RELATING STUDENT'S COMFORT LEVEL WITH CLASSMATES TO SOCIAL BELONGING IN GENERAL CHEMISTRY 1
Tenzin Norzom (Regina Frey Ph.D.)
Department of Chemistry

Abstract

This study focuses on the factors that students use to describe their social belonging in General Chemistry 1, specifically the factors they use to describe their level of comfort with their peers in the classroom. Previous studies in the Frey group have shown that students’ social belonging affects their grades and persistence in the general chemistry series and introductory physics 1 course at the University of Utah. These studies have also identified two main components for social belonging: sense of social belonging and the belonging uncertainty. A sense of social belonging is the sensitivity of an individual's connectedness with people such as peers and instructors and the significance of the course environment that helps build an interpersonal relationship of how they feel they fit in the course. One aspect of course-level sense of belonging is the level of comfort that students have with their classmates. While these recent quantitative studies show that social belonging affects student performance and retention in introductory STEM courses, there are very few studies that ask students what factors they look at when describing their belonging in STEM courses and none in these introductory STEM courses. In this current study, student responses from General Chemistry 1 about their comfort level with their peers were analyzed to generate a codebook that contains eight remote and non-remote categories: Course Environment, Common Academic Experience, Identity, Perceived Ability, Student-Student Relationship/Interaction, Student-Instructor Relationship, Non-Specific, and Non Codable. In this presentation, I will present these categories, their definitions, and representative quotes for each category. I will also discuss implications for instructors to improve the inclusivity of their STEM courses, and the next steps for this project.