

TITLE Leadership Behavior and Its Impact on Student Success and Retention in Online Graduate Education

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OBJECTIVE This research examined individual differences that exist in the leadership development of doctoral students that would contribute to and predict success and persistence in leadership development programs.

METHODOLOGY

The sample included doctoral students who enrolled in a multi-disciplinary online doctoral program in organizational and in strategic leadership at a private graduate university. Data for this study was collected from students who entered the program beginning in 1997 to 2006 and have since either dropped out or graduated. The subjects are career professionals in various for-profit and non-profit organizations and range in ages from mid-twenties to late fifties. A total sample size of 303 students represented the full population of incoming students for the doctoral program out of whom 179 graduated and 124 attrited. In the graduated group, 113 were male and 66 were female and in the attrited group, 86 were male and 38 were female. The study used a logistic regression to test whether critical thinking, leadership effective behavior, Master's GPA, gender, application summary score, and psychological type were positively related with academic retention/completion amongst doctoral students enrolled in an asynchronous-distance program in leadership studies. Participants completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985).

KEY FINDINGS

The analysis “showed that Master’s GPA had no statistical significance on an individual’s ability to persist. Application summary scores were negatively related to a student’s desire and willingness to persist to degree completion. Those with higher application summary scores were more frequently among those who left the program prior to degree completion. While some of the variables, such as critical thinking skills and psychological type, showed to contribute to an individual’s academic performance and subsequent decision to continue or drop-out, the findings of this study highlighted the central role of the effective leadership behavior of *Modeling the Way*” (p. 15). This leadership behavior emerged as the single most significant predictor of persistence and success in the online doctoral leadership program.