An Examination of Pre-College Program Participation for First-Year College Students: Promoting Sense of Belonging, Strategies for Academic Success and Confidence in Transition

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SITUATION

- Growing disparities in terms of college access and completion
- Evidence of association between college outreach and academic support programs (COASPs) and student success
- Anonymous donor wins $20M and gives it to CHEE
- CHEE develops a grant program for COASPs
ACTIVITY

15 MINUTES

Who should get the money and why?

1. Break into groups
2. Develop the ideal COASP for the grant competition
3. Three program categories (special eligibility, leadership, outdoor activity)
4. Think about program content, activities, and duration of program
   • (3 days vs. 3 weeks)
OVERVIEW

- COASP Background
- Research Design
- Demographic Information
- Current Study
- Findings
- Implications/Recommendations
- Q&A
Background
Larger Research Project

- Partnership between pre-enrollment planning committee (PEP) and CHEE
- 14 COASPs
- Outdoor adventure, leadership development, and special eligibility
- Mixed-method
- Survey and interviews
- Three data points
- PEP/CHEE outcomes
- Program-specific outcomes
• Pre and post-test data have already been collected (Time 1, n=310; Time 2, n=222), and the data for post-posttest will be collected in early April, 2016.
• Final sample were comprised of 142 participants who completed both pretest and posttest.
Program Design

Program Types

- Outdoor Adventures: 12 (8.5%)
- Leadership: 47 (33.1%)
- Special Eligibility: 83 (58.5%)
PROGRAM DESIGN

Program Duration Time

- 21.8% More than 10 days
- 20.4% 6-10 days
- 57% Less than 5 days

Legend:
- Yellow: Outdoor Adventures
- Red: Leadership
- Turquoise: Special eligibility
The sample was comprised of 142 incoming college freshmen who participated in 2015 COASPs and completed both pretest and posttest.
Home Community
- Rural: 1%
- Suburban: 13%
- Urban: 23%
- Other: 63%

First-Generation
- First-Generation: 77%
- Continuing Generation: 22%
- Unknown: 1%
First-Generation

- Female: 58.1%
- Black/African-American: 41.9%
- Special eligibility: 90.3%

Female: 60%
While/Caucasian: 56.4%
Special eligibility: 49.1%
Current Study
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is there a significant change in students’ sense of belonging, strategies for academic success, and confidence in transition over time as result of participation in COASPs? Paired t-test

2. How does first generation status influence students’ sense of belonging, strategies for academic success, and confidence in transition?

3. How does program duration between COASPs influence differences from pre and post-test in students’ sense of belonging, strategies for academic success, and confidence in transition to college? Two-way mixed design ANOVA
FINDINGS

• Is there a significant change in students’ sense of belonging, strategies for academic success, and confidence in transition over time as result of participation in COASPs?

• Students reported significant gains in their sense of belonging and strategies for academic success.

• Students’ confidence in transition was unchanged, namely, students remained relatively confident in their ability to transition to college.
FINDINGS

• How does first generation status influence students’ sense of belonging?

• Both groups had significantly higher scores in the posttest. First generation students had slightly higher scores at the beginning of program participation, but this difference was not statistically significant.

• Results indicate growth or score changes in sense of belonging of first-generation and continuous generation students did not follow a different pattern through program participation.
FINDINGS

• How does first generation status influence students’ strategies for academic success?

• Both groups had significantly higher scores in the posttest

• First generation students and continuous generation students have the same starting point at the beginning, and through program participation, their scores increased. By the end of program participation, students reach the same level

• Results indicated that the increase in strategies for academic success of first generation and continuous generation students did not follow a different pattern through program participation
FINDINGS

• How does first generation status influence students’ confidence in transition?

• Recall that students’ confidence in transition remained quite stable through program participation

• Although non-significant, both groups had slightly higher scores in the posttest

• Results indicated that both groups’ confidence in their ability to transition to college remained at the same level through program participation
FINDINGS

• How does program duration between COASPs influence differences from pre and post-test in students’ sense of belonging?

• Each group had significantly higher scores in the posttest. At the beginning of program, students had the same starting point, but through program participation, their sense of belonging increased. At the end of program, they reached the same level.

• Students in programs that lasted more than 10 days had slightly higher scores, but this difference was not statistically significant.

• Growth in sense of belonging did not follow different patterns among students in these three groups of COASPs.
FINDINGS

- How does program duration between COASPs influence differences from pre and post test in students’ strategies for academic success?

- Each group had significantly higher scores in the posttest

- By end of program participation, students in programs that lasted more than 10 days had slightly higher scores, but this difference was not statistically significant.

- Growth of students’ strategies for academic success did not follow different patterns among three groups of COASPs
FINDINGS

• How does program duration between COASPs influence differences from pre and post test in students’ confidence in transition?

• There were no statistical differences among the three groups; thus, program duration did not have a significant impact on students’ confidence in transition.

• In the less than 5 day and more than 10 day groups, students reported slightly higher scores in their confidence in transition at the end of program.

• Students in the 6-10 day group reported slightly lower scores in their confidence in transition.
Implications & Recommendations
IMPLICATIONS

- **Policy:** Results support formulation and implementation of campus and federal policies that support the development of new and continuation of existing precollege/outreach programs, especially longer programs with focused curriculum.

- **Practice:** Results suggest the importance of longer programs (10 days or more) over and above shorter-term programs that fail to foster belonging, teach academic success strategies or increase transition confidence.

- **Research:** Results have several implications for research including (1) More studies on similar programs (2) Analyses that focus on race/gender differences in program outcomes and (3) Understanding of what affects transition confidence.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Help students set realistic self-appraisal of their skills and confidence level, in terms of transition

• Move away from 1-day or “one off” experiences and toward connected, integrated experiences that seem to produce robust outcomes for students regardless of generation status

• Sense of belonging is connected to self-efficacy (i.e., confidence) and student success—improve student success by way of increasing confidence and reducing transition anxiety (i.e., “I’m the only one”)
Question & Answer