The Relationship Between Individual Talents and College Success Factors

A Critique By:

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Predicting student academic success is an on-going effort by institutions across the country. The literature review highlights research associated with traditional predictors to academic success. What makes this study unique is that the authors investigate fresh and novel student variables to predict academic success of students. Borrowing the work by the Gallop Organization, the authors cite compelling arguments to consider individual talents as predictors of academic success.

The methodology section of the paper sound, was well written, and provided an adequate background to the nature and outcome of the Gallop Organization’s work on individual talents. The authors report appropriate information to sustain the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. Scoring procedures for the instrument were outlined and critical to understanding the results of the study.

The authors are commented for qualifying the nature of the findings as having limited ability for generalization and for the use of appropriate descriptive statistics when presenting the data. The findings were well presented and easy to read. The conclusion section clearly provided the reader with the outcome of the study, but also serve as a basis for questions.

Questions:

1. The authors conclude that StrengthsFinder talents fail to be “good” predictors of student academic success factors. Combined with the traditional success factors (ACT, SAT, HSPR, HSGPA), the authors report the StrengthsFinder talent themes (Relating, Impacting, Striving, Thinking) accounted for 42 percent of the variance in First Semester GPA. Controlling for the traditional success factors, what would be the expected unique variance in First Semester GPA? A similar question is posed for variance associated with cumulative GPA as a dependent variable?

2. The authors report a complex scoring system for determining the talent scores used in the analysis. Is there something in the score transformation that can be the basis for the outcome?

3. Given conclusions of the study, what recommendations would the authors offer and to whom?

Overall, I found the study very interesting. The authors are to be commended for a well-constructed study that broadens our thinking beyond traditional predictors of student academic success measures.