

Summer Bridge Programs: A Pathway to Retention



By

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College Persistence:



- Research on college student persistence is voluminous.
- Much of this research is based on testing and validating Vincent Tinto's (1975, 1987, 1993) highly-acclaimed model of student departure.
- The basic premise of Tinto's model is that social and academic integration are essential to student retention.

(Theoretical Consideration in the Study of Minority Student Retention in Higher Education, by L. Rendón, R. Jalomo, & A. Nora)

Persistence Research:



- Tinto's work examines the rites of passage framework of Dutch anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960).
- Van Gennep was concerned with the movement of individuals and societies over time and the rituals designed to move individuals from youth to adulthood in order to ensure social stability.

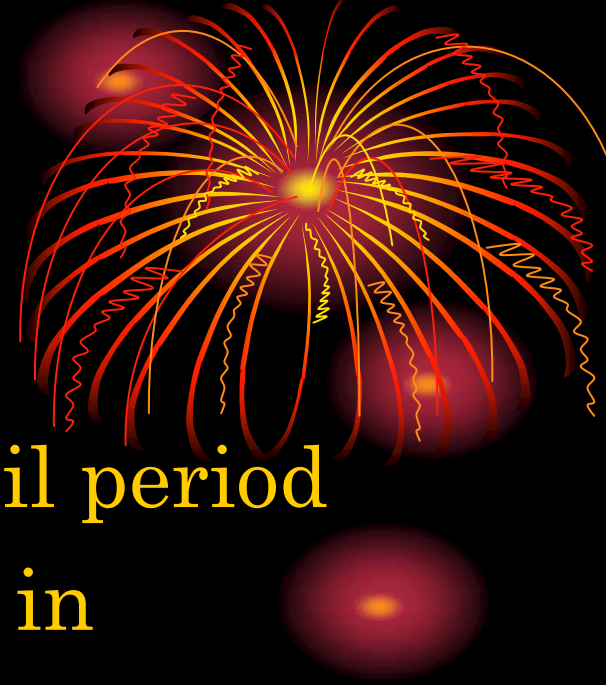
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Van Gennep's Theory:



- Van Gennep described three stages of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation.
- Separation: the individual is separated from past associations.
- Transition: the individual begins to interact in new ways with members of the new group in which membership is sought.
- Incorporation: the individual takes on new patterns of interaction with members of the new group and establishes competent membership.

Bridge Programs:



- Take place during a tranquil period
- Focus on “at-risk” students in transition
- Focus on student social integration
- Focus on student academic integration

Existing Programs:



- Research indicates that nearly all higher education institutions are using some type of first-year seminar or freshman monitoring program.
- The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience reports that the first-year seminar is one of the most researched innovations in higher education.
- Currently, there are three volumes of campus-based research on first-year freshman experience programs, spanning over a decade of recent research.
- For the Hillsborough Community College project, 43 national programs were examined and two were selected for emulation with significant modifications.

Exemplary Programs:



Program 1: Appalachian State University

- Appalachian State University is a public, four-year institution located in Boone, NC. The school currently enrolls over 14,000 students, and 90% of the students are full-time undergraduate students. Over half of the students are under the age of 22 and live on or in close proximity of the campus.
- The retention program at Appalachian State University is *Freshman Seminar* (US 1150), and the program was first offered in 1987. The course is a three-credit extended orientation course that enrolls 60% of all incoming freshman. The seminar is taught by faculty, advisers, administrators, and student services professionals.

Program 2: Bristol Community College



- Bristol Community College is a public two-year institution located in Fall River Massachusetts. The college offers over 90 programs leading to careers or associate degrees or certificates. Bristol Community College is diverse population representing over 25 countries and enrolls approximately 6,700 students. Over 60% of the students are first-generation college students, and over 50% are over the age of 21.
- The retention program at Bristol Community College is *College Success Seminar* (CSS), and it was developed as part of a Title III grant received in 2001. The course is a one-credit course that is restricted to 20 students in each section. The CSS course enrolls approximately 35% of all incoming freshman, and various sections are geared toward differing academic and social needs. The college offers two basic CSS models: 1) a stand-alone model that focus on college orientation, and 2) a learning community model that is designed for discipline specific course pairings.

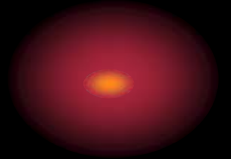
Course Emulation:



- Elements from Appalachian State University and Bristol Community College were selected for emulation.
- First, the focus on course content from Appalachian State University was selected for the modification and inclusion in the Hillsborough Community College model.
- Second, the “custom” orientation course concept from Bristol Community College was adapted to and modified to meet the needs of the targeted population, as well as the limitation of 20 students per section for the specialized orientation courses.

Transition Steps:

- Research Programs
- Design an Innovative Program
- Contact Target Population
- Recruit Target Population
- Monitor Target Population



Results:

- Students reported a high interest in continuing in college
- Course Retention was 91%
- Course GPA was 4.0
- Several students demonstrated academic gains



Thoughts for Replication:

- Research existing programs.
- Design an innovative program.
- Make sure your program meets the needs of your target population. (Research indicated nearly all students benefit from a well-developed college orientation program.)
- Contact target population.
- Recruit target population. (Actively recruit the target population. During this project, over 200 students were contacted, resulting in 15.5% recruitment rate.)
- Monitor target population. (Design a monitoring system. Tag students for follow-up, as well as, select an academic pre- and post-test.)

