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**Predicting Student Effort: Assessing the Importance of Academic Preparation, Course Challenge, and Teaching Effectiveness**

**ABSTRACT**

**Predicting Student Effort: Assessing the Importance of Academic Preparation, Course Challenge, and Teaching Effectiveness**

This research examines factors that influence the level of effort students expend in their college coursework. In applying Astin’s (1993) “Input-Environment-Outcomes” assessment model, this project seeks answers to two questions. The first question seeks to determine the extent to which “input” characteristics of academic preparation combine with “environmental” experiences (student perceptions of course challenge and teaching effectiveness) to predict student effort levels. The second research question seeks to extend the predictive model from measures of student effort to measures of student learning.

Survey responses and measures of student performance were collected from college students enrolled in an upper level business course. Measures of teaching effectiveness (Delany et al. 2010), student effort, course challenge, academic preparation, and other background characteristics are examined. Through a factor analysis, two dimensions of teaching effectiveness emerged, namely measures of teacher helpfulness and teacher persona/style.

The results suggest students’ levels of academic preparation, perceptions of course difficulty, and perceptions of teaching effectiveness, impact the effort expended by students, as well as students’ course learning. Based on these results, the author provides suggestions on how faculty might combine knowledge of student preparation with effective teaching practices to encourage high student effort and associated positive outcomes.

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