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Advantages and Disadvantages of Taking a Gap Year before Undergrad and Graduate School

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Takyla Graham* and Tamara Avant⁺

School of Health Sciences, Barton College, Wilson, NC, USA

*Student author, ⁺Faculty mentor

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Abstract

Taking a gap year can improve students' academic performance, likely because those students adopt a growth mindset (Blackburn et al, 2005). I hypothesized that participants who took a gap year (before entering either undergraduate or graduate school) are more prepared and have better academic performance than students who did not take a gap year. Participants ($N = 46$) were current and former college students who answered a questionnaire on their gap year status, self-assessments (i.e., how they feel), and an evaluation (i.e., their behavior/actions) of their academic preparedness and performance. Independent t -tests showed that results did not match my hypothesis, as there was no significant difference in perceived performance for those taking a gap year ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.08$) or not ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.64$), $t(44) = 1.29$, $p = 0.20$. There were also no significant differences in their perceived preparedness for college, $t(44) = 1.38$, $p = 0.17$. However, students who felt more prepared for college had a higher average performance evaluation ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.77$) than students who felt less prepared for college ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.63$), $t(44) = 2.88$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, there was a significant positive correlation between the preparedness and performance evaluations for all participants ($r(44) = 0.86$, $p <$

.0001), but this relationship was stronger for participants who took a gap year ($r(3) = 0.95, p = 0.05$) than those who did not ($r(41) = 0.83, p < .0001$).

Keywords: gap year, academic performance

References

Blackburn, George Alan; Clark, Gordon; & Pilgrim, David. (2005). The gap year for geographers: Effects and paradoxes. *Geography*, 90(1), 32–41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00167487.2005.12094115>