

From Campus to Community: A Pathway to Belonging

Ann Veeck

Western Michigan University

Mohammad Sakif Amin

Western Michigan University

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Abstract:

Understanding student retention is crucial for higher education institutions. Based on a survey of 721 undergraduate business students, this research explores how engagement with the surrounding community of a university affects students' sense of belonging. Findings indicate that higher community engagement is linked to increased diversity exposure and a stronger sense of belonging, which in turn reduces loneliness and dropout intentions. The relationship between diversity exposure and reduced loneliness is stronger when students perceive higher support from university personnel. These insights have implications for how universities and their community partners can foster engagement and support retention through strategies that build connections between students and their surrounding environments.

Keywords: Community engagement, sense of belonging, diversity exposure

Track: Public Sector and Non-Profit Marketing