

Examining the Role of Faculty Subcultures in Perceptions of Student Retention Initiatives

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Abstract

Scholars and practitioners have argued that student success must be a shared responsibility among members of the campus community. Academic and student affairs cultures play imperative roles in the establishment and success of partnerships designed to support student success. However, little is known about the differences within the academic affairs culture that shapes faculty members' perceptions of such initiatives. Understanding how faculty members perceive student retention efforts is essential in developing a shared responsibility for student success. This research examines the extent to which faculty with various academic ranks (tenured/promoted, tenure track, and non-tenure track/non-promotional), years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas vary in their perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives. Faculty members' perceptions of these retention initiatives are measured according to awareness of their departments' and institutions' academic and co-curricular activities, dedication of resources towards promoting retention, and communication about available support services. Results revealed variations among faculty members in their perceptions of departmental and institutional retention efforts according to the subcultures analysed. Implications for faculty members, student affairs staff members, and administration are considered.

Keywords

Campus community, Faculty subcultures, Faculty relations and academic ranks, Retention, Student success, Academic and student affairs

Introduction

Student success and retention initiatives are assumed to be a shared responsibility among members of the campus community (Culp & Helfgot, 2021; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Thomas et al., 2021). The task of supporting students to persist in achieving their academic and personal goals is too large and complex to be the purview of one individual or group in post-secondary education. It is believed that faculty and student affairs professionals must understand one another and work together to realise an institution's retention goals (Felten & Lambert, 2020; O'Halloran, 2019; Stebleton & Higashi, 2021). According to Kuh et al. (2005), "as with so many aspects of institutional effectiveness, the whole of the cultural properties that comprise and contribute to student success is greater than the sum of the parts" (p. 39). Therefore, to achieve a positive organisational culture that supports students, the commitment and effort of all members in the academic community are needed (Kuh, et al., 2010).

In 1998, the foundational, cross-organisation publication, *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, & NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) was released. From this publication came increased attention regarding partnerships among and between academic and student affairs professionals. The resulting literature has largely focused on promising practices for collaboration (Brown et al., 2018; Frost et al., 2010; Kift et al., 2010; Magolda, 2005; O'Halloran, 2019; Rowbotham & Boniface, 2017; Whitt et al., 2008) and the associated barriers that

exist when forming these partnerships and collaborations (Kezar & Elrod, 2012; Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Streit, 1993). Further research has examined specific areas in which collaboration should occur, such as in the first-year experience (Einfalt & Turley, 2013) and residence life (Buell et al., 2017; Krieger, 2023). Institutional factors that could influence the presence and operation of partnerships have also been surveyed, such as types of institutions, shifting dynamics, and organisational models or structures (Gulley, 2017; Gulley & Mullendore, 2014; Horde, 2017; Kuk & Banning, 2009; Tull & Kuk, 2012).

The cultural variations between academic and student affairs cultures can lead to conflict that jeopardises partnerships, which requires purposeful interactions and persistence to overcome (Commodore et al., 2018; McClellan & Marquez Kiyama, 2023). While the existence of these cultures is acknowledged, less is known about the subcultures that exist within the academic affairs realm and how these influence perceptions of campus culture and institutional efforts to support student success. Faculty are not homogenous and, as a result, the research examines several subcultures, such as change-oriented and community-embracing subcultures (Berger et al., 2021), disciplinary subcultures (Austin 1990; Hiller, 2023; Posselt & Nuñez, 2022; Seifert & Umbach, 2008), and departmental- and institutional-level subcultures (Austin, 1990). In this research, we investigate several faculty subculture domains: academic ranks, years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas. We appreciate that faculty subcultures can influence meaning constructed from events and actions, disciplinary perspectives, and interests (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Using a multi-institutional sample (17 public universities located across Canada), we analysed the extent to which faculty with various academic ranks (tenured/promoted, tenure track, and non-tenure track/non-promotional), years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas varied in their perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives. The following research questions guided this work: (1) To what extent do perceptions of institutional retention initiatives vary by faculty members' academic ranks, years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas? and (2) To what extent are any identified variations reduced in magnitude and/or statistical significance when information seeking and cross-institutional partnering behaviour are taken into account?

Theoretical framework

Schein (2004) and Kuh and Whitt's (1988) theorisations of institutional culture and faculty subcultures have informed this research. We intentionally selected an application of these foundational theorisations, given their sustained and celebrated relevance within our current post-secondary education environment. The conceptualisations embedded within these frameworks continue to influence academic and student affairs professions and have arguably become more well-regarded within our current climate, where partnerships among and between academic and student affairs professionals are necessary for survival (Felten & Lambert, 2020; O'Halloran, 2019; Stebleton & Higashi, 2021). Academic and student affairs professionals are immersed in an academic environment where securing resources is a challenge; sharing personnel and workloads is integral; and understanding one another's cultures, strengths, and weaknesses is advisable when collaborating to prioritise student success (Commodore et al., 2018; Kezar, 2003; Kinzie & Kuh, 2004; Kuh, et al., 2010; Magolda, 2005; Stebleton & Higashi, 2021). Herein, we focus specifically on the subcultures that exist within academic affairs and the associated perceptions of student retention efforts at the departmental and institutional levels. These variations in academic subculture, we postulate, will influence the manner and mechanisms with which faculty members participate in and partner with colleagues within academic and student affairs on retention initiatives for student success.

Kuh and Whitt (1988) defined culture as "persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in a college or university" (p. 6).

These beliefs and assumptions, in turn, promote an individual's understanding of events and actions and the meaning that is attributed to them. To examine culture in post-secondary education, Kuh and Whitt (1988) put forth a framework that includes four components: (1) the environment external to the institution, (2) the environment internal to the institution, (3) the subcultures within the institution, and (4) the individual actors and roles. Schein (2004) pointed out that as organisations grow and evolve, differentiation occurs. This differentiation may also be called division of labor, functionalisation, or diversification. As this occurs, "new subgroups will eventually share enough experience to create subcultures based on occupational, national, and uniquely historic experiences" (Schein, 2004, p. 289). Differentiation, and subsequent subculture development, could occur in several respects, including: (1) functional/occupational differentiation; (2) geographical differentiation; (3) differentiation by product, market, or technology; (4) divisionalisation; and (5) differentiation by hierarchical level (Schein, 2004). In the case of post-secondary institutions, subcultures include administrators, faculty members, student affairs staff members, students, alumni, parents, online environments, and even satellite campuses.

Kuh and Whitt (1988) noted the culture of the academic profession is based on "the concepts and symbols of academic freedom, the community of scholars, scrutiny of wisdom, truth seeking, collegial governance, individual autonomy, and service to society through the production of knowledge, the transmission of culture, and education of the young" (p. 91). However, discussions regarding an overarching academic culture may overlook the probability that there are several faculty subcultures, or subprofessions, within the academic profession. Kuh and Whitt (1988) pointed out that faculty members "make up a complex set of subprofessions characterized by fragmentation and specialization" (p. 7).

For faculty members, several characteristics may be used to structure a subculture, such as discipline, the culture of the academic profession, institutional culture, and provincial/national system of post-secondary education (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Other defining characteristics may come in the form of one's academic rank and years employed at the current institution. The subcultures that exist within a particular institution contribute to the overall institutional culture. Faculty norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions can at times conflict with one another and with other subcultures at the institution. However, given that student success is realised when it is a shared responsibility among campus stakeholders (Kuh et al., 2005), it is critical to understand to what extent faculty culture and subcultures influence perceptions of student retention efforts at the departmental and institutional levels.

Literature review

Faculty subcultures

Kuh and Whitt (1988) stated that subcultures are not static, as culture is "always evolving, continually created, and recreated" (p. 30). Subcultures evolve based on time; interactions within the community; and the environment, both internal and external to the institution. There are a multitude of faculty subcultures and, therefore, we reviewed the comprehensive literature to identify those that were most commonly discussed and debated (Austin, 1990, 1996; Becher, 1987; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Clark, 1962; Freedman, 1979; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Schein, 1992, 2004; Umbach, 2007a). Based on the literature, we determined that the subcultures to be examined for the purposes of this research would include: academic ranks (tenured/promoted, tenure track, and non-tenure track/non-promotional), years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas. Note, these subcultures are not fragmented and siloed from one another in terms of the norms, values, practices, and beliefs they embody and by which one is guided. Schein (2004) stated that "ambiguity and conflict also result from the fact that each of us belongs to many groups, so that what we bring to any given group is influenced by the assumptions that are appropriate to our other

groups” (p. 17). Characteristics of several subcultures may therefore intersect and contribute to how members of these subcultures make meaning.

Academic ranks

There has been increasing discussion in academic and media discourses regarding the use of non-full-time faculty members in post-secondary contexts. The number of full-time faculty has not increased at the same rate as student enrolment, thus, opening the door to a number of sessional, adjunct, and lecturer positions (Dobbie & Robinson, 2008; Field et al., 2014; Jones, 2019; Jones & Weinrib, 2022). Ensuring all faculty members, irrespective of academic rank, are engaged in supporting student success can be problematic. Heavy workloads, initiative overload, lack of connection, and lack of integration of non-full-time faculty members can thwart such efforts (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011; Jones, 2013; Kezar & Maxey, 2013; Peltier, 2014). Despite the need for academic and student affairs divisions to work together to realise the institution’s retention goals and objectives, weaving non-full-time faculty into the institutional fabric can pose particular challenges.

Kuh and Whitt (1988) provided an example that illustrates how characteristics of academic ranks signal the existence of a faculty subculture:

On one campus, the professors of distinguished rank meet regularly and serve as informal advisors to the president; such a group would be an enhancing subculture if their advice and actions served to perpetuate core institutional values and discouraged initiatives that would change the mission of the institution. (p. 65)

Divisions by academic ranks are well documented within the academic profession, commonly denoted as tenured or tenure track positions and non-full-time positions (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Historically, subcultures according to academic ranks consisted of divergent norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions based on the assistant, associate, and full professor positionality. However, these existing subcultures, according to academic ranks, have arguably evolved as the number of non-full-time positions has increased. Operationally, we use the terms non-tenure track/non-promotional for the purposes of this research, but recognise that some research (see Baron-Nixon, 2007) refers to this group as adjuncts or contingent faculty.

Research underlining the unique position of non-full-time faculty typically focuses on the challenges non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty experience, such as a perceived lack of institutional support, limited access to office space and teaching materials, lack of job security, and minimal academic advancement opportunities (Brownlee, 2015; Field & Jones, 2016; Muzzin, 2009; Vander Kloet et al., 2017). In addition to these factors, foundational work by Gappa and Leslie (1993) underscored the notion of a non-full-time subculture within a study investigating the integration of non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty members. The research investigated the role of non-full-time faculty in the academic communities with a focus on their level of integration. Findings showed the degree to which part-time faculty were integrated greatly differed according to institution and department. Expanding on this research, Banasik and Dean (2016), Baldwin and Chronister (2001), Hearn et al. (2012), and Umbach (2007b) acknowledged differences in levels of non-full-time faculty integration, which may contribute to differing perceptions of departmental and institutional priorities, such as student success and retention initiatives.

Additional research has investigated the role of faculty members in promoting student academic achievements by various subcultures. For example, non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty may have less frequent interactions with students, have attitudinal and behavioural differences regarding academic integrity, and contribute to grade inflation (Conley & Leslie, 2002; Hudd et al., 2009;

Jones, 2013, 2019; Jones & Weinrib, 2022; Sonner, 2000; Wallin, 2004). Concerning academic integrity, Hudd et al. (2009) found several differences between non-full-time and full-time faculty. Non-full-time faculty perceived lower levels of cheating on campus, more commonly acknowledged that students face high levels of competition on the campus, and were more likely to believe that faculty are consistent in their approaches to academic integrity violations. Concerning grade inflation, Sonner (2000) determined that adjuncts awarded higher grades than full-time faculty members and felt pressured to provide higher grades because of the contractual basis of their positions. Due to the lack of job security, contract-based faculty members may not want to receive negative teaching evaluations out of fear that their contracts will not be renewed.

Duration of employment

An extensive body of research has examined the relationship between newcomer information seeking, organisational socialisation tactics, and outcomes such as job performance and satisfaction, organisational commitment, and intention to remain (Bauer et al., 2007). Academic and student affairs leaders recognise the value of induction, which is designed “to facilitate the entry of new recruits [like new faculty] to an organization and equip them to operate effectively within it” (Trowler & Knight, 1999, p. 178). As such, one may hypothesise those who are newer to an institution may have more recently been inculcated to the goals of the strategic plan and revised vision as a result of formal induction practices. On the other hand, “the unrecognized aspects of organizational life”, which come to light only over time, “may be the most important” (Trowler & Knight, 1999, p. 183).

Nevertheless, limited research has expressly examined the duration of faculty employment and associated perceptions of student success and retention initiatives. In part, this may be due to the fact that years employed is largely related to faculty members’ academic ranks. Newer faculty members tend to be tenure track, assistant professors, while faculty members that have been employed at institutions for longer durations tend to be tenured/promoted. Of course, the distinction is changing with the increase of non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty, some of whom may be new to an institution while others may have been employed by the same institution for many years (Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005). We examined the unique relationship between years employed at current institution and perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives controlling for academic ranks. We included years employed at current institution as a subculture covariate in that there may be important cultural distinctions between those with a longstanding history at an institution and relative newcomers.

Broad disciplinary areas

Kuh and Whitt (1988) noted that disciplinary cultures include: “assumptions about what is worth knowing and how knowledge is created, about the tasks to be performed and standards for effective performance, and about patterns of professional interaction and publication patterns” (p. 7). Biglan’s (1973a) foundational work similarly addressed disciplinary differences. Biglan highlighted three dimensions for consideration when categorising disciplines, including: (1) concern with a single paradigm (*hard*, such as physics versus *soft*, such as humanities), (2) concern with application (*pure*, such as physical sciences versus *applied*, such as engineering), and (3) concern with life systems (*life*, such as agriculture versus *nonlife*, such as accounting).

Studies examining disciplinary similarities and differences have addressed social connectedness; commitment to research, teaching, and service; scholarly output; purposes of learning; and teaching approaches (Biglan, 1973b; Creswell & Bean, 1981; Hardré et al., 2010; Smart et al., 2000). This growing area of literature provides insight into the similarities and differences concerning cultural norms, values, and beliefs across subjects. In light of the presence of various disciplinary subcultures,

exploring faculty perceptions of institutional retention initiatives from various disciplines is warranted.

However, the research comparing and contrasting faculty perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives across disciplinary subcultures is rather incomplete. Instead, several case studies within a single department have been conducted (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Lillis, 2011; Mcenroe-Petitte, 2011; Shelton, 2003). Findings showed mentoring, supporting, and caring retention initiatives implemented across various departments revealed higher grade point averages, coursework completion rates, and lower dropout rates for students.

Current faculty subculture concerns

While there are several notable concerns that academic professionals experience, a few dominant neoliberal trends have surfaced within the literature which deserve consideration. Faculty members experience overwhelmingly individualistic and competitive work environments focused on research production and publication, governance and administrative demands, and universal access for diverse student populations (Anderson, et al., 2011; Chenault, 2017; Schimanski & Alperin, 2018). Schimanski and Alperin (2018) appropriately commented that the value of research processes and tenure, promotion, and review “significantly affect how faculty direct their own career and scholarly progression” (p. 1). Research processes vary within and between institutions and impact academic ranks and broad disciplinary areas. However, there are consistencies across the literature when it comes to the increased value of research in tenure, promotion, and review policies and procedures; undetermined value teaching and learning initiatives; pronounced value of grants and research contracts; and the acknowledged dilemma of maintaining work–life balance (Acker & Webber, 2016; Chen, 2015; Hesli & Mook Lee, 2013; Morales et al., 2021; Niles et al., 2020).

Governance and administrative demands are further consuming ventures for faculty members, who are commonly defending collegial governance, advocating for a shared role with university administration in decision-making ventures, and have continually requested to shoulder additional duties at the departmental and institutional levels (Austin & Jones, 2016; Cameron, 2002; Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2017; Delucchi et al., 2021; Hurtubise, 2019; Lang, 2016; Loughed & Pidgeon, 2016; McInnis, 2023). Hurtubise (2019) reviewed 30 years of scholarly literature on university governance in Canada and determined that “when university administrators either act, or are perceived as acting in a unilateral fashion faculty tend to see, in such actions, impingements upon their role in the governance of the institution they belong to” (p. 191) and this leads to tension in governance preparations and arrangements.

Lastly, universal access and diverse student populations have rounded out the demands as equity, diversity, and inclusion activities have become a necessary priority (McGregor, 2021; Michalski et al., 2017; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). These activities include more intentional strategic initiatives, political commitments, training opportunities, admission policies and procedures, curriculum amendments and additions, and innovative student success programs and initiatives (Chan, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2012; McGregor, 2021; Michalski et al., 2017; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Consequently, these pressures and possibilities have necessitated the strengthening of partnerships and collaborations among academic and student affairs, which require joint goals, responsibilities for fulfilling those goals, joint planning, and a sharing of managerial roles (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016). An interactive process is necessary for partnerships to be successful and shared rules for engagement, structures, and outcomes are generally required. While partnerships among and between academic and student affairs professionals were previously considered controversial, they have become more commonplace where synergies across services and supports is required to meet diverse student needs with financial reductions (Commodore et al., 2018; McClellan & Marquez Kiyama, 2023).

Method

This research analysed data collected from the Supporting Student Success project—a multi-funded project that examined the relationship between post-secondary organisational structures and cultures and student success. The broader project employed a sequential mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) to understand how faculty members and student affairs staff members made sense of their institution’s organisational structure and culture with respect to supporting student success. From narrative data collected through individual interviews and focus groups (Seifert et al., 2011), the research team developed survey items to measure faculty members’ and student affairs staff members’ awareness of programs and services to support student success, referral to and engagement with such programs and services, as well as adapted items from the *Parsing the First Year of College Survey* (Reason et al., 2006) to measure faculty perceptions of their departmental and institutional retention initiatives.

Sample

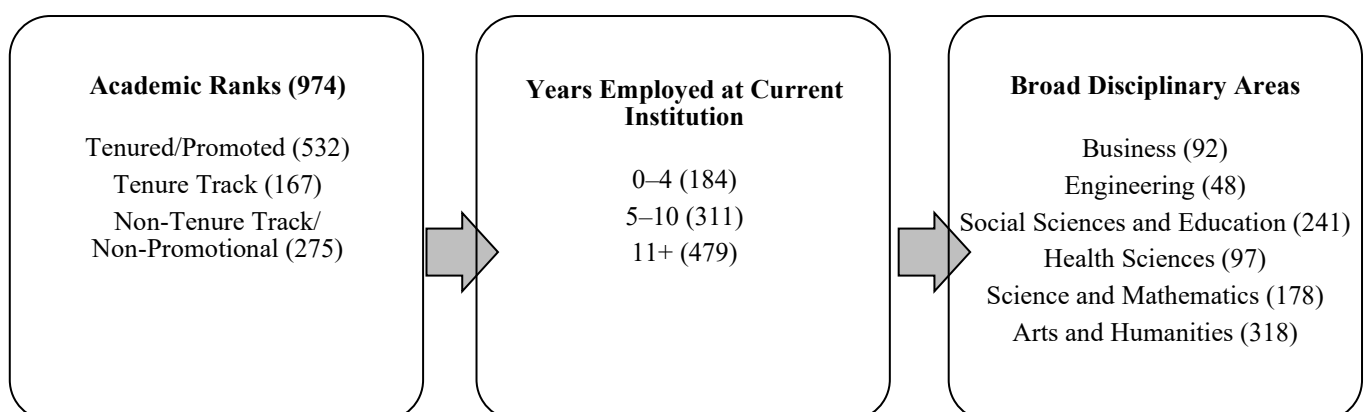
The institutional sample consisted of 17 public universities located across seven Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador). Institutions varied in terms of student enrolment, size of community, research intensiveness, and program offerings. All faculty who had responsibility for teaching undergraduate students were invited to complete an online survey maintained on a secure server. The target population frame consisted of 21,040 faculty email addresses, although invitations to some institutionally provided addresses were undeliverable. Our analytic sample yielded complete responses from 974 faculty members from four medical/doctoral universities, eight comprehensive universities, and five primarily undergraduate universities. Full-time enrolment for students at these institutions ranged from 2,420–64,900 and the locations of the institutions included a mixture of rural and urban centers with various catchment populations. This sample provides estimates with a 3% confidence interval at a confidence level of 95%.

Predictor variables

Predictor variables measured several faculty subcultures: academic ranks, years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas. See Figure 1. *Non-tenure track/non-promotional* refers to faculty members hired on a time- or course-specific contract without the opportunity for tenure and/or promotion. For analytic purposes, we compared non-tenure track/non-promotional and tenure track with tenured/promoted faculty as the reference group throughout the analyses.

Figure 1

Predictor Variable Distribution



Intervening variables

We included a number of intervening variables in sequential blocks in our analyses.

Previous awareness and frequency of learning

Having first regressed the outcome variables on the faculty subcultures of interest, we next accounted for faculty respondents' information seeking with respect to student support programs and services by including two separate variables. First, we measured respondents' awareness of student support programs and services from the previous academic year using a single item with a four-point response ranging from "not at all familiar" to "very familiar". Second, we summed the frequency of ways by which faculty learned about student support programs and services in the current academic year. Response options ranged from "have not learned in this way" to "more than once a term". A higher score indicated frequent learning from the greatest number of sources.

Frequency of partnering

Lastly, in order to estimate the difference in perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives by faculty subcultures, we accounted for the frequency with which faculty members partnered with colleagues across a host of areas, including academic services, administrative services, student life, and career education. The response options were: "I have never partnered with someone from this area", "I have been involved but I am not currently", and "I have an ongoing partnership with someone from this area". This was a summed measure in which higher scores indicated more frequent and expansive partnership behaviours.

Outcome variables

Faculty members' perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives were measured through seven composite scales (three at the departmental and four at the institutional level). See Table 1. Scale scores were the average of responses indicating level of agreement (strongly agree = 5; strongly disagree = 1) on a series of statements.

Analyses

We used OLS regression to examine differences in the composite scores: first, by academic ranks and second, by accounting for other faculty subcultures (Block 2). We then added variables to examine how differences between faculty subcultures may be reduced once accounting for respondents' information seeking (Block 3) and partnerships with these programs and services (Block 4). This approach sequentially adds blocks of variables to the regression equation, which permits an examination of the extent to which the intervening variables explain variance in the outcome variables, and how regression estimates of the predictor variables change in magnitude and statistical significance.

Table 1*Variable Descriptions*

Names of Variables	Description
Independent Variables	
<i>Academic ranks</i> Block 1	Denotes respondents' rank
<i>Broad disciplinary areas</i> Block 2	Respondents' undergraduate program/area in which they primarily teach
<i>Years employed at current institution</i> Block 2	Respondents' years employed at their current institution
<i>Previous awareness of campus programs and services</i> Block 3	Respondents' familiarity with programs and services
<i>Frequency of learning about programs and services</i> Block 3	Sum of nine items measuring how often respondents learned about student support programs and services in current academic year
<i>Frequency of partnering</i> Block 4	Measures how often respondents refer, communicate, and collaborate with divisions across campus to support student success
Dependent Variables	
<i>Perceptions of department's foundation for student success</i> ($\alpha = .87$) (4 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions of the degree to which their division conveys to students that they can succeed as well as facilitates involvement in academic and co-curricular activities
<i>Perceptions of department's planned approach for student success</i> ($\alpha = .92$) (5 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions of their division's goals and objectives to helping students succeed
<i>Departmental leadership</i> ($\alpha = .72$) (3 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions of their department's (or program's) leadership and resources in promoting and supporting student retention objectives
<i>Institutional efforts toward resource awareness of academic and personal supports</i> ($\alpha = .87$) (4 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions regarding their institution's efforts to relay information about academic and personal support services available to students
<i>Institution's foundation for student success</i> ($\alpha = .89$) (4 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions of their institution's ability to convey to students that they can succeed, they belong, and the institution's ability to facilitate students' involvement in activities
<i>Institution's planned approach for student success</i> ($\alpha = .88$) (5 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions of their institution's goals and objectives to helping students succeed
<i>Institutional leadership</i> ($\alpha = .80$) (3 survey items)	Measures respondents' perceptions of institutional leadership and resources to promote and support student retention initiatives

Results***Departmental-level perception composites***

Tenured/promoted faculty members reported more positive perceptions of the degree to which their department conveyed to students that they could succeed, and facilitated involvement (i.e., a foundation for student success) than their non-tenure track/non-promotional colleagues. This relationship held after accounting for years employed at current institution, broad disciplinary areas, previous awareness, and frequency of learning about student support programs and services ($p < .01$). See Table 2. However, this difference becomes nonsignificant once frequency of partnering is taken into account.

Years employed at current institution had a small negative relationship between those who had been at their institutions for 5–10 years, compared to those who had 11+ years' employment. This relationship was reduced to nonsignificance when information seeking and partnership covariates were included. Interestingly, in the full model, a suppressed relationship was revealed, as newer faculty members (0–4 years) had more positive perceptions of their department's ability to convey to students that they could succeed and to facilitate student involvement than their more seasoned colleagues.

Differences in perceptions also existed across broad disciplinary areas, but these differences were largely reduced to nonsignificance in the full model specification. One notable exception was in Health Sciences and Social Sciences and Education faculty members to a lesser extent, who reported less positive perceptions than their Arts and Humanities colleagues across all models.

The information seeking measures (previous awareness and frequency of learning about student support programs and services) contributed to faculty members reporting a more positive perception that their department conveys to students that they can succeed, and facilitates involvement. However, once we include respondents' partnerships with student support programs and services (in the last column), the information seeking measures are either nonsignificant or slightly negative. Similar patterns from the block regression existed across other departmental-level composite measures. For this reason, we present and discuss only the full model specification for the other departmental composites. See Table 3.

Consistently, newer faculty members (0–4 years) had more positive perceptions of their department's retention initiatives than their more seasoned colleagues (11+ years). Newer faculty members reported more positive perceptions of the foundation ($p < .05$), planned approach ($p < .01$), and leadership and resources ($p < .01$) dedicated to supporting student success. Few differences in perceptions existed across broad disciplinary areas. Lastly, the extent to which faculty members engaged in inter-divisional partnerships had a strong positive relationship with perceptions of departmental efforts to support student success. Once faculty members' partnership behaviour is accounted for in the model, respondents' previous awareness of student support programs and services becomes slightly negative, suggesting that those who were less involved but modestly aware had less positive perceptions of their department's initiatives. An additional suppression relationship appeared in the full model for perceptions of leadership and resources at the department level; non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty members reported more positive perceptions than their tenured/promoted colleagues.

Table 2

Dependent Variable: Foundation for Student Success—Departmental

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Academic ranks (ref: Tenured/Promoted)				
Non-tenure track/non-promotional	-0.098***	-0.101***	-0.095***	-0.044
Tenure track	-0.013	-0.024	-0.043	-0.031
Years employed at current institution (ref: 11+ years)				
0–4 years		0.048	0.066*	0.082**
5–10 years		-0.076**	-0.049	0.001
Broad disciplinary areas (ref: Arts and Humanities)				
Business		-0.057*	-0.038	-0.041
Engineering		0.004	0.021	0.016
Social Sciences and Education		-0.098***	-0.084**	-0.055*
Health Sciences		-0.071**	-0.060*	-0.063**
Science and Mathematics		-0.092**	-0.061*	-0.049
Information seeking				
Previous awareness			0.093***	-0.066**
Frequency of learning			0.199***	0.000
Frequency of partnering				0.571***
Statistics				
<i>R-squared</i>	0.009	0.032	0.090	0.320

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$. Number of observations = 974.

Table 3*Departmental-Level Perception Composites—Full Model*

Dependent variable	Foundation	Planned Approach	Leadership and Resources
Academic ranks (ref: Tenured/Promoted)			
Non-tenure track/non-promotional	-0.044	-0.018	0.053*
Tenure track	-0.031	-0.010	-0.014
Years employed at current institution (ref: 11+ years)			
0–4 years	0.082**	0.090***	0.099***
5–10 years	0.001	0.034	0.000
Broad disciplinary areas (ref: Arts and Humanities)			
Business	-0.041	-0.037	-0.029
Engineering	0.016	0.013	0.031
Social Sciences and Education	-0.055*	-0.018	-0.024
Health Sciences	-0.063**	-0.001	0.005
Science and Mathematics	-0.049	-0.040	-0.045
Information seeking			
Previous awareness	-0.066**	-0.083***	-0.099***
Frequency of learning	0.000	-0.003	0.018
Frequency of partnering	0.571***	0.618***	0.581***
Statistics			
<i>R-squared</i>	0.32	0.354	0.324

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$. Number of observations = 974.

Institutional-level perception composites

Tenured/promoted faculty members had more positive perceptions regarding their institution's efforts to relay information about academic and personal support services available to students, but this relationship was reduced to nonsignificance once frequency of partnering was taken into account. Moreover, newer faculty members had more positive perceptions of their institution's efforts to relay information about academic and personal support services than their more seasoned colleagues ($p < .01$). Lastly, a small difference existed between Engineering faculty members, who reported more positive perceptions than their Arts and Humanities colleagues when information seeking and partnership covariates were included. See Table 4.

Similar patterns emerged across the other institutional-level composite measures. For this reason, we present and discuss only the full model specification. See Table 5.

The full models revealed similar relationships in the institutional-level perception composites as at the departmental level. Newer faculty members tended to have more positive perceptions, accounting for all other covariates, than their seasoned colleagues. Frequency of partnering was a strong predictor of positive perceptions of institutional retention initiatives. Contrary to the departmental-level analyses, in which there were few differences according to broad disciplinary areas in the full models, the institutional-level analyses revealed that Engineering faculty members reported more positive perceptions of the foundation ($p < .10$), planned approach ($p < .01$), and leadership and resources ($p < .10$) dedicated to supporting student success than their Arts and Humanities colleagues.

Table 4

Dependent Variable: Resource Awareness and Personal Supports—Institutional

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Academic ranks (ref: Tenured/Promoted)				
Non-tenure track/non-promotional	-0.043	-0.063*	-0.060*	-0.014
Tenure track	0.001	-0.036	-0.058	-0.046
Years employed at current institution (ref: 11+ years)				
0–4 years		0.089**	0.129***	0.144***
5–10 years		-0.057	-0.020	0.025
Broad disciplinary areas (ref: Arts and Humanities)				
Business		-0.005	0.016	0.014
Engineering		0.036	0.054*	0.050*
Social Sciences and Education		-0.037	-0.025	0.002
Health Sciences		-0.032	-0.021	-0.024
Science and Mathematics		-0.029	0.003	0.014
Information seeking				
Previous awareness			0.170***	0.026
Frequency of learning			0.183***	0.002
Frequency of partnering				0.518***
Statistics				
<i>R-squared</i>	0.002	0.019	0.098	0.287

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$. Number of observations = 974.

Table 5*Institutional-Level Perception Composites—Full Model*

Dependent variable	Awareness and Supports	Foundation	Planned Approach	Leadership and Resources
Academic ranks (ref: Tenured/Promoted)				
Non-tenure track/non-promotional	-0.014	-0.004	0.014	-0.014
Tenure track	-0.046	-0.024	-0.009	-0.046
Years employed at current institution (ref: 11+ years)				
0–4 years	0.144***	0.126***	0.168***	0.144***
5–10 years	0.025	0.042	0.041	0.025
Broad disciplinary areas (ref: Arts and Humanities)				
Business	0.014	-0.039	0.022	0.014
Engineering	0.050*	0.048*	0.078***	0.050*
Social Sciences and Education	0.002	0.037	0.008	0.002
Health Sciences	-0.024	0.012	0.027	-0.024
Science and Mathematics	0.014	0.078**	-0.015	0.014
Information seeking				
Previous awareness	0.026	-0.024	-0.029	0.026
Frequency of learning	0.002	-0.007	0.009	0.002
Frequency of partnering	0.518***	0.544***	0.472***	0.518***
Statistics				
<i>R-squared</i>	0.287	0.289	0.238	0.287

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$. Number of observations = 974.

Discussion

Analyses revealed several informative results that can be used to modify policies and practices. First, regarding perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives, we found no differences between tenured/promoted and tenure track faculty members. However, tenured/promoted faculty members appeared to have more positive perceptions of the degree to which their department conveyed to students that they could succeed and facilitated student involvement, in comparison to non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty members. Tenured/promoted faculty members also appeared to have more positive perceptions of their institution's efforts to relay information about academic and personal support services than non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty members. However, these differences became nonsignificant once engagement in inter-divisional partnerships were acknowledged.

These findings suggest the existence of an academic rank subculture that differentiates between those with a greater level of permanency to their appointment and those whose labour is more contingent. In sharing responsibility for student success, academic and student affairs professionals may wish to connect with non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty members to ensure that they possess an understanding of retention objectives and are encouraged to participate in realising these goals. Schein (2004) discussed how organisations grow and develop, identifying differentiation of hierarchical level as a means to diversification. Schein stated, "the subculture at each level of the organization will, over time, structurally reflect the major issues and tasks that must be confronted at that level" (p. 288). As such, one must consider how major issues and tasks at each level compare and how the similarities/differences might inform faculty perceptions regarding their departmental or institutional retention initiatives. For example, because of time constraints and contract obligations, if non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty focus largely on students' in-class experience rather than the whole student experience, what effect might this have on their perceptions? With the number of non-tenure track/non-promotional faculty members increasing on Canadian campuses (Field et al., 2014; Jones & Weinrib, 2022), institutions must make retention objectives salient for everyone.

Second, regarding years employed at current institution, newer faculty members employed for 0–4 years were found to have more positive perceptions than those employed for 11+ years, across departmental and institutional success measures. These differences persisted in the presence of additional covariates, suggesting the need to reach out to seasoned faculty members who may have been socialised into the academy "as researchers, not as teachers" (Trowler & Knight, 1999, p. 179). Although a culture may shift over time, a core group of leaders tends to maintain the institutional culture (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Given the leadership that seasoned faculty members provide in terms of curricular and collegial governance, a need exists to ensure they understand and support a shared responsibility for student success. If faculty members employed by the institution for an extended period do not hold similar norms, beliefs, and assumptions regarding student success, there is a risk of this negative perception being perpetuated. As Clark (1970) noted, "The socialization of newcomers by senior faculty is another strand in weaving the tapestry of institutional culture" (as cited in Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 61). However, it must also be acknowledged that not all retention objectives are constructive and, therefore, negative perceptions due to misguided, duplicative, and/or confusing intentions should be investigated.

Third, regarding broad disciplinary areas, Arts and Humanities faculty members were found to have more positive perceptions of the degree to which their department conveyed to students that they could succeed and facilitated student involvement than Social Sciences and Education and Health Sciences faculty members. However, Engineering faculty members were found to have more positive perceptions than those in Arts and Humanities across all institutional measures. These findings remained in the presence of the additional blocks/covariates. The significant differences are interesting when considering Biglan's (1973a) framework for categorising disciplines. For example,

the difference between arts and humanities and social sciences and education is curious when they would both typically be considered soft disciplines. However, differences between these exist in terms of the second (*pure* versus *applied*) and third dimensions (*life* versus *nonlife*). Such differences may therefore contribute to divergent perceptions. The difference between Engineering and Arts and Humanities faculty members also reveals how disciplinary subcultures might exist according to Biglan's framework. While engineering would be categorised as a hard, applied, nonlife discipline, the arts and humanities disciplines would be soft, pure, and (typically) nonlife. Given such stark differences according to the framework, perhaps contradictory perceptions should be expected. To address disciplinary differences, we argue that induction workshops and outreach materials concerning the role of student support programs and services should be tailored to disciplinary subcultures.

Information seeking (previous awareness with, and frequency of, learning about student support programs and services) was found to be related positively to perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives. However, this relationship weakened when frequency of partnering was added into the regression model. While knowing about student support services is valuable, it appears that actually engaging with student support programs and services is what matters most in positively influencing faculty members' perceptions of retention initiatives. Encouraging interactions is therefore of importance, as faculty appeared to develop more positive perceptions of retention and student success initiatives when they partnered with colleagues across campus. This encouragement could come from various sources, including administrative leaders, student affairs professionals, and tenured/promoted faculty. Institutional leaders are commonly identified as the influencers of institutional culture as a result of their positions in the hierarchy (Schein, 2004).

The fact that inter-divisional partnerships had a positive relationship raises two issues of relevance for future research. First, it may be that positive perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives promote faculty partnership behaviour; that is, the directional relation between these variables may be opposite to that modelled here. Disentangling this interconnected relationship would be beneficial from an empirical perspective and for divisional planning purposes, to better understand how to create faculty member buy-in to these programs. Second, it may be that perceptions of retention and student success and partnership behaviour are both influenced by similar antecedent factors, and understanding how these two variables are co-determined would be beneficial. For example, institutional size and type were not included in this analysis but may impact these variables. It would be interesting to examine whether faculty members at large medical/doctoral universities have the same capacity and incentives to learn and become involved in student success and retention initiatives as those at comprehensive or primarily undergraduate universities.

Conclusion

These results provide a baseline of faculty members' perceptions of departmental and institutional retention initiatives and an opportunity for improving how faculty members learn about programs and services on campus, their knowledge and awareness, and the frequency with which they engage in inter-divisional partnerships. Institutional leaders can use these findings to review how they engage faculty members across subcultures of academic ranks, years employed at current institution, and broad disciplinary areas to be invested in, and how they support departmental and institutional retention initiatives. This study may offer student affairs professionals ideas on how to approach academic colleagues in creating a shared responsibility for student success.

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