

Student Perceptions of Responsibility in the College Classroom

Michelle N. Wickham¹

¹Department of Communication Studies, IU School of Liberal Arts

A large body of research examines student success in college. Institutions of higher learning carefully assess the success of their programs, learning outcomes, and students in terms of engagement, grades, and attendance, for example. However, this scholarship often measures and defines success in terms and language that serve the values, priorities, and biases of educators and administrators, but that may not fully reflect student understandings of performance and success. In an effort to mind this gap, the purpose of this research study is to examine how college students understand responsibility for learning and to discover student perspectives on faculty communication practices that promote or inhibit personal responsibility in the learning process. This study employs a mixed methods approach. The researcher has conducted focus groups and individual interviews with undergraduate students and has also gathered survey data (both Likert scale and open-ended questions). The qualitative data will be coded in order to discover themes and relationships among the student responses. This study is important for students, faculty, and higher education administrators because it may uncover potential variances in the assumed communication processes in which students and professors engage. Student performances often stray from professors' expectations or requirements. While educators try many methods to refocus students, many students still struggle to discover the motivation and responsibility for learning. Knowing how students understand responsibility and how they perceive that professors communicate messages about responsibility may provide professors and administrators with greater understanding of the students they serve. Consequently, this research might aid in the development of communication strategies and teaching practices that would promote greater responsibility for learning among students in the college classroom.

Mentor: Jonathan P. Rossing, Department of Communication Studies, IU School of Liberal Arts