

Sociology And The New Systems Theory: Toward A Theoretical Synthesis

Article

Toward a New Predictive Model of Student Retention in Higher Education: An Application of Classical Sociological Theory

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Abstract

Theoretical models designed to predict whether students will persist or not have been valuable tools for retention efforts relative to the creation of services in academic and student affairs. Some of the early models attempted to explain and measure factors in the college dropout process. For example, in his seminal work, Tinto defined retention as a longitudinal process incorporating both the academic potential of the student and institutional social systems, thus creating a directional model based on continual variance in social commitments that influence academic performance. Others expanded the earlier theoretical models to test the predictive capabilities of these models using logistical regression and structural equation modeling to project college retention rates. As public sectors push for performance-based accountability in federal and state agencies, higher education funding becomes directly linked to academic performance. Critics of performance-based accountability in higher education contend that these funding structures undermine the mission of the university system and negatively impact retention in higher education. As Astin suggested, the structure of the American college system is a great deal more complex than the elementary concept of supply side economics. Additionally, due to globalization and aggressive progress in information technology, a shift from labor-intensive, information-age economies to a knowledge-based economy has created

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