INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN ORIENTATION AND
SOCIAL INTEGRATION, ACADEMIC INTEGRATION, AND STUDENT
RETENTION FOR ONLINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research study was conducted to investigate if the community college’s voluntary orientation for online students was an effective retention strategy that led to social integration, academic integration, and course completion for this nontraditional student population. Kember’s (1995) Distance Education Student Progress survey instrument was used during the study. The instrument helped to determine that orientation for fully online community college students was an effective retention strategy at the community college. The significant outcomes for variables in the study indicate that an online orientation session had a positive relationship with the dependent variables of academic integration and course completion. The findings revealed that participation in an orientation enabled students to integrate academically and promoted student retention in an online course. This study suggests that academic integration is more important than social integration for students in an online distance education environment. This study also investigated social integration, academic integration, and course completion and their relationships between several demographic variables (e.g., number of hours worked per week, number of dependent children, martial status, and number of credit hours taken during the semester and gender) associated with nontraditional students. Based on the statistical tests, gender and course completion were the only variables that were found to have a significant relationship for the student population in the study with regards to the demographic data.