This paper presents the results of a study of university students’ perceptions of educational training environments, which is typically limited to course evaluations. Relations between program organization/structure, students’ perceptions, and cumulative GPA will be examined considering race and gender. Findings will enhance understanding about the impact of program variables.

No significant gender differences were found in this sample of students. Packets (N = 227), which included a consent form and a research-developed Training Environment Survey, were completed bi-annually by a random sampling of currently enrolled undergraduate (n = 140; 61.7%), graduate (n = 56; 24.7%), and doctoral-level (n = 31; 13.7%) university majors in programs housed within a Department of Human Services in a state institution located in the southern USA. Having a total student population of approximately 13,000: Special Education, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, School Psychology, Vision Impairment, Orientation and Mobility, Rehabilitation Services, Counseling, Communication Disorders, and Speech and Language Pathology. The Training Environment Survey (TES) assessed students’ perceptions of: Faculty-Faculty Relationships, Faculty-Student Relationships, Student-Faculty Relationships, Student-Student Relationships and number of student services available (Policies). Twenty-four (23.8%) percent (n = 54) of the participants reported racial/ethnic minority status; 76.2% (n = 173) reported having White or racial/ethnic majority status; 94.2% (n = 210) were female; and 5.8% (n = 13) were male; 1.8% (n = 4) did not specify; 12.8% (n = 29) identified as African American; 9.3% (n = 21) identified as Latino American; 1.3% (n = 3) identified as Asian American; and .4% (n = 1) identified as International Student status.

1. Significant differences were found between students who reported racial/ethnic majority (White) and Minority status. Majority students were found to perceive faculty more positively (Student-Faculty Relations) and approached faculty more often for assistance than Minority students (Faculty-Student Relations). Differences between the two groups approached significance in perceptions of student-student relationships. No significant differences were found between perceptions of the number of student services available.

2. No significant gender differences were found in this sample of students for Student-Faculty Relations (F = 2.34; p = .13); Faculty-Studetn Relations (F = 1.02; p = .31); Student-Studetn Relations (F = .06; p = .81); and Faculty-Faculty Relations (F = 1.07; p = .30). However, significant gender differences were found in perceptions of available student services (Policies) (F = 5.78; p = .02). Male students perceived significantly more policies available in the training environment (mean = 15.75; sd = 5.05) than female students (mean = 12.32; sd = 5.14).

3. Pearson-Product Correlation Matrix for the total sample, indicated a significant relationship between students’ cumulative GPA and the following responses: “Faculty provide me with opportunities to increase my competitiveness for employment” (Student-Faculty Relations item 4) (r = -.24; p = .01) and “I ask faculty to provide opportunities for interaction among students for the purpose of identifying strategies for academic success and professional development” (Faculty-Student Relations item 6) (r = -.22; p = .02). No other significant relationships were found between cumulative GPA and the items on this survey for the whole sample. Findings suggest that in this environment, students with lower GPAs tend to those who receive more faculty engagement and seek more faculty engagement for the purpose of increasing academic success and future employment opportunities.

4. The Pearson-Product Correlation Matrix for the Racial/Ethnic Majority students indicated a significant relationship between students’ cumulative GPA and “Faculty provide me with opportunities to increase my competitiveness for employment” (Student-Faculty Relations item 4) (r = -.24; p = .05). Findings suggest that in this environment, White students with lower GPAs tend to those who receive more faculty engagement for the purpose of increasing academic success and future employment opportunities. No other significant relationships with cumulative GPA were found.

5. The results in a Pearson-Product Correlation Matrix for the Racial/Ethnic Minority students indicated a significant relationship between students’ cumulative GPA and “I consider other students in the program as members of my support group” (Student-Studetn Relations item 1) (r = .45; p = .02). Findings suggest that in this environment, minority students with higher GPAs tend to those who have established support networks with other students. No other significant relationships with cumulative GPA were found.

Limitations

- Limitation of sample to one institution and one academic department.
- Small representation of males within the sample.
- The collapsing of all racial/ethnic minorities into one group may mask significant within group differences yet to be discovered in future research.