Summer Bridge: Impact on First Generation Students’ Transition to College

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Making a Positive Difference

The Educational Opportunity Program’s Summer Bridge is a five week (3 week residential/2 week commuter) program designed to assist incoming first generation, socio-economically disadvantaged students in their transition from high school to college. Students are enrolled in a 4 unit course and participate in a myriad of high quality seminars, workshops, and activities geared toward strengthening their academic success skills, building confidence in establishing the student/faculty partnership, developing friendships, experiencing university life, and becoming familiar with the campus environment prior to their first term.

Desired Outcomes

The program goals are 1) to positively impact participants’ perceptions of and confidence in their own academic and social preparedness and readiness for college; 2) to provide students the opportunity to experience and gain appreciation for the rigors and expectations of university life; and 3) to build students’ sense of belonging and confidence in their ability to be a part of the university community.

After participating in the five week Summer Bridge program students will indicate an increased confidence in their knowledge, skill, and ability related to 18 specific learning outcome elements, with a minimum 85% frequency in the combined Moderately Agree to Strongly Agree category.

Focus of Assessment

By way of our program assessment, we hope to identify students’ perceptions and level of confidence in their own understanding and abilities to meet the expectations of university life and to determine if we are successful in fulfilling our program goals and learning outcomes.

An online pre/post assessment is administered to all participants prior to and at the conclusion of the program. Students are asked to rate their level of agreement with 18 statements related to the activity learning outcomes of the program. Additionally, students are asked to indicate the three most important things they learned by way of their participation in the program.

Other modes of measurement include course grade, paper research project and oral presentation ratings, and first quarter/year persistence.

Results

What Students Learned

I have learned that it is okay to ask help from others and that study groups allow you to discuss and understand whatever material you are learning better.

Everyone has their own opinions as you do too, you are not judged for what you believe in, you are judged for how you act upon it.

I learned that keeping a positive attitude is very important. With the right kind of attitude you can do anything.

Implications for Practice

In general, this summer transition program successfully introduced students to therigors and expectations of university life increasing their personal sense of belonging and belief in their readiness for the college experience.

Areas for improvement:

• Provide instructors, and facilitators with the pre assessment data as early as possible to allow adjustments in teaching and facilitation based on what students indicate they know as well as need to know.
• Identify specific learning rubrics to better determine the level of learning that has taken place.
• Incorporate periodic “one-minute” assessment activities during seminars and lectures to gain immediate feedback on student learning.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the pre & post assessment, students participating in Summer Bridge 2012 demonstrate:

• an increased confidence in their level of preparedness and readiness for college;
• an appreciation for the rigors and expectations of university life;
• an increased sense of belonging and ability to be a part of the university community.

In particular, the following learning outcomes results indicate a marked shift in the students’ perceptions of their own skill and level of preparedness:

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