

Use of Adventure Based Programs to Aid in Retention
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Statement of purpose: Retention of students is a crucial issue for institutions of higher education that cuts across all campuses (Seidman, 2005). Studies have been conducted that conclude extended orientation programs enhance the retention rate of students from their first to second year (Lowe & Cook, 2003; Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). The purpose of this study was to investigate if an adventure based transition program would enhance the retention from first to second year of undergraduate students.

Methodology: The program consists of a 5 day adventure based experience consisting of camping, low ropes course experience, hiking, rock climbing, and a 2-day white water rafting trip. Students from 7 years of the summer program were tracked each subsequent fall to determine their persistence rate into their sophomore year. There were a total of 336 students in the adventure program, and 7280 students served as controls. Data was run via Chi Square Analysis. The following were calculated and assessed in order to find a comparison between retention rates in the adventure program participants and all other first to second year students at the targeted institution. After data output was recorded, the information was analyzed and assessed to view the comparison in retention rates. The following data analysis was produced from these methods:

Results and conclusion/discussion: The Pearson chi-square analysis revealed a significant ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 5.951, p = 0.015$) difference between observed and expected frequencies for sophomore retention for the adventure based learning group. Of the 336 students in that program, there was an expected sophomore retention frequency of 300 students, whereas actually 314 were retained. Within the control group, there was 6499 students retained; however it was expected through the analysis that 6512 would be retained. While a limited study, it seems that the participation in the adventure education program significantly influenced the retention rate from first to second year. It is recommended that continue investigation into this program be conducted; and a more longitudinal comparison be considered.

Sources

Lowe, H. & Cook, A. (2003). Mind the gap: Are students prepared for higher education? *Journal of Further & Higher Education*, 27 (1), 53-76.

Seidman, A. (Ed.) (2005). *College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success*. Westport, CT: Praeger Series on Higher Education

Wilcox, P., Winn, S. & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005). 'It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people': The role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (6), 707-722.