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Higher Education
Administration

THE UNINTENDED AND UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES OF A MAJOR SELECTION
POLICY (145 pp.)

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The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a major selection policy, demographic background, and previous academic performance are related to retention and academic performance of degree-seeking students enrolled in non-degree programs.

A comparative study design was used to explore whether implementation of a major selection policy impacts academic outcomes as measured by earned credit hours, college cumulative GPA, and retention. The study examined the differences in academic outcomes and retention for students who enrolled pre-policy (2008 & 2009) and those who enrolled post-policy (2010 & 2011). The study included 3,468 students enrolled in non-degree programs.

Based on the results of this study, major selection policies alone are not sufficient in assisting students in obtaining a college degree. A major selection policy may help students to identify what is expected and the parameters associated with the community, but does not in itself provide the support necessary to move students from non-degree programs to graduation. Based on the results of this study, the policy alone has unintended and unexpected outcomes that in the long-term may have negative consequences for the students and the institution. Requiring students to select a major by way of a policy may be analogous to a doctor treating the symptom rather than the medical cause. The cause of students not selecting a major may be indicative of larger

developmental issues and/or inability to see the connection between completing a degree and reaping any desired benefits.