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**Abstract**

China's higher education system has been marked by dramatic growth since 1999. In response to calls for quality assurance, substantial efforts have been made to improve collegiate environments and enhance student learning. However, only limited empirical research has been conducted to investigate the effects of the college environment on student gains in the Chinese context. Drawing on data from 1121 students at a prestigious four-year university, this study investigated how college environmental factors (i.e., course challenge, faculty guidance, academic climate, and interpersonal relationships) and student involvement affected students' intellectual development. The results of the structural equation modeling indicated that academic involvement mediated the relations between college environmental factors and intellectual development. Among the four environmental factors studied, faculty guidance was the strongest predictor of intellectual development. The results highlight the pivotal role of teachers in student involvement and development. Practical implications for the design of college environments conducive to student learning are discussed. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)