UNDERSTANDING THE REACCULTURATION EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-GENERATION, UNDECIDED STUDENTS

Tracey Glaessgen

Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

When students enter institutions of higher education, they are typically leaving behind one culture to join another. First-generation students have a higher attrition rate as do undecided students, but little research has been conducted on students who have both characteristics. The researcher applied Bruffee’s reacculturation process to understand the challenges and experiences that first-generation, undecided students have as they transition to a new academic environment. This qualitative, exploratory case study included 35 students utilizing interviews, focus groups, observations, and writings to triangulate the data collected. Findings revealed heightened feelings of stress, desire to become comfortable on campus, reliance upon continuing-generation friends, helpfulness of specialized first-year seminar course, and an uncertainty towards advisors’ roles. Based upon research findings and framework, recommendations for practice are shared.