributes, goals/commitments, institutional experiences, integration, goals/commitments, and outcome.

Methodology

Population and Sample

Fall 2008 Entering Students

- 206 Entering Students Participated – 100 % Response Rate
- 6 Incomplete Questionnaires – Classified as Missing

Instrumentation

Student Readiness Inventory (Le, Casillas, Robbins, & Langley, 2005)

- 108 questions in the form of Likert scales
- 10 higher order factors

Analysis

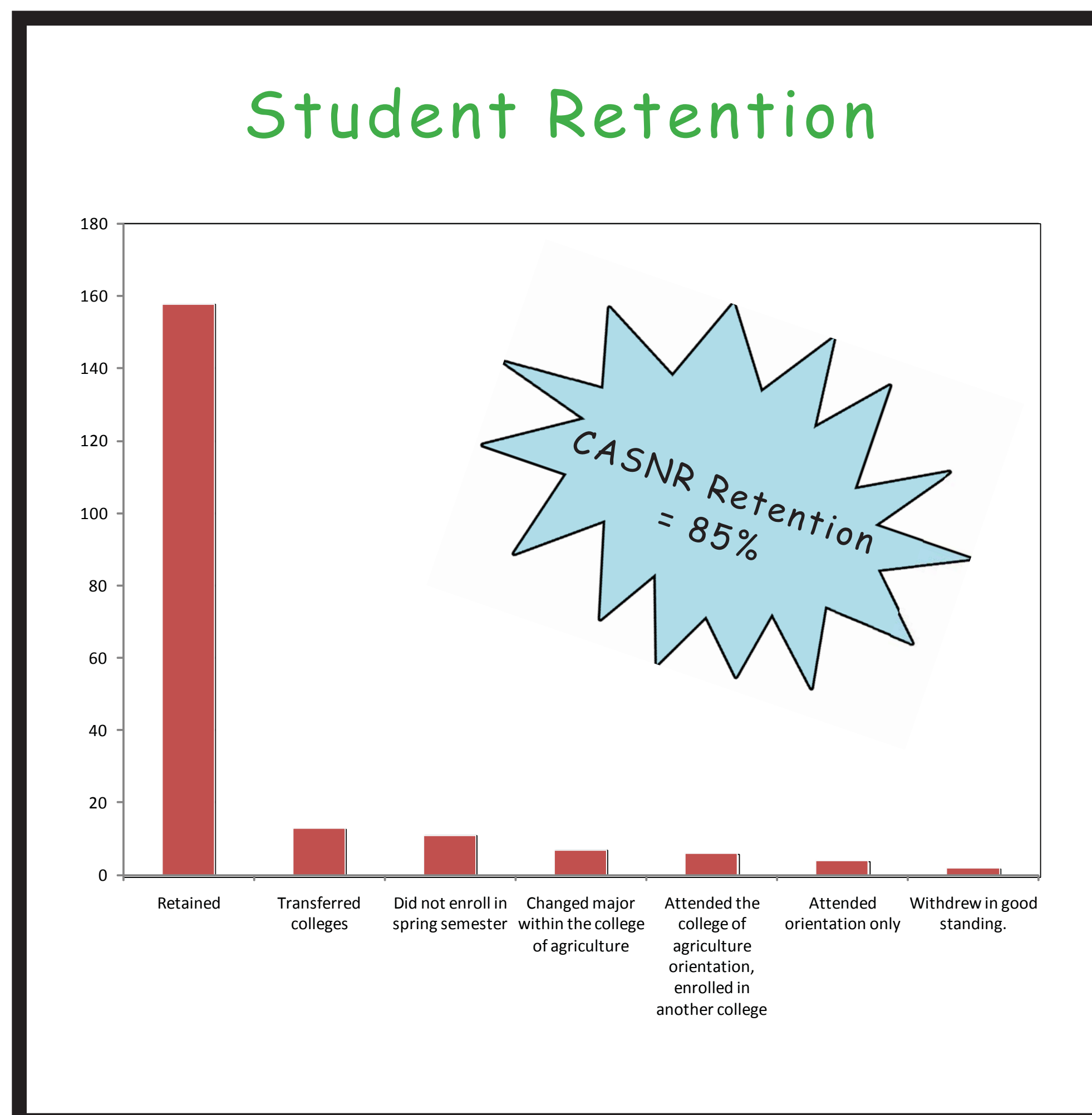
SPSS 16.0 for Windows

- Frequencies, percentages, means, correlations, standard deviations and inferential analyses

SRI Definitions

SRI Factor	Definition	Sample Item
Academic Discipline	The amount of effort a student puts into schoolwork and the degree to which a student is hardworking and conscientious.	I consistently do my school work well.
Academic Self-Confidence	The belief in one's ability to perform well in school.	I achieve little for the amount of time I spend studying.
Commitment to College	One's commitment to staying in college and getting a degree.	A college education will help me achieve my goals.
Communication Skills	Attentiveness to others' feelings and flexibility in resolving conflicts with others.	I'm willing to compromise when resolving a conflict.
General Determination	The extent to which one strives to follow through on commitments and obligations.	It is important for me to finish what I start.
Goal Striving	The strength of one's efforts to achieve objectives and end goals.	I bounce back after facing disappointment or failure.
Social Activity	One's comfort in meeting and interacting with other people.	I avoid activities that require meeting new people.
Social Connection	One's feelings of connection and involvement with the college and community.	I feel part of this college.
Steadiness	One's response to and management of strong feelings.	I have a bad temper.
Study Skills	The extent to which students believe they know how to assess an academic problem, organize a solution, and successfully complete academic assignments.	I summarize important information in diagrams, tables, or lists.

ACT, Inc. 2008



SRI Factors

SRI Scores of all participants (scale = 0 - 100)

- Commitment to college (M = 67.9)
- General determination (M = 64.4)
- Social connection (M = 63.8)
- Academic self-confidence (M = 60.8)
- Goal striving (M = 60.5)
- Steadiness (M = 58.3)
- Communication skills (M = 57.4)
- Social activity (M = 57.3)
- Academic discipline (M = 56.7)
- Study skills (M = 52.3)

The strongest relationship for first semester GPA and SRI factors was at the moderate relationship with academic discipline ($r = .39$).

GPA had a low relationship with academic self-confidence ($r = .27$), goal determination ($r = .19$), and commitment to college ($r = .15$).

Predictors for Retention

This study found the best predictors of retention to be:

- General determination - 3%
- Commitment to college - 2%

The reason this study may not have high relationships or predictions may be because of the already high retention rate.

What can we do with these scores?

SRI scores might benefit colleges of agriculture through academic advising.

SRI scores may help advisors and student services centers get to know their students better and how to help them more specifically.

So, what can we do in the future?

We can continue tracking these same students through a longitudinal study at Texas Tech. And, we can continue the SRI for incoming freshmen.

SRI may be more utilized at an Institution with a lower retention rate.

References

ACT, Inc. (2008). *Components: SRI scale definitions and sample items*. Retrieved October 7, 2008, from <http://act.org/sri/components.html>.

Le, H., Casillas, A., Robbins, S. B., & Langley, R. (2005). Motivational and skills, social, and self-management predictors of college outcomes: Constructing the student readiness inventory. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 65(3), 482-508.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Authors

CassiDe Street
Cindy Akers
Steven Frazee
Lori Dudley
Rachel Bobbitt
Kelsey Hall

Texas Tech University
Box 42131
Lubbock, TX 79409
806-742-2808