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Exploring Undergraduate Absenteeism at a Small, Regional, Minority-Serving Institution

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While research has shown class attendance is important for undergraduate student success, few studies have examined why students choose to not attend class. What is more, existing research has focused on absenteeism among undergraduates at land-grant institutions and professional schools. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine reasons for absenteeism among students at a small, regional, minority-serving institution. Three focus groups were used to collect data, and thematic data analysis revealed class attendance was impacted by (a) teacher attributes, (b) student attributes, (c) process variables, and (d) context variables. Based on these attributes and variables, recommendations are provided to instructors and administrators on how to improve class attendance at small, regional, minority-serving institutions.

Keywords: absenteeism, minority-serving institution, classroom attendance, higher education

Higher education reform has been a recurrent topic over the last several decades. In a report for the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, The Committee for Economic Development (2005) stated that “without improvements to our educational system, we are in danger of losing our preeminent position to nations with better academically prepared youth, whose rapidly increasing rates of college participation and graduation already outpace our own” (p. vii). Fry (2004) reported that many college students never complete their degrees, and if students graduate, they are not proficient in necessary skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, and leadership (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Bok, 2006, 2013; Brint & Clotfelter, 2016).

Accordingly, recommendations have been put forward to improve students’ persistence in higher education, many of which have focused upon faculty members’ teaching (Association of Public and Land-grant Universities [APLU], 2009; Brint & Clotfelter, 2016; National Research Council [NRC], 2009; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2006). Calls have been made for faculty to implement active, engaging learning experiences in the classroom; however, the blame may

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not solely lie upon teachers' classroom instruction. Others have proposed that undergraduate students have become increasingly disengaged from academic coursework (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018; Hassel & Lourey, 2005; Moore et al., 2008; Taylor, 2006; Trout, 1997). This is disconcerting, as Tinto (1975, 1993) theorized that students who are not academically engaged in college are less likely to persist through graduation.

One measurable indicator of students' disengagement with the academic process is absenteeism from class. Scholars have asserted that student absenteeism has become a chronic problem in higher education (Bati et al., 2013; Cleary-Holdforth, 2007; Friedman et al., 2001; Macfarlane, 2013). Studies aimed at determining the relationships among absenteeism and academic success have yielded varied results; however, the general consensus has been that absenteeism is correlated with lower academic performance (Marburger, 2001; Rodgers, 2001; Stanca, 2006; Teixeira, 2016). Empirical data from a meta-analysis by Credè et al. (2010) reported strong relationships between classroom attendance, academic performance, course grades, and GPA. In fact, Credè et al. stated that class attendance was a better predictor of college grades than other predictors of academic performance including, SAT scores, high school GPA, and study habits.

While data have illustrated the relationship between class attendance with academic performance, fewer inquiries have studied students' reasons for absenteeism. Most studies examining reasons for absenteeism have been conducted at land-grant universities, professional schools, or in foreign countries. In contrast, fewer investigations have examined absenteeism at smaller regional and minority-serving institutions. According to Li and Carroll (2007), regional, minority-serving institutions tend to be less selective with admissions and enroll more first-generation, low-income students. Due to these differences, it is plausible that students at regional and minority-serving institutions exhibit differences in their reasons for absenteeism. Additionally, this gap in the literature is important as research has indicated that the aforementioned problems of college persistence are exacerbated among minority students, especially Hispanic students (Crisp, 2011; Kuh et al., 2007). Because of the scarcity of research in this area, more studies investigating absenteeism among students at regional, minority-serving institutions is warranted. As a result, the purpose of this qualitative study was to determine reasons for absenteeism among students at a small, regional, minority-serving institution. The following research question guided this study: Why do undergraduate students at Sul Ross State University choose not to attend class?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on the Model for the Study of Classroom Teaching (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). According to the model, teacher attributes, student attributes, context variables, and process variables interact to influence student behaviors. In the context of this study, absenteeism was considered a student behavior. Teacher attributes are characteristics of teachers affecting teaching and learning, such as teacher formative experiences,

educational experiences, and teacher properties (e.g., pedagogical skills and knowledge, motivation, and personality traits as described by Dunkin and Biddle, 1974).

Student attributes are characteristics of the learner, such as formative experiences, educational experiences, and student properties (e.g., social class, abilities, knowledge, and attitudes; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974). Process variables are “the actual activities of classroom teaching – what teachers and pupils do in the classroom” (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974, p. 44). Context variables are “characteristics of the environment about which teachers . . . can do very little” (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974, p. 41). Examples of context variables are community, school, and classroom contexts such as school buildings, budgets, and community beliefs and student populations (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974).

Literature Review

Prior research has outlined the attendance habits of undergraduate students. Studies have shown that the number of undergraduates absent from class ranges from 20-40% (Friedman et al., 2001; Rodgers, 2001; Romer, 1993), and Marburger (2001) and others (e.g., Rodgers, 2001; Van Blerkom, 1992) reported that as the semester progresses, the number of student absences increases. What is more, absenteeism increases toward the end of the week. Marburger (2001) showed a 9% increase in absences on Friday versus Monday and Wednesday. Regarding who misses class, Gump (2005) found that seniors had the highest number of absences, while sophomores had the least.

Many factors influence students' absenteeism. According to Thomas and Borrayo (2016), stress has been cited as a major contributor to absenteeism. Stress, coupled with low self-efficacy and anxiety, played a role in students' motivation to attend class (Moore et al., 2008) and was detrimental to students' emotional and physical health (Thomas & Borrayo, 2016). Accordingly, across studies, the most commonly reported reason for absenteeism was illness, either minor or severe (Friedman et al., 2001; Stripling et al., 2013; Van Blerkom, 1992; Westrick et al., 2009). Other personal reasons included oversleeping, running errands, being out of town, emergencies, important events (i.e., funeral, wedding), work, and desiring to have a break (Friedman et al., 2001; Stripling et al., 2013; Van Blerkom, 1992; Westrick et al., 2009).

In addition to personal reasons, researchers have also reported instructor variables that played a role in students' decisions to miss class. Examples of instructor variables were: poor lecture quality, course content provided online, instructor reading from notes, instructor not comfortable with the content, instructor not allowing students to enter the classroom late, and the in-class material not being consistent with exams (Friedman et al., 2001; Stripling et al., 2013; Van Blerkom, 1992; Westrick et al., 2009).

Research has shown the benefits of attending class; however, the studies examining students' reasons for absenteeism have been more limited. Most of the studies conducted have relied on

quantitative methods, which may have inadvertently omitted certain variables. In addition, while these studies illustrated various reasons for absenteeism among undergraduates, they were conducted at large, land-grant universities, professional schools, or in foreign countries. A substantial gap in the literature exists pertaining to absenteeism among students at small, regional, and minority-serving institutions.

Methods

In qualitative inquiries, researchers should disclose personal biases for readers to understand the lens through which the researchers conducted the study (Merriam, 1998). The two researchers are faculty members in Agricultural Education, one at a land-grant institution in the Southeast and the other at a Hispanic-serving institution in the Southwest. Both researchers adhere to a constructivist epistemology in the classroom and strive to create student-centered, active learning environments. Thus, attendance is an important issue, as both researchers believe students should be present in class to be active participants in the learning process. This particular study was conducted at Sul Ross State University, which is a small, regional, Hispanic-Serving Institution in the Southwestern United States. The demographic makeup of students at Sul Ross State University is approximately 52% Hispanic, 39% White, and 9% African American.

We approached the research question using qualitative methods to examine and understand undergraduate students' collective reasoning as to why they chose to not attend class. Qualitative methodology allowed us to develop a deeper understanding and richer description of the phenomenon of absenteeism (Flick, 2006). This approach was grounded in the theoretical perspective of social constructivism. Crotty (1998) purported that knowledge construction occurs "in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). Accordingly, this led us to utilize a focus group methodology to collect data. In alignment with social constructivism, focus groups are "a quasi-naturalistic method for studying the generation of social representations or social knowledge in general" (Flick, 2006, p. 199), and thus appropriate for use with this type of research phenomena.

The target population was all undergraduate students at Sul Ross State University. Focus group participants were solicited through campus-wide email invitations, and incentives of \$10 iTunes gift cards were offered for participation. Purposive sampling of chronically absent students was not attempted, as many instructors do not take roll in their courses, making identification of these students difficult. Twenty-four undergraduate students participated in one of three focus groups. Focus group one had six participants, group two had seven participants, and group three had 11 participants. The number of participants per group was deemed appropriate according to recommendations by McLafferty (2004), who suggested group sizes should range from 6 to 15 members. In response to the campus-wide email, participants signed up for one of the three focus groups based on their availability.

The two lead researchers facilitated the focus group interview process. One researcher, not affiliated with Sul Ross State University, served as the moderator, while the second researcher observed and recorded field notes. Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. To assure anonymity, participants were assigned numbers (S1, S2, etc.), which were used as identifiers throughout the data collection and analysis process. Semi-structured interview guides were used during focus groups to facilitate deep discussion among the participants. Participants were also asked open-ended, follow-up questions to probe further into participants' responses. Examples of questions included, *Do you feel class attendance is important? (please explain your answer)*; *When do you feel it is appropriate to miss or not attend class?*; and *Describe your thought process in deciding to attend or not attend an individual class session.*

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis method. This method allowed us to reduce the data based on repeated words and phrases (Grbich, 2007). No predetermined themes were established; instead, the data were allowed to “speak for themselves initially before any predesigned themes [were] imposed” (Grbich, 2007, p. 32). A block and file approach to data analysis was used where the researchers read through the transcribed data multiple times, separated data into color-coded segments, which helped categorize the data into themes. We compared our coding and came to consensus on the emergent themes present in the data. We determined that our themes closely resembled Dunkin and Biddle's (1974) Model for the Study of Classroom Teaching; thus, we utilized their nomenclature to develop theme titles. Lastly, data were included as evidence of each emergent theme.

According to Dooley (2007), several techniques exist for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies ensuring “that the researcher will tell the story giving voice to the respondents” (p. 39), and provides a “degree of confidence that the findings of the study represent the respondents and their context” (p. 38). Trustworthiness factors include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established in this study through persistent observation, investigator triangulation of data analyses, peer debriefing, and member checks of the data (Dooley, 2007). Transferability was achieved through collecting the data in the context of the phenomenon being studied, literature comparisons, and rich, thick descriptions of the data (Dooley, 2007). Next, dependability and confirmability were accomplished by providing an audit trail documenting methodological decisions and reflections, which also included field notes and a reflection journal (Dooley, 2007).

The limitations of the study are as follows: (a) the sample population was not representative of the overall population in terms of race/ethnicity, and (b) the focus groups were disproportionately Caucasian. Additionally, the researchers have no way to discern the attendance habits of students. Therefore, this sample may not represent chronically absent students.

Results

The average age of participants was 23.6 years old, with a minimum and maximum of 19 and 60, respectively. Sixty percent of respondents were Caucasian, 32% were Hispanic/Latino, 4% were African American, and 4% classified themselves as “other.” About 30% of respondents reported being sophomores, 40% were juniors, and 30% were seniors. Also, the average number of classes not attended in the four weeks prior to the focus groups was 3.2 ($SD = 2.5$).

Data analysis revealed four themes explaining the reasons why undergraduate students choose not to attend class. The themes were arranged in accordance with Dunkin and Biddle’s (1974) Model for the Study of Classroom Teaching and included (a) teacher attributes, (b) student attributes, (c) process variables, and (d) context variables.

Teacher Attributes

Participants expressed that the role of the professor in the classroom plays a large part in whether a student will attend class. Participants agreed that the professor instructs them on what they need to know and “it’s a lot easier with somebody guiding you through the process instead of trying to do it on your own” (S5) and being in class helped students learn beyond what was assigned in a textbook (S7; S9; S12; S15; S16; S22). Additionally, participants conveyed that their rapport with teachers played a key role in class attendance. Students were more likely to attend class if they felt the professor remembered who they were or would notice if they were absent (S2; S6; S8; S11; S23). Students wanted to be more than a “name on a piece of paper” (S5). Participants were more likely to attend class when the professor was “more involved with their students” (S9). For example, when teachers paid attention to the students, asked students questions to engage participation, and corrected student answers in a nice manner (S7; S8; S9; S24). Students were less likely to attend class if the teacher made them feel “stupid” (S6; S9; S15; S24). Students reported that when they “try so hard but the professor doesn’t see it,” and “when they try to get help [but,] they [teachers] don’t want to help” (S6), the students were less likely to attend class. Students wanted professors to be there for the students and “not here for them[selves]” (S14). Students who did not have a rapport with the professor or did not like the professor were less likely to attend class (S7; S8; S10; S24).

Participant S6 in this study continuously communicated that a professor’s strictness will play a role in a student’s desire to attend class. Participants also felt that if attendance was “stricter,” Sul Ross State University would have a better academic climate (S1; S5; S6; S12). Participant S1 stated they would rather show up for class “where I know every single day that the teacher is going to take at least a small grade compared to the classes where I know we are just going over lectures for the next three weeks until that test comes.” Participants reported that when professors had mandatory attendance in the form of sign-in sheets and/or weekly quizzes, there was a greater incentive to attend class because attendance was factored into their grades (S5; S6; S23; S24).

Many participants expressed that a professor's enthusiasm or lack thereof for course material played a role in a student's decision to attend class. Participants expressed when the professor is "monotone" (S2; S6; S7; S8), the lack of expressiveness makes students want to "fall asleep" (S8; S6) and not want to be in the class. A student stated that if a professor would just simply move around the classroom or vary their voice, these changes would make a boring topic a little more interesting (S2). Participants preferred when "the professor is more enthused to teach" (S15) and passionate about the subject (S15; S16; S17; S18; S21). They expressed enthusiasm for teaching, and the subject matter motivated them to attend class (S15; S16; S17; S18; S21).

Student Attributes

Participants placed more emphasis on classes for their major than general education classes, since major classes are more specific in content knowledge (S1; S4; S6; S7; S8; S9; S9; S10; S11; S12; S13; S18; S19; S20). Participants also expressed major courses continuously build upon each other, and as a result, some believed it was more important to attend cumulative classes (S2; S4). Some participants felt general education classes were "almost pointless" (S11) because the information did not apply to their major or career of interest (S6; S7; S11; S14; S19).

Participant's responses also indicated they missed class for physiological reasons (S2; S4; S5; S6; S7; S9; S11; S23). To that end, participant S5 felt it was acceptable to skip class if they were sick or ill. Some participants indicated they were more likely to miss a general education course versus a course required in their major for an illness (S2; S4; S5). Other participants admitted to skipping class if they were "tired" (S6; S7; S9; S11; S23).

Participants expressed that they prioritized which classes to attend (S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S8). Participant S3 stated one factor used in this prioritization was how well they were doing or the grade they currently had in the class. Participants professed they had skipped class to study or finish work for another class (S1; S14; S15; S16; S17; S18; S19; S20; S21; S22). Current academic performance and their confidence in their ability to obtain a desired grade influenced if they would skip a particular class to finish classwork or study for a class in which their grade was below a desired level (S1; S2; S8; S14). If participants perceived they understood the course material at a personally satisfactory level, or they believed they were not being challenged by the course material, they were also more likely to choose to skip class or only attend on test days (S1; S2; S3; S5; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12; S14).

Participants were likely to place greater emphasis on personal matters than attending class. Consequently, participants were more likely to skip class for family or work-related situations (S1; S12; S13; S16; S18; S20). Some participants expressed the need to put their families first and schoolwork second (S1; S12; S16; S20). For example, caring for small children often meant participants were not able to complete their homework until late at night, and this made morning classes harder to attend (S1; S11; S12). Participants also put personal health, such as diseases, disorders, and allergies, above attending class (S6; S11; S20). If participants felt stressed out or

“overwhelmed” (S5) from class or life, they noted skipping class in order to “not think about it” (S5) or to regroup before their next class (S5; S18; S19; S20). Participants were also more likely to miss class for work if they needed money to attend college (S2; S7; S18). Some participants missed class for social reasons such as partying or watching sports (S13; S16).

Process Variables

Material being covered in class was an important factor in participants’ decision to attend class. Participants were more likely to skip lectures if they felt they already knew the material being presented in class (S1; S3; S6; S16). Additionally, if students felt they could easily make up the work or obtain the material from the book, they were more likely to skip class (S1; S3; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12; S17). Conversely, if quizzes, tests, or graded assignments were given, participants felt more inclined to attend (S1; S3; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12; S17). Some participants were more inclined to skip the first day of the semester, because they perceived the instructor would discuss the syllabus, and they felt going over the syllabus was not important (S1; S6). Participants were also more likely to skip the day after an exam (S1; S5; S19). Two participants stated they were more likely to attend class if there was a guest lecture (S19; S20).

Participants further expressed that the way a class was taught and the learning activities used affected their decision to attend class; the more involved they are in class, the more likely they were to attend (S1; S2; S6; S9; S18; S20). Participants preferred “fun” (S16) activities such as games or other competitive activities to keep students engaged (S16; S17). Participants were also more likely to attend class when the professor used questions or discussions to engage students (S6; S7; S16; S19). Some students preferred working in groups that “[get] the class involved.” (S6) and liked having the opportunity to learn with other students (S6; S7; S16). Participant S9 felt there was greater emphasis on attending class when working in groups because their input affects other people and their grades. Participant S1 expressed appreciation when professors put in the effort to make classes more engaging through personal “experiences and projects they’ve worked on.” Participants did not appreciate when professors read off of the PowerPoint slides (S7; S8; S11; S13; S12; S16;) or assigned work they perceived as “busy work” (S13) such as answering questions from the textbook or watching a movie and answering questions (S13; S18; S19).

Context Variables

Some participants felt mandatory class attendance was extremely beneficial because it gave incentive to not miss class material (S1; S4; S6; S9; S16; S19). However, other students felt the decision to attend class should remain with the student since they are paying to attend college (S2; S6; S10; S18). When class attendance was not mandatory, participants expressed that their peers, as well as themselves, were less likely to attend class (S1; S2; S3; S4; S5; S6; S12). Some participants perceived that mandatory class attendance positively influenced their course grade (S1; S16).

Difficulty of the material also played a role in attendance. Some participants reported that if the material was too difficult, overwhelming, or caused stress, they would consider not showing up to class (S1; S5; S11). Furthermore, as the difficulty of a course increased, or as the course progressed, participants perceived that less of their peers show up to class (S1; S11). Participant S6 noted that some students take non-challenging classes as a “joke” (S6), and some stated, if they know a professor gives “an easy A,” students will just show up for exams (S1; S6; S11). Participants also expressed that if a course is not as challenging, they were less likely to attend class because they were confident in their ability to make up the work or be prepared enough for a test (S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12).

Participants felt class size was a factor in deciding whether or not to attend class (S4; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S19). Participants felt that in smaller classes and labs, professors and teaching assistants would notice if they were absent, making participants want to attend class more, whereas, in a bigger class, they would not be noticed nearly as much (S4; S7; S8; S12; S19; S20). However, participants preferred smaller classes because of the one-on-one attention from the professor and fewer distractions from the rest of their peers (S4; S6; S7; S8; S12; S19; S20).

Class scheduling played a key role in participants’ attendance. Participants were more likely to miss early morning classes (S1; S5; S6; S7; S8; S9; S10; S11; S12; S13; S14; S16; S19), whereas some participants perceived morning classes as part of the college commitment (S2; S16; S18). Participants were more likely to miss classes on Thursdays and Fridays as these classes cut into their personal lives such as driving home on the weekends, partying, and school-sponsored activities such as athletics and rodeo (S1; S2; S3; S6; S7; S14; S16; S17; S18; S23). Participants were also more likely to miss class if it conflicted with their work schedule (S1; S2; S6; S5; S7), and some placed work life ahead of their academic commitments (S8; S17).

Moreover, when there were large time gaps in participants’ schedules, students reported they were more likely to skip class (S6; S7; S11; S12; S18; S20). Students indicated they used the time to rest (S11) and complete homework (S6; S7). Other students stated a large time gap caused laziness, and as a result, they did not go back to class (S19; S23). Participants felt that they were often locked into their schedules because of limited offerings; thus, they needed to plan schedules out well in advance to make sure they took all of their required coursework, further limiting the flexibility of their schedules (S6; S7; S10). Participants felt that if some classes were offered online, it could help alleviate some of the scheduling stress (S6; S7).

Weather influenced participants’ motivation to attend class (S6; S7; S10; S18). Icy conditions, “really cold” (S7; S18), and “bad weather” (S6; S7) were given as reasons given for missing class. Participants were also more likely to skip classes in order to attend extracurricular activities (S2; S3; S17) and resume-building activities, such as volunteering, research, or work experience, because they felt the need to build skills for their future careers (S5; S7; S9; S14; S10; S17; S18; S20).

Conclusions

Results revealed that reasons for absenteeism grouped into four themes: (a) teacher attributes, (b) student attributes, (c) process variables, and (d) context variables. These attributes and variables align with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Friedman et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2008; Stripling et al., 2013). However, while the themes align with those found by other studies, this study provides an in-depth description of students' reasons for absenteeism at a small, regional, minority-serving institution.

Regarding teacher attributes, participants professed they were more likely to attend classes in which they had a positive rapport with the instructor and if the instructor exhibited characteristics of effective teachers, such as those put forward by Rosenshine and Furst (1971). This finding is congruent with earlier literature, which reported that students were more likely to miss class when teachers were ineffective. Students were also more willing to attend class when professors facilitated the learning process and noticed students' effort. Additionally, participants valued a low-risk learning environment where they could actively participate without fear of being made to feel stupid or corrected in a harsh manner. Theoretically, this low-risk environment could help improve self-efficacy and lower stress and anxiety, which Moore et al. (2008) stated could increase motivation. Furthermore, students noted that strict attendance policies encouraged higher attendance rates.

Related to student attributes, participants professed they were more committed to attending major-specific over general education courses due to the cumulative nature and perceived relevance of major-specific courses. Participants also reported missing class for physiological reasons, such as sickness and being tired. Additionally, participants prioritized class attendance based upon academic performance, assignments due, future exams, knowledge of course content, family and work obligations, financial needs, and their social life. These student attributes are consistent with Friedman et al. (2001), Stripling et al. (2013), Van Blerkom (1992), and Westrick et al. (2009).

In relation to process variables, students were more likely to be absent from class when teacher-centered activities, such as lecture were used as compared to a class session in which students expected social- or student-centered activities such as games, questioning and discussion, and graded work (i.e., test, quiz). Furthermore, they were more likely to not attend class when content could be obtained from the book or online and when class activities were perceived as busywork, such as answering questions from a textbook or watching a movie and answering questions. These findings are similar to those of Stripling et al. (2013) and Westrick et al. (2009).

Context variables such as an attendance policy or mandatory attendance, perceived rigor of the course, time and day the course was offered, class size, weather, perceived need to engage in resume-building activities, and timing of extracurricular activities influenced attendance. To that

end, students were more likely to attend classes smaller in size and with an attendance policy, high rigor, offered in the afternoon, and on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Precipitation and cold weather, the perceived need to engage in out-of-class resume-building activities, and extracurricular activities also reduced class attendance. Works by Marburger (2001), Friedman et al. (2001), Stripling et al. (2013), and Westrick et al. (2009) reported a similar influence of context variables on class attendance.

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are given to faculty/instructors for increasing class attendance: (a) take proactive steps to develop teacher-student rapport; (b) show enthusiasm for teaching and the content; (c) be a facilitator of learning and acknowledge students' efforts in the learning process; (d) establish low-risk learning environments in which students feel comfortable expressing varied perspectives, engaging in academic discussion, and making and learning from mistakes; (e) develop and hold students accountable to an attendance policy; (f) teach general education courses in a manner that explicitly connect content to future use and citizenship; (g) plan social- and student-centered learning activities; and (h) use class time for higher-order thinking or engaging students in cognitive tasks beyond remembering or recalling information.

Also, based on the results of this study, we recommend administrators (a) promote the relevance of general education among instructors and the student body; (b) investigate the feasibility and appropriateness of reducing class size; (c) provide instructors with professional development opportunities on engaging students in larger courses, developing teacher-student rapport, active learning, and providing high-quality academically focused feedback to students; (d) conduct a course scheduling analysis and if needed seek ways to improve efficiency; (e) determine if additional online course offerings are appropriate for reducing family, work, and school conflicts; and (f) provide university-sponsored resume building opportunities at various times.

Future research should investigate instructors' knowledge of teacher and student attributes and process and context variables that positively influence the learning environment and class attendance. Future research should also seek to determine differences in reasons for absenteeism based on student-level variables such as demographics and socioeconomic status. In addition, future research should examine the influence that specific reasons for not attending class have on class attendance. Lastly, class attendance and reasons for not attending class should be investigated at other minority-serving institutions.

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