Using Teaching Assistants and Synchronous Labs to Improve Academic Success for Undergraduate Online Learners

by

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Increasing student persistence and retention are key goals of academic institutions and researchers alike. Scholars such as Ernest Pascarella, William Spady, Vincent Tinto, and others have contributed to the literature with their various models aimed at explaining the factors that positively and negatively affect learner success in higher education. The commonalities of the models are that they include understanding the learner background and goals and the learner social and academic integration with the institution (Stavredes, 2011). Their models, while focused on brick and mortar institutions, can still be applied to understanding the online learning experience of learners today.
The purpose of this best practices presentation is to describe an intervention aimed at helping learners in an undergraduate psychology program at an online university achieve academic success. The faculty-driven model was designed based on Tinto’s (1975) and Bean and Metzner's (1985) work and includes synchronous labs facilitated by teaching assistants. The curriculum is tied to learner coursework in their first term and is focused on increasing academic readiness, developing writing skills, and supporting learners as they begin their program. The presentation will include an overview of the curriculum as well as a demonstration of a sample synchronous lab.

Reference:

