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Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

October 22, 2008

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

427A Waterman Building

Title: Recreating Retention: Student Satisfaction Through Participation In  
Campus Recreation

## ABSTRACT

In an effort to quantify the effect of campus recreation programs on student satisfaction in higher education, campus recreation professionals have collected empirical data demonstrating the correlation between participation in recreational programming and retention. The objective of such investigations is to ascertain the direction of such relationships as a means for determining the level of investment in campus recreation programs from institutional resources. Current literature has produced compelling arguments in both an increase and a decrease in institutional resources for campus recreation offices by examining individual factors that influence a student's satisfaction level with the college experience. The problem is that there is little literature that examines the relationship between campus recreation programs and satisfaction while controlling for other factors that affect satisfaction which are outside the scope of campus recreation (NIRSA, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to test the relationship between participation in the campus recreation intramural sport program and non-participation among undergraduate students at a New England University. Additionally the study investigates differences among users of the program and amount of participation in regards to perceptions of student satisfaction. The study also introduces the Campus Recreation Participation Ladder as a heuristic model specific to campus recreation professionals.

The instrument used for testing the research questions was the College Senior Survey, developed and supplied by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The instrument controls for several influences of student satisfaction including intramural sport participation. The primary investigator created an end sum score for the survey which was informed with the help of the HERI, but ultimately modified for the purpose of this study. Scales were created for analysis of the data and were found to be reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha calculation of at least .7 for each scale.

Participants (users) were identified as using the intramural sport program at least 3 times and non-users were selected as individuals that have not participated in the program during their collegiate experience at the college. All participants were full time enrolled undergraduates and only juniors and seniors were questioned. A 43% response rate was secured once non-response follow up calls were made.

Non-response bias was calculated and no significant bias was found. Results suggest that participation in the intramural sport program significantly influences a student's perception on academic achievement and participation in campus life ( $p < .05$ ). They further indicate that no significant difference exists on perceptions of leadership abilities and overall satisfaction of the collegiate experience. Finally, the results were approaching significance in regards to the effect the amount of participation had on satisfaction perceptions ( $p = .06$ ). Implications of the results on the use of the heuristic model are discussed and further suggestions for future research are listed.