ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference between scores on the Learning Autonomy Profile (LAP) and whether students completed their class. The LAP assesses learner intent to exhibit behaviors consistent with learner autonomy, broadly identified as desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence. Students and institutions commit valuable resources to distance learning, making it important to understand characteristics of distance learning students to improve course completion. By learning more about students, institutions can provide interventions to improve their ability to cope with challenges in the educational setting. Student LAP scores were not significant with respect to course completion, which may mean that despite strong scores, some not completing their class may have made the right choice at the time, or some had other skills not measured by the LAP enabling them to overcome challenges. Although the scores were not significant, there were some differences that may be significant in a larger sample. Although LAP scores were not significant, it provides valuable information to assess learner behavioral intentions with respect to learner autonomy. Individuals exhibit a range of learner autonomy behaviors, which can be further developed and facilitated. Institutions, faculty, and students can use this information to foster new skills, build on strengths, and encourage behaviors that lead to choices resulting in more successful, autonomous learning experiences. Four demographic variables were significant including age, total credits completed, number of distance learning courses current term, and professor. The significance of age may mean older
students have developed skills enabling them to overcome difficulties faced in school. The significance of total number of credits completed reinforces that experience plays a role in successful completion of classes. The significance of the number of distance learning courses in a term indicates stakeholders should consider course load. The significance of professor underscores the need for institutions and faculty to review and evaluate their courses. Faculty may perform well in the face-to-face setting with excellent results, but taught at a distance these results may not be the same. Faculty should have ongoing, formal training that addresses teaching at a distance and assistance designing their courses such that they foster autonomous learning, equipping students for future learning experiences.