

Academic success and retention is an ongoing concern for postsecondary institutions in the United States. Many scholars have noted that academic self-efficacy is positively associated with academic persistence (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984, 1986, 1987; Zhang & RiCharde, 1998) and performance (Brown, Lent, & Larkin, 1989; Hackett, Betz, Casas, & Rocha-Singh, 1992; Lent et al, 1984; Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991). Consistent with social-cognitive career theory, previous research has found empirical support for the role of social cognitive factors, such as stress and academic self-efficacy, in determining academic performance (Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade, 2005). The current study examined vocational identity status (Vocational Identity Status Assessment, VISA; Porfeli, Lee, Vondracek, & Weigold, 2011) and college stress (College Stress Inventory; Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993) as predictors of college self-efficacy, defined as a student's confidence in his/her ability to complete a college-related task (Solberg, Hale, Villareal, & Kavanagh, 1993). We explored the notion of whether more adaptive dimensions of vocational identity would be related to higher levels of college self-efficacy, as measured by the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (Solberg et al., 1993), among pre-medical college students enrolled in an urban primary care track program. To the extent that they are more committed, less doubtful, and engage in a more in-depth exploration of their occupational interests, it is reasonable to postulate that such a purposeful and clear focus on their career goals may provide greater opportunities (learning experiences) for building their self-efficacy. This notion, coupled with prior research, laid the groundwork for the current study.

The sample for this pilot study consisted of 70 college students who were admitted into a pre-medical program at a university located in the Midwest. The average age was 26.97, ranging from 20 to 48. Forty-one percent were male and 59 percent were female. Participants consisted

of 56.8 percent Caucasian, 13.5 percent African American, 5.4 percent two or more races or ethnicities 2.7 percent Hispanic, 2.7 percent Asian, and 18.9 percent did not specify.

Preliminary analyses showed that college self-efficacy was significantly correlated with stress ($r = -.517, p < .01$) and two vocational identity status scales, career self-doubt ($r = -.312, p < .05$) and career commitment making ($r = .331, p < .05$), but was not found to have significant correlations with the remaining VISA scales. A subsequent forced-entry regression analysis found that college stress, career self-doubt, and career commitment making explained 24.5 percent of the variance in college self-efficacy; however, college stress was the only significant predictor ($\beta = -.406, p < .01$). Although limited by a small sample size, the study suggests that college stress may exert a more powerful effect on college self-efficacy than vocational identity, and perhaps other career-related constructs believed to enhance self-efficacy rather than weaken it. As this study collects more data on the same variables by the time of presentation, which will be derived from a larger longitudinal study, other salient factors (e.g., relationships with faculty and peers) will also be included in future analyses of college self-efficacy.