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Angela Vaughan

University of Northern Colorado

Alexis Hauck

University of Northern Colorado

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UNIV 101 Summer Support Initiative

A report submitted to Dr. Kim Black, Director of Assessment

July 1, 2022 by

Angela L. Vaughan, PhD

Alexis Hauck

Introduction

Previous literature (i.e., Cooper et al., 2018) has demonstrated that summer programming for incoming freshman students (summer bridge programs) have been effective at increasing student comfort with interacting with college faculty as well as feelings of connectedness to faculty, compared to students who did not participate in summer programming. Previous literature (i.e., Eblen-Zayas & Russell, 2019) has also shown that summer bridge programs can be effective at increasing retention and academic success for at-risk students as well as ease the transition to college for all students.

Study Description

Based on initial results from Summer 2020, we wanted to expand and further refine UNIV 101's Summer Support Initiative and continue to assess its impact on student success and belongingness to the institution. Expansion of the program included increased marketing to entering students by partnering with both new student orientation and the advising centers on campus. In addition to the tutorials and resources on canvas (used in the previous summers), face-to-face activities were offered to support increased connections to instructors, class leaders and peers. UNC and UNIV 101 swag was used to incentivize participation.

The research questions that were explored and answered included:

- What effect did participation in the summer programming have on student sense of connectedness and belonging?
- What activities and resources did students use and find helpful? What barriers were there to participation?

We hypothesized that students who participate in the programming will endorse greater feelings of connectedness to both faculty and peers as well as overall sense of belonging to the college community, compared to those who did not participate.

Participants included students enrolled in the Fall 2021 UNIV 101 program. Data collection included survey responses collected during the third week of classes.

Key Findings

Survey participants (n = 321) provided insights on the impact of participating in the summer support program. Using a one-way between subjects ANOVA, participants who did engage with the summer support program reported feeling as though they had a resource in UNIV101 who could answer their questions (p = .006). They also reported feeling connected with another student before the semester began (p = .047) and enjoyed spending their time with other UNIV101 students (p = .042) early in the semester. Table 1 shows the participation in specific resources and activities.

Table 1

Summer Activity (n = 37 students)	Participation %
Posted 1 discussion post	24
Read others' discussion posts	38
Participated in 1 zoom meeting	27
Participated in more than 1 zoom meeting	19
Followed and read Instagram	24
Accessed Canvas (watched tutorial, setup profile and notifications)	68
Attended at least one in-person event	30
Attended more than one in-person event	14

When asked about barriers to participation, students reported they did not know about the summer activities offered by UNIV101, late registration thus a missed opportunity to participate, too busy to participate and not interested in getting started with college yet. These findings are presented in Table 2. Students were also asked to share recommendations to increase

participation and 138 participants (47%) stated there was not anything UNIV101 could offer to change their non-participation.

Table 2

	n	%
I did not know about UNIV 101 summer activities.	97	33
I registered for UNIV 101 the last week of summer and did not have the opportunity to participate.	20	7
I was not interested in getting started with college yet.	28	10
I was too busy this summer to participate.	107	36
Other	7	2

Future Directions

Moving into year three of the summer support program, University 101’s purpose is to provide resources, connection, and an opportunity to reach more students and encourage attendance at the end of summer. We plan to achieve this by instructor and class leader introductions videos posted on canvas, section specific emails from instructors and CLs, earlier access to course canvas shells, continued refinement of canvas tutorials, and one end of summer on-campus event. After two years of assessing this program, this seems to be the most cost-effective balance (both in terms of budget and personnel) of providing support for students and gaining their participation in activities that will begin to build community and support their transition to UNC.

Sharing and Using the Results

This assessment grant coupled with the results from the previous year has resulted in a national conference presentation (i.e., The Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience), presentation at two of UNC’s assessment symposiums, and a manuscript submitted to the Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice.