

12-2015

A Comparison of Academic Performance and Persistence of Incoming Freshman Participants in a First-Year Experience Program

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A Comparison of Academic Performance and Persistence of Incoming Freshman Participants in
a First-Year Experience Program

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Human Resource and Workforce Development Education

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare first-time, full-time incoming freshmen from 2008 to 2011 who participated in an extended orientation, first-year experience (FYE) program at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith known as Cub Camp with incoming freshman from the same time period who did not participate. The study was designed to identify possible significant differences in the persistence rates and the academic performance of these two groups.

The study utilized a series of two proportion z-tests and two tailed t-test to compare persistence and academic performance data for the two groups. The two groups were further compared using variables such as gender, first-generation college student status, and college preparedness. The study found no significant differences in persistence rates when Cub Camp participants were compared with non-participants except for when first-generation students were compared; however, significant differences were found to exist between Cub Camp participants and non-participants in terms of academic performance. When gender was considered male and female Cub Camp participants outperformed their non-participant counterparts academically and that difference was found to be significant. When college readiness was considered, no significant difference was found in either persistence rates or academic performance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Paul B. Beran and Dr. Ray Wallace for their commitment to professional development and their efforts to establish the UAFS doctoral cohort. I would like to thank Dr. Lee Krehbiel for his encouragement and support in my effort to achieve this goal. A special thanks is due to Dr. Fnu Mihir for assistance in helping to retrieve the institutional data for this study. I also appreciate Dr. Mihir's encouragement and support throughout this process. I am forever grateful to my dissertation committee led by Dr. Kit Kacerik and including Dr. Michael Miller, Dr. Ketevan Mamiseishvili, and Dr. Jack DeVore.

I was a first-generation college student and I am a proud Upward Bound Alum. I am forever grateful for the Arkansas State University – Beebe Upward Bound program. I especially want to thank Susan Taylor, former Upward Bound Director, who believed in me before I ever believed in myself. Your belief in me has changed my life forever.

I want to thank my parents, Keith and Phyllis Stevens, who taught me a good work ethic. I would like to especially thank my mother who I credit with teaching me to have great compassion for others and my father who has always been my hero and role model. Without their love and many lessons, I would never have been able to accomplish such a goal.

Finally, I want to say a special thank you to my lovely wife, Andrea Stevens, who has encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. To my daughter, Avery Stevens, you are truly the joy of my life. Thank you both for allowing me to chase my dream.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my wife, Andrea. Andrea is my best friend and biggest supporter. I would also like to dedicate my dissertation to everyone who has ever been a part of the UAFS Cub Camp program.

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Chapter One

Retention in Higher Education

College student retention has been widely studied and volumes of literature have been written on the subject. College student retention is a significant issue for institutions of higher education and for the United States economy. According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report on *College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2013 High School Graduates* (2014) approximately 2 million (65.9%) high school graduates enrolled in college immediately following their high school graduation. According to an ACT *National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates Report* (2013) the national mean retention rate for first-year to second-year students was 65.8 percent.

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education report *College Completion: Who Graduates from College, Who Doesn't, and Why it Matters*, of the approximately 3 million first-time, full-time in-coming college freshman who started college in 2004, 2.1 million will never officially graduated. The report further states, in Arkansas where 10, 683 first-time, full-time in-coming freshman started college in 2004, only 19.7% graduated in four years and 38.7% graduated in six years.

Institutions of higher education are being asked by federal and state policy makers to make college more accessible and affordable, while maintaining a quality educational product. At the same time, institutions are also being scrutinized for their performance in such areas as retention and graduation rates. Institutions of higher education are often portrayed as cold and indifferent when it comes to student success and retention, and yet, that has never been the case. At the heart of most retention efforts, is the desire to see students graduate and succeed.

Financial Impact of Retention

Recent economic conditions have been difficult for institutions of higher education. According to Mehaffy (2012), state support for higher education in 2011 was at 57 % per full-time equivalency (FTE). “Full-time equivalency provides a method of equating part-time and full-time student enrollments into an equivalent full-time enrollment” (University of Arkansas – Fort Smith, 2014, p.1). In fiscal year 2012, state support dropped to 49.5%. To compensate for this decline, college tuition rates have increased dramatically. Between 1998 and 2008, tuition for public four-year institutions rose approximately 325% (Desrochers, Lenihan, & Wellman, 2010). This increase has left many parents and students alike questioning the return on investment of a college education. In response to escalating costs associated with attending college, policy makers have imposed accountability measures upon institutions of higher education (Thaddieus & Thomas, 2011).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), approximately 57% of first-time, full-time in-coming freshman who entered college seeking a four-year bachelor’s degree from a public four-year institution in the fall of 2005 completed a degree within six years. Failure to graduate has economic ramifications for the student and the institution. When students leave college without a degree, the institution loses unrealized revenue and the student loses the earning potential that comes along with a college degree.

Retention is where the real revenue is created. Admissions costs money – significant amounts of money. Retaining students/clients costs nothing to very little. Retaining students through graduation is also how colleges, universities and career schools meet their higher calling, their mission, their purpose and reason to exist and be supported (Raisman, 2008, p. 66).

Retention Strategies

To increase retention, many institutions have implemented interventions that include First-Year Experience (FYE) programs. FYE programs are designed to help students make the transition from high school to college. According to Woolsey (2003) “students who thought they had made friends, were adjusting well, and satisfied with their social life during their first few weeks of their first semester of college were more likely to complete a degree within five years” (p. 206). John Gardner, the founder and senior fellow of the National Resource Center for First Experience and Students in Transition and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of the Library and Information Sciences at the University of South Carolina, described the First Year Experience FYE as “a national and international effort to improve the first year, the total experience of students – and to do this intentionally and by rethinking the way the first-year was organized and /executed” (Schroeder, 2003, p. 10).

Today, 94% of colleges and universities have some type of FYE programming on-campus. These programs use a variety of delivery formats that include, but are not limited to, extended orientation programs, freshman seminar courses, and peer advising programs. Colleges and universities have recognized the need to improve the experience of first-year students. Additionally, public institutions are under increasing pressure from policy makers to produce evidence of improved performance in outcome related indicators including retention (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

Problem Statement

According to an American College Test National Persistence and Graduation rate report (2013), the national mean rate for first to second-year retention among four-year public institutions offering only bachelor’s degrees with an open enrollment policy is 58 %. The same

report indicated that the graduation rate for four-year public institutions offering only bachelor's degrees with an open enrollment policy is 24.7% within six years. Due to the 1990 Student Right to Know Act, colleges and universities are required to report the percentage of students who graduate within 150% of the typical degree completion time, which is six years (NCES, 2013). In an effort to respond to low persistence to graduation rates, colleges and universities have invested in various programs meant to integrate students socially and academically in an effort to increase student retention (Strayhorn, 2009). While retention programs require in many cases a substantial institutional investment in monetary and human resources, the impact of many retention initiatives is unknown.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a first-year experience program known as Cub Camp on the persistence rates and academic performance of in-coming freshman. This study compared first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen students at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS) who participated in Cub Camp with a group of similar students who were randomly selected and who did not to participate from 2008 to 2011. Student participants were described by gender, college readiness, and first generation college student status. Academic performance was measured using the participants' cumulative grade point average at the end of their first year of college. The persistence rates were calculated for each group. Persistence was determined by whether or not the participants from each group were retained through the 11th day of their sophomore year.

Research Questions

To determine the impact of Cub Camp on persistence from 2008 to 2011, the following questions guide the study:

1. What are the demographics and characteristics for the UAFS freshman class study participants from 2008 to 2011? The characteristics include gender, first-generation status, whether they were required to enroll in a remedial course and ACT composite score.
2. Are there significant differences in the persistence rates after the first year of college between students who participated in Cub Camp and students who did not participate?
3. Are there significant differences in the academic performance, as measured by grade point average, after the first year of college between students who participated in Cub Camp and students who did not participate?
4. Are there significant differences in persistence rates and academic performance after the first year of college between Cub Camp participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course and non-participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course.
5. Are there significant differences in persistence rates and academic performance after the first year of college between male and female students who participated in Cub Camp and their gender counterparts who did not participate?
6. Are there significant differences in the persistence rates and academic performance between first-generation college students who participated in Cub Camp and first-generation students that did not participate?

Theoretical Frameworks

After reviewing the literature regarding student retention from the early 1960's, Spady (1970) wrote his seminal article, "Dropouts from Higher Education: An Interdisciplinary Review and Synthesis". In this article, Spady uses Durkheim's theory of suicide as the basis for his retention model. Durkheim (1961) suggested that individuals who feel isolated or are not properly integrated into the social system are more likely to commit suicide. Spady (1970) suggested that isolating variables in Durkheim's theory increase the likelihood of suicide, could also influence college persistence. Spady offered five different variables (academic potential, normative congruence, grade performance, intellectual development, and friendship support) as contributors to social integration that could potentially be linked to a student's ultimate decision to drop out of college through the intervening variables of satisfaction and commitment to the institution. Spady's model has been cited in numerous studies (Healy, 1983; Litchy, 2013; & Henry, 2010).

Tinto (1973) built upon Spady's work and suggested that each student enters college with a unique set of personal characteristics, which paired with a student's commitment to the institution and the student's desire to complete a college degree ultimately influence the student's decision to persist in college. Tinto also suggests that a student's commitment to the institution will impact another key factor in student retention, academic and social integration (Tinto, 1973).

Melinda, Hughes, and O'Gara (2011) applied Tinto's Theory of Student Departure to community college students by utilizing a series of in-depth interviews with students from two urban community colleges, and they were able to conclude that Tinto's theory also applied to community college students. In fact, the study suggests that community college students feel a

strong connection with their institutions and that this connection is related to student persistence from the first-year to the second-year.

Longwell-Grice and Longwell-Grice (2008) conducted a study testing Tinto's theory studying academic integration and personal interaction with faculty members by first-generation working-class college students. The study found that first-generation, working class college students were too intimidated to interact with their faculty members. The study suggests that institutions should find a creative way to encourage students to interact with faculty.

The third theory that informs this study is Alexander Astin's Theory of Involvement (1993). Astin's theory states that students who invest physical and psychological energy into their academic and social experiences on campus are more likely to persist in college (Astin, 1984). "The simplicity of this model made it easily used, and it served as the basis for many retention interventions on campuses throughout the country," (Berger & Lyon, 2005, p.24).

Yarbrough (1993) conducted a study which compared the effects of an extended orientation camp on academic performance. The study utilized Astin's theory as a part of its theoretical framework. The study compared the results from the College Student Experience Questionnaire for orientation participants with two separate control groups. The results of the study indicated that those who participated in the extended orientation had higher grade point averages, and slightly higher retention rates.

Lorge-Grover (2013) conducted a qualitative study on First-Year Interest Groups at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Pointe. The study utilized a questionnaire which was guided by Astin's theory. The questionnaire was intended to analyze activities related to social and academic integration. The study found that peer interactions are important for student success.

Lorge-Grover suggests that colleges and universities find creative ways for students to interact with their peers on campus and find intentional ways for faculty to interact with students outside of the classroom.

The three theories briefly described above are central to the design of Cub Camp. The program offers a structured opportunity for in-coming freshman to meet other in-coming freshmen, upperclassmen, faculty and staff to integrate them into the social system of the University. The program also seeks to teach in-coming freshmen about university traditions and involvement opportunities, while creating connections to the institution. As a result of attending Cub Camp, the University expects that in-coming students will continue to be involved both academically and socially persisting through graduation.

Importance of Study

Colleges and universities are under increasing pressure from policy makers to demonstrate that they produce quality graduates who achieve specific learning outcomes. To demonstrate accountability, colleges and universities have invested a significant amount of financial and human resources into programs and services designed to retain students.

At the UAFS, Cub Camp has been offered annually before the start of the fall term since 2004. In that time, the University has invested approximately \$566,000 not including personnel time and creative energy to support the program. However, the Cub Camp program has never been thoroughly evaluated to assess its impact on first-year retention and academic performance.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of the Cub Camp FYE program on the academic performance and persistence of first-time, full-time incoming freshmen. This study could provide evaluative data from which to make programmatic decisions. This study

could also add to the body of literature on retention and FYE programs by examining specific variables including first-generation college students, college readiness, and gender.

Context of Study

The University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS) is located in the historic city of Fort Smith, Arkansas. UAFS was established in 1928 as Fort Smith Junior College and was run as an extension of the Fort Smith Public School District during its formative years. In 1966, the institution became Westark Junior College and six years later the institution changed its name again to become Westark Community College. As a Community College, the institution sought to develop a connection with local business and industry. Fort Smith was home to a number of factories, manufacturing plants, and other blue collar employers. The institution developed a set of quality technical programs designed to give local citizens the skills necessary for success and advancement within the local economy. In fact, the institutions connection to the community has been so strong throughout the years that local citizens have repeatedly approved a millage, which today supports the University at approximately \$5 million annually. On January 1, 2002, Westark Community College became the University of Arkansas Fort Smith and it was decided at that time that the institution would continue to offer the quality technical programs which had long been a part of its mission in addition to four-year bachelor's degrees. Today, the institution is a four-year Liberal Arts institution with a total undergraduate enrollment of 7,154 students in the fall of 2013, with approximately 1,200 students in the freshmen.

Retention Initiatives at UAFS

UAFS offers a variety of freshman experience programs in an effort to increase retention. One recent addition was inspired by the Cub Camp program. It is a one day seminar for non-

traditional students, traditionally aged college students that for one reason or another cannot attend the Cub Camp program, and transfer students. The program is produced out of the Student Activities Office by the Coordinator for Non-traditional Student Support. Participants get a tour of the University, in depth sessions on University specific software and technology, exposure to academic resources, and a free lunch with professors from various academic programs. The sessions are led by current UAFS non-traditional student Peer Mentors and University staff.

While the UAFS does not have a uniform University wide freshman seminar program, the College of Business has created their unique curriculum. The courses are taught by full-time faculty from the department and are designed to introduce students to the College of Business at UAFS.

The University also offers in-coming freshman the opportunity to participate in a full day freshman orientation program. The students are provided with important information on financial aid, academic support and tutoring, and involvement opportunities. Students and their parents also have the opportunity to hear from university administrators and current students in a question and answer panel format. Students may also take a tour of the freshman residence hall and discuss meal plan options with the University's food service provider. Students are advised by faculty from their selected major and professional advising staff before registering for classes at the end of the day.

Finally, UAFS has an intervention program known as Academic Early Alert. This program is not exclusive to freshmen but is used with all students at the University. When students are struggling with course work or missing classes, faculty are expected to go onto the

University's Banner program at least three different times throughout the semester and post notes and updates on struggling students. The Banner program then generates an alert e-mail to the student's academic advisor. It is then the responsibility of the academic advisor to make contact with the struggling student and record the outcome of their visit on the student's record in the University's Banner program. If the student is a freshman living in the freshman residence hall, an alert e-mail is also sent to the student's full-time professional resident director. The resident director will also make an effort to visit with the student and record the outcome on the student's record in the Banner system.

Cub Camp FYE

Cub Camp is a FYE camp open to all first-time, full-time, incoming freshmen at the UAFS. The camp is modeled after Fish Camp which is hosted at Texas A&M University. While Cub Camp is not mandatory, first-time, full-time incoming freshmen are encouraged to attend. The program is a four day experience which takes place prior to the start of each fall term on the University campus. Students who live on-campus are permitted to move-in early to participate in the program, while commuter students drive in each day for the program. Cub Camp provides an opportunity for in-coming freshmen to meet other in-coming freshman, upperclassmen, faculty and staff. Cub Camp is designed to introduce in-coming freshmen to the many campus traditions, academic resources, and involvement opportunities available to them at UAFS. Freshmen participants are broken down into smaller groups of about 50 – 60 students. These smaller groups are referred to as camps and are led by upperclassmen chairs and counselors.

Structure

Cub Camp has a full-time staff member who serves as the professional advisor for the program. The Cub Camp Director is a paid Student Assistant who works under the immediate supervision of the professional advisor. The Cub Camp Director has a number of Assistant Directors that volunteer their talents to the program. The Cub Camp Director and Assistant Directors comprise the Director's Staff and assist the advisor in making decisions about the program. The Director's Staff assists the advisor in the selection and training of Cub Camp Chairs and Counselors.

Cub Camp Chairs are upperclassmen who serve as the primary leaders responsible for the oversight of each individual camp. Chairs facilitate discussion with camp counselors during the planning phase, they hold counselors accountable to established deadlines and provide reports to the Director's Staff concerning their camps progress, and they see to it that their camp runs efficiently during the Cub Camp program. Chairs are typically selected in early November and counselors are selected in early January. Both groups are selected through an application and interview process, which is conducted by the Advisor. Chairs are typically assigned a partner to help them manage their camp and those teams are commonly referred to as Chair pairings or Co-Chairs. Most Chairs have spent at least one year as a Cub Camp counselor and have proven themselves to be responsible and committed leaders. The counselors, who also are upperclassmen student leaders, are charged with leading their camps through a series of skits, choreographed camp dances, all camp activities, information sessions and leading their Den Groups (DGs).

Cub Camp Chairs and Counselors undergo extensive training. The Cub Camp staff has a "work day" one Saturday a month starting in March and ending in August. During that time, the Director's staff will assist in planning and deliver training on topics which include Title IX,

customer service, academic resources, involvement opportunities, small group discussion, and various ice breaker games and activities. The Director's Staff also creates a deadline calendar for the chairs to reference. The deadline calendar consists of important tasks which keep the camps on schedule. Some of the items on the deadline calendar might include creating a camp dance song list, selecting a camp name, designing a camp flag or banner, selecting and practicing skits, completing camp run sheet, etc. Run sheets are vital to the success of Cub Camp. Run sheets act as a script or agenda for the various activities that will take place during individual camp times and den group times.

From 2012 to 2014, Cub Camp has averaged 275 participants out of approximately 1,200 in-coming freshmen. The Chairs of each camp are asked to select a specific name for their camp, but each individual camp is more commonly identified by the color it has been assigned. Each camp is broken down further into Den Groups, which are commonly led by a team of two counselors. Den Groups may range in size, but ideally these groups will have between eight to ten campers. Campers will spend the vast majority of their time with their individual camps and in their Den Groups. Den Groups are intended create an environment where students can really get to know one another and feel comfortable discussing important topics and asking questions. The smaller Den Groups allow for the upperclassmen counselors to begin developing the mentor/mentee relationship. These mentor/mentee relationships are encouraged to continue throughout their first-year of college and beyond. Chairs and Counselors will typically share contact information with their Campers towards the end of camp and will encourage them to stay in touch.

Activities

In addition to individual camp times and Den Groups, campers participate in a series of all camp activities. All camp activities are designed to be educational and entertaining and typically focus on difficult, yet relevant topics such as alcohol and drug abuse or sexual responsibility. Arria, Caldeira, Bugbee, Vincent, and O'Grady (2013) reports that substance abuse has proven to increase the likelihood that students will skip class, spend less time studying, perform poorly academically, and ultimately dropout of college. Excessive drinking by college students has the potential to lead to risky sexual behavior including unprotected sex and multiple partners. The consequences for such actions can include sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy, and regret over sexual behavior (Grossbard, Lee, Neighbors, Hendershot, & Larimer, 2007).

Cub Camp culminates with the Camp Mixer which features a choreographed dance from each camp that the chairs and counselors have taught their campers during individual camp time. Camp dances are meant to be a fun activity that brings the group together through a common task but it is not a competition. On the final day of camp, freshmen attend Convocation signifying the beginning of their college career.

Campers are encouraged to remain in contact with their chairs and counselors over the course of the fall semester. In recent years, each camp has created a Facebook page where students can continue to connect with each other as well as the camp staff. Periodically, Cub Camp will sponsor reunion lunches or other events to bring campers back together. Counselors will often act as mentor or guides for in-coming students, which seems create a lasting bond. Pagan and Edwards-Wilson, (2002 – 2003) and Colton, Connor, Shultz, and Easte (1999) have shown that yearlong peer mentoring programs can have a positive impact on academic performance and retention.

Support

Cub Camp is largely funded through student activity fee dollars which are budgeted for the program; however, students are also charged a small registration fee to help offset the cost of the program. Freshman students who register for Cub Camp prior to the early-bird registration deadline are charged a \$50 registration fee. Students registering after the early-bird registration deadline, which is typically set near the end of July, are charged a \$75 registration fee. The fee goes toward covering the cost of food and a camp t-shirt, which each freshman receives on the last day of Cub Camp. The fees are charged to their student accounts and may be covered by scholarships or other forms of financial aid, if any remain after tuition and fees have been paid. At New Student Orientation, in-coming students and their parents are informed that if they cannot afford the registration fee for Cub Camp they are encouraged to communicate with the Cub Camp staff and a waiver will be considered. Typically, students are asked to send an e-mail in order to create a record documenting the request for a waiver. The Cub Camp Advisor has been given the authority to evaluate these requests and to waive the registration fee when deemed appropriate.

Feedback/evaluation

During the final day of camp, students are given the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey. The survey has a series of questions that utilize a Likert scale and a few open ended questions where students are permitted to give their feedback. Counselors and Chair are also permitted to evaluate one another. This data is compiled and reviewed by the Director's Staff and the Cub Camp Advisor.

Limitations

The following are the limitations for this study:

- The study was limited to first-time, full-time in-coming college freshman students enrolled at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith between 2008 and 2011. The population was further limited due to the difficulty in making matched pairs. Thus, the study's generalizability is limited.
- A nominal fee is charged to each participant's account. If a student expresses a desire to attend but informs the Cub Camp staff that they do not have financial means to pay the fee, administration has customarily waived the fee. However, students might not feel comfortable communicating their financial struggles with the Cub Camp staff. Therefore, a fee potentially limits a student's ability to attend.
- While similar programs exist, Cub Camp is unique to the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. A single institutional sample was utilized in this study, which limits its generalizability.
- The study utilizes institutional data some of which is self-reported on the student's application for admission. The self-reported variables utilized in this study include first-generation college student status and gender.
- While the American College Test (ACT) is more prominent in the state of Arkansas, it is possible that some students either did not take the ACT or took another entrance exam like the Compass Test or the SAT. Since there is no easy way to convert the scores from one test to another, students who did not take the ACT were excluded from the study.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as follows:

Cub Camp – a four day freshman experience camp that occurs annually on the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith Campus prior to the start of fall classes.

First-Time Freshman – An undergraduate student who is entering their first institution of higher learning.

First-Year Experience Program (FYE) – “A general term referring to any type of first-year program or concept that supports or promotes student persistence and success” (Spencer, 2012, p 14).

Full-Time Student – A college student enrolled in at least 12 college credit hours is considered full-time at UAFS.

Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) – “Full-time equivalency provides a method of equating part-time and full-time student enrollments into an equivalent full-time enrollment” (University of Arkansas – Fort Smith, 2014).

Overall Grade Point Average (GPA) – “the GPA for all course work completed at UAFS” (UAFS Student Handbook, 2012, p.13).

Persistence – is a student’s willingness to remain engaged in their education from semester to semester through graduation.

Retention – is a university’s ability to retain students from semester to semester through graduation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Chapter two consists of a review of literature concerning relevant topics associated with retention and persistence in Higher Education. The review is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief historical overview of college student persistence, and the factors that influence retention today. The second section includes an overview of FYE programs. The final section discusses the relationship between persistence and the following variables; first-generations status, gender, and college readiness.

A Brief History of College Student Retention

“First and foremost, retention is about students” (Berger & Lyon, 2005). The American college student has evolved dramatically since the founding of Harvard University in 1636. Early American college students were largely affluent white males who attended college in order to prepare for careers in ministry or education (Harris, 2009). In the early years of American higher education, retention was not given much consideration, because a college degree was not in high demand and the desire to complete a degree was low even among the enrolled students (Berger & Lyon, 2005). A college degree in the colonial era was not vitally important to securing one’s economic future and institutions were more concerned with keeping their doors open than graduating students.

In 1862, the United States Congress passed the Morrill Land-Grant Act which helped to establish colleges and universities throughout the United States. Geiger (2005) reports that it was not until the early 1900’s when institutions began to standardize and stabilize that college enrollment began to increase. Prior to the 1900’s, many institutions were not able to attract and

enroll a growing student body. As a result, these institutions were forced to close their doors and go out of business. The entry of women into higher education ultimately helped to stabilize American institutions. According to Geiger (2005) “The average institution in 1870 had 10 faculty and 98 students; in 1890 these figures had grown to just 16 faculty and 157 students; but in 1910, they were up to 38 faculty and 374 students” (p. 54). The standardization of American higher education resulted from the addition of similar academic programs such as engineering, education and business. Additionally, colleges added specialized programs like mining, forestry, dentistry, pharmacy, medicine and law.

In 1937, John McNeely published “College Student Mortality” which is believed to be one of the earliest empirical studies on college student retention. McNeely (1937) collected data from 60 institutions and looked at variables such as demographics, social engagement and departure. Following the end of the Second World War, 1.1 million soldiers returned home and took advantage of the GI Bill (Berger & Lyon, 2005). According to Kim and Rury (2007) “The decades following World War II witnessed an unprecedented expansion of postsecondary education in the United States. In absolute terms, enrollment grew from less than 1.5 million in 1940 to more than 11 million by 1980 a rate increase that approached 800 percent” (p. 304).

Until the 1940's, the typical American college student was white, male, and traditionally aged. It wasn't until after World War II, the GI Bill and Truman Commission that colleges began to open their doors to a more diverse student body. Enrollment in higher education slid only slightly in the early 1950s, but then large cohorts of traditionally aged college students began to flood institutions of higher education. Colleges and universities across the country during this time began to formally track and keep record of their enrollment (Thelin, 2004). Many state flagship universities choose to become more selective in terms of enrollment. Many private

institutions that did not have the funds to handle such dramatic expansion began to strengthen their academic programs and became more selective. Regional institutions, or teachers colleges as they were called, began to add academic programs including graduate degrees (Geiger, 2005).

The 1960's and 1970's were a period of social and political unrest in the United States. The Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the first round of baby boomer enrolling in colleges and universities created a flood of student enrollment. The opportunity for minorities, women, and low-income students to enroll at institutions of higher education created a diverse and growing student body that many institutions were not ready to support. By the end of the 1960s, retention was a topic of increasing importance around the country, and leading the discussion were student development theorist Alexander Astin and researcher Alan Bean (Berger & Lyon, 2005).

In the early 1970s, college student retention theory comes to the forefront. With Spady's (1970) drop out model and Tinto's (1975) model of student integration, a national conversation began about college student retention. Tinto's model theorized that a student decision to drop out is linked to academic experiences both in and outside of the classroom in addition to social integration. Tinto's model further suggests that the degree of student success as they seek a college degree impacts their level of commitment to the institution, academic and career goals. Nearly 40 years later, Tinto's work, continues to be a key component in the discussion of college student retention (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011).

The 1980's saw a decline in higher education enrollment. This decrease fueled competition for in-coming students. Institutions of higher education responded with the practice of enrollment management. Enrollment management proposes that it is the responsibility of the

entire university to market to potential student and recruit those students (Hossler, 1984).

Increased cooperation between administrator from across academic affairs and student affairs are encourage to increase efforts to recruit, retain and graduate students.

During the 1980s, retention continued to be an important topic as institutions across the country began to focus more heavily on retention and include it as part of their strategic planning. Astin and Bean were important theorist during the 1980s. Bean (1980) focused his research on important student background characteristics, such as academic performance, distance from home and socioeconomic status in addition to student satisfaction in relation to why students chose to discontinue their education. Bean's study also found that male and female students often drop out for very different reasons. In the mid-1980s, Bean would revise his earlier study to include the influence of peers on a student's decision to leave school.

Retention research in the 1990s focused heavily on minority and underserved students. Across the country there was a push to embrace diversity and promote multiculturalism as a strategy for increasing student retention (Swail, 2004). Additionally, research on first-generation college students and how the barriers they face impact their persistence to a degree was another popular research topic during this time.

College Student Retention Today

Colleges and Universities in the United States have grown by 43% from 14.5 million students to 20.7 million students between 1994 and 2009 (National Science Foundation, 2012). According to the National Freshman Attitudes Report by Noel-Levitz, Inc. (2013), "over 90 percent of incoming freshman bring a strong desire to finish a college degree" (p. 5). The National Freshman Attitudes Report is an annual report based upon the responses of a large

national sample of first-year students. While most students do not enroll in college with the intention to dropout, according to the ACT National Collegiate Retention and Persistence to Degree Rates report (2013), the national six year graduation rate for a traditional four year institutions is 46.3%.

The Student Right to Know Act and Campus Security Act (title II of Public Law 101-542) more commonly known as the Clery Act, was signed into law as an amendment of the *Higher Education Act of 1965* which requires colleges and universities who receive financial aid to calculate and release graduation rates to all students and every prospective student. The initial intent of this law was to provide students and their parents with important information that would be helpful in the process of selecting a college.

Retention and graduation rates are being used for more than just helping prospective students choose a college or university.

Many states now use some measure of institutional retention and/or graduation rates in their accountability programs for state sponsored or supported institutions. Several organizations and at least one well-known news magazine now rank institutions and in some cases states, by some measure of retention. Even the federal government is considering using institutional retention rates in a national system of higher education accountability. Indeed a number of states already use institutional retention in their accountability systems. Clearly increasing student retention matters now more than ever (Tinto, 2006, p. 5).

Today, college student retention and graduation rates are viewed as a performance measures. Internally, retention rates are used to determine whether or not the institution has been successful in educating students. Externally, policy makers and tax payers have become disenchanted with institutions of higher education. This disenchantment is due in part to the increasing number of students accessing higher education, but yet, graduation rates have

remained stagnant (Sanford & Hunter, 2011). Many states have created funding formulas that tie state support to a set of previously agreed upon performance measures. Performance funding is another way for policy makers to exercise control over public institutions and create leverage for holding them accountable for their performance.

First-Year Experience Programs

First-year experience (FYE) programs differ across institutions. According to Fike and Fike (2008) “Interventions should be tailored to each institution and then evaluated to make sure they are meeting the unique needs of the institution and its students” (p. 68). While these programs vary from institution to institution, they have many common factors. FYE programs will often have an aspect of the program that is intended to be an introduction to the institution and their campus resources. It is also common to spend some time discussing study skills and time management. These programs all have some form of activities to entertain and educate students. Programs also focus on similar goals including increasing student academic performance, retention and graduation rates through integrating students academically and socially into the university (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Goldman & Pascarella, 2006; Tobolowsky, Mamrick, & Cox, 2005). While there are a variety of first-year programs, bridge programs, orientation programs, outdoor adventure programs, freshman seminars, and learning communities are most commonly discussed in the literature. These programs are discussed in the following section.

Bridge Programs

Bridge programs are designed to help in-coming freshmen and transfer students acclimate to the institution. Bridge programs are typically residential offerings held during the summer

months lasting four to six weeks in length. Bridge programs target different students based upon the programs mission and a few institutions will conditionally admit students with the understanding that full admission is dependent upon successful completion of the Bridge program. Most programs tend to target low-income, first-generation college students. Other programs target non-English speaking students, international students, and students with a disability. The curriculum for these programs varies depending upon the programs mission and students served. All Bridge programs ultimately have the same goal, which is to retain these students and give them the opportunity to be successful at the institution (Kezar, 2000). Bridge programs allow students the opportunity to adjust to college life in a regimented environment, meeting regularly with program staff and having access to tutors and other academic support.

In a study that investigated at risk students, Ackerman (1990) followed students from low-income families for two semesters following their participation in an intense six-week bridge program, and the study found that these students had greater academic performance and higher persistence rates.

Orientation Programs

Orientation programs are designed to help students acclimate to their new colligate environment. While these programs vary in duration, most orientation programs range from a day to a week in length compared to a Summer Bridge program that might last four to six weeks. Another major difference is that Summer Bridge programs often have a set curriculum that is delivered and evaluated. While an orientation program may have a set of objectives, there are rarely examinations or grades given.

According to Perrine & Spain (2009), Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) has an orientation program called New Student Days (NSD). Designed around Tinto's (1975) theory this orientation program seeks to integrate new and transfer students socially and academically into the institution as well as creating a sense of connection between the student and the institution. Students are encouraged to attend through a series of mailings which go out over the course of the summer. One week before the fall term begins students are permitted to move on to campus and series of planned programs and events are executed.

Other orientation programs are designed to be a brief overview or introduction to campus policies and procedures, campus life including Student Activities, Greek Life and other campus clubs and organizations, academic resources and the institution's library, financial aid, food service and book store. Some of these programs end with an advising session and the selection of fall classes. Many orientation programs are mandatory, but some institutions will allow late enrollees to register for classes without an orientation.

Outdoor Orientation Programs

Outdoor orientation programs vary in length, but are usually no longer than a week. Trips typically consist of overnight camping, canoeing, hiking, ropes challenge courses, and other outdoor activities. Trips are led by faculty and staff with strong backgrounds in recreational programming and outdoor safety and survival. Often student leaders who have had an exhaustive training course will serve as facilitators. Program participants also vary depending on the program's mission and objective with some programs being open to all students and others target at-risk student populations. These programs are often held at state and national parks or other camp grounds available to the institution.

Wolfe and Kay (2011) conducted an assessment on an outdoor orientation program using proven retention factors and examining the participant's experience. Participants reported having made a greater feeling of connection with their fellow first-year students and the institution. The participants also reported having stronger feelings of transition.

Outdoor orientation programs do not appeal to everyone. These programs are often more enticing to students who have a passion for the outdoors. Outdoor orientation programs are not limited to preterm. Some of these programs continue into the academic year or can reoccur throughout providing students with continuing support.

Freshman Seminars

The makeup of Freshman Seminars differs greatly from institution to institution. The goals and objectives set forth for Freshman Seminars also differ from institution to institution. Some seminars are purely academic; others focus on campus life and success strategies; and some are a blend of academic content and success strategies (Hendel, 2007). Seminars are typically set up like any other course with a set time and location for the student to meet. Some courses only meet once a week, while others meet more frequently. The curriculum for freshman seminar courses are typically designed as a team effort between academic departments and student affairs professionals. Thus, the courses are often taught by faculty and/or Student Affairs professionals and in some cases are taught in teams (Hendel, 2007). These courses are often for credit and students receive a grade for their efforts. The number of students in the course is typically kept rather small to allow for more one-on-one with the faculty and group interaction (Robinson, Burns, & Gaw, 1996).

“FYE seminars can be defined as curricular interventions (Allen & Lester, 2012; Porter & Swing, 2006), or programming tools (Jamelske, 2006; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008), used to help improve all students’ transition” (Holliday, 2014). The University of South Carolina has a model freshman seminar course, University 101. Many universities across the nation have adopted their model while adapting their course to meet their specific institutional needs.

Friedman and Marsh (2009) study consisted of 177 first-year students enrolled in a Freshman Seminar course in the fall of 2006. The participants were 61% female and 39% male. The students were enrolled in nine different section of an experimental Freshman Seminar course. Two of the three sections were being taught by full-time faculty, while the remaining section was being taught by a first-time instructor. The control group consisted of 131 freshman enrolled in six sections of a traditional freshman seminar course with similar faculty members and experience.

The participants were given the College Student Expectations Questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed during the first week of fall classes, and measures a student’s expectations about college, goals, motivation, and engagement in academic and social life. After analyzing the data, the researcher indicated that there was no statistical difference in retention. Both course styles had an 87% retention rate, and in terms of academic performance, there was no significant difference.

Strayhorn (2011) studied first-time, full-time freshman participants from a large research intensive institution. The sample consisted of 755 participants who responded to a First-Year Assessment Survey. The majority (58%) of the studies participants were women. Eighty-six

percent of participants were white, 7% were African American, 3% were Asian Pacific Islander and 4% were Hispanic. The study was quantitative in nature and examined the impact of a first-year seminar on three variables known to have a close relationship with retention: academic self-efficacy, sense of belonging, academic and social skills. After a multi-variate analysis, the findings suggest that simply participating in a first-year seminar does not lead to greater outcomes. However, the study did find that the female participants reported being significantly more satisfied with their college experience than their male counterparts.

Learning Communities

“Learning communities are characterized by a variety of approaches that link or cluster classes around a theme and a cohort of students during a given term.” (Messina, 2011, p. 120). According to Romanoff (2000) and Stassen (2003) Alexander Meiklejohn is responsible for one of the most notable learning communities known as the “Experimental College” at the University of Wisconsin. The “Experimental College” came out of an effort to connect what seemed to be a fragmented undergraduate experience. Meiklejohn’s model placed students into a cohort designed to build community among the students and called upon faculty members to serve as instructors and facilitators. The “Experimental College” focused upon the theme of citizenship and democracy, and encouraged students to live out democratic ideas (Inkelas, Soldner, & Szeleny, 2008; Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Whether or not learning communities have an impact upon persistence or academic performance is a contested issue. Pike, Schroeder, & Berry (1997) found in a study after controlling for entering abilities that the living learning community could not show a direct impact on student persistence, but rather the increased interaction with faculty members that was

correlated for persistence. However, the study did find achievement and commitment to the institutions could be significantly impacted by social integration, student faculty interactions and support from fellow students. The challenge is to create more programs that support such opportunities.

Pasque and Murray (2005) found that learning communities for participants at the University of Michigan was a predictor of academic achievement accounting for a 1.1% variation in grades. Kanoy and Bruhn (1996) found that students who lived in learning communities had higher grade point averages than other residents. However, the same study found no significant difference in retention rates.

There are many factors that have been studied in order to better understand the retention puzzle. While some factors have been more clearly identified as having an impact on academic performance and retention, there are others that are more contended. The following section describes the factors that influence retention as it relates to this study.

First Generation College Students

First-generation college students are students whose parents have an associate's degree, some college, or have never attended college.

First-generation college students, most of whom come from low-income and minority backgrounds, face a number of challenges – from poor academic preparation to inadequate finances to a lack of support from peers or family members – that make it difficult for them not only to get into college but also to get through it (Engle, 2007, p. 25).

Research has shown that being a first-generation college student is a risk-factor even if you control for other factors (Engle, 2007; Engle & Tinto, 2008). According to Chen (2005) first-generation college students that attend either a two-year college or a four-year university are

twice as likely to leave school without completing a degree compared to students whose parents have earned a college degree. According to Engle (2007), “First-generation college students tend to be less prepared academically when they enter college than their peers. Research has shown that they are less likely to take a rigorous high school curriculum, Advanced Placement Courses, and they generally have lower scores on college entrance examinations such as the SAT and the ACT” (p.33). According to Chen (2005) 55% of first-generation college students enrolled in remedial course work upon entering college, while only 27% of continuing generation students took remedial course work.

Financial Aid

In 2012 – 2013, the number of students receiving Pell Grants totaled 8.8 million. During that same time period, the United States Government awarded \$32.3 billion dollars in aid. The maximum Pell Grant in 2012 – 2013 covered only 63% of the average public four-year tuition and fees. Additionally, about half of those awarded Pell Grants were 24 years or older (College Board, 2013).

According to Sawyer (2011), first-generation college students were more likely to worry about failing their courses and about financial aid than their peers. McLean (2013) reports that first-generation college students are more likely to choose a college or university based upon the cost of attendance. They are also more likely to choose an institution closer to home for reasons related to work and for the opportunity to live at home.

Generally, first-generation college students are from low-income a family, which makes it possible for them to receive federal and state funded grants and scholarships, but for many students, these free gifts do not begin to cover their expenses.

On average, after deducting scholarships, work-study, and grants from a student's tuition, he/she may have a remaining balance. Therefore, both students and parents apply for loans and/or make arrangements with their respective institutions to cover a remaining balance through payment plans (McLean, 2013, p. 18).

Gender

Gender as a factor in relation to college student persistence has been studied with mixed results. Astin (1975), Astin, Korn and Green (1987), and Tinto (1987) found gender to be a significant factor in college student retention. Peltier, Laden and Mantranga (1999) and Evers and Mancuso (2006) found that gender was a significant retention factor and that women were more likely to be retained and graduate than their male counterparts. DuBrock (1999) found that women were more likely to return for their second and fourth year of college while men were more likely to return for their third year. There are clearly recognizable differences between men and women. Across the country, more women enroll and graduate from college than do men.

College Readiness

The admission departments at colleges and universities around the country receive and review the applications of in-coming freshmen on a daily basis. Included in those applications are often high school transcripts and entrance exam scores from national tests like the ACT and the SAT. Unfortunately, graduating from high school does not necessarily mean that a student is ready for the rigor of a college curriculum, as there are various paths to a high school diploma (Somerville & Yi, 2002). Today's graduating high school seniors will have had the opportunity to take advanced placement courses, higher level math and science courses, and in general a more challenging high school curriculum all in an effort to prepare them for college.

In order to define college readiness, college entrance exams like the ACT and SAT have set minimum benchmarks. The ACT has set their benchmarks for tests in English, Math,

Reading and Science based upon the high probability that the student will achieve success (at least a 75% probability that the student will earn at least a “C”) in freshman courses in the tested subject matter (Conley, 2007). Each institution must establish its own admissions policy and/or selection guidelines, which likely include high school grade point average, rigorous high school curriculum, and minimum entrance exam scores. Some colleges have what is commonly referred to as “Open Enrollment”, which basically means all are welcome to attend.

College entrance exams are used for placement purposes. All institutions are different, but commonly students with sub score of an 18 or less in English, Reading or Math have required remediation. Many institutions have minimum test score requirements, meaning that students who do not score at least minimum test score on an entrance exam may be encouraged to seek Adult Education for remediation prior to retaking the entrance exam again.

Remediation

Remedial courses are non-credit courses that are intended to increase a student’s knowledge and skill in a given subject area in order to better prepare them for freshman entry level courses. Being required to enroll in at least one remedial course means that it will take longer for the student to earn their degree and decreases the likelihood that they will graduate (Adleman, 1999). In 2007 – 2008, the number of first-year undergraduate students enrolled in remedial courses was 20.4% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). Conley (2007) reports that remedial courses cost institutions of higher education approximately a \$1 billion dollars a year and those students required to enroll in remedial course have a dramatically reduced probability of graduating.

Pagan and Edwards (2003) conducted a study which included 53 at-risk remedial students in their second semester. The mentors were recruited from a list of students that had a 3.0 grade point average or higher. These volunteers received extensive training. Each mentor was assigned a group of 5 – 8 mentees. The mentees were remedial students who had performed poorly academically and had been placed on academic warning or probation. Those students were divided based upon their academic status. Those on academic probation were assigned graduate and upperclassmen mentors and those on academic warning were assigned to sophomore or freshmen mentors. Pagan and Edwards (2003) found that this intervention showed a positive impact on retention and grade point average.

Roberts (2001) studied the relationship between taking part in student services programs and student achievement in first-time, full-time freshmen enrolled in remedial courses. The student services programs included academic advising, tutoring services, and student activities. The study found that students who participated successfully exited remedial courses at a significantly higher rate than students who did not participate. The study also found that females who participated successfully exited remedial courses at a significantly higher rate than those who did not participate.

Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2009) conducted a study that included 250,000 students who were referred to take a remedial mathematics course. Of those participants studied, 28% never enrolled, 30% failed or withdrew from the course, 10% dropped out without failing, and 32% completed the course. Only about half of the students who successfully completed the developmental math course went on to complete a college-level math course. The study illustrates the high-risk nature of students enrolled in remedial courses.

Chapter Summary

College student retention has become an increasingly important topic in American institutions of higher education. Over the last 60 years, what we know about college student retention has increased dramatically. Scholars have been able to identify a few key theories that have been tested and have formed the frameworks of many studies. Scholars have identified certain populations of students as being at-risk and institutions have developed a number of programs to help those students. College student retention will continue to be vitally important to institutions of higher education moving forward.

Chapter Three

Methods

Research Problem

According to ACT (2013), the national mean first-to second-year retention rate among four-year public institutions offering only bachelor's degrees with an open enrollment policy is 58%. The same report indicated that persistence to degree rates for four-year public institutions offering only bachelor's degrees with an open enrollment policy is 24.7% in six years. Due to the 1990 Student Right to Know Act, colleges and universities are required to report the percentage of students who graduate within 150% of the typical degree completion time, which is six years (NCES, 2013). In order to counteract low persistence to graduation rates, colleges and universities have invested in creation and implementation of programs meant to integrate students socially and academically in an effort to increase student retention (Strayhorn, 2009).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a first-year experience program known as Cub Camp on the academic performance and persistence rates of in-coming freshman.

Research Questions

To determine the impact of Cub Camp on persistence from 2008 to 2011, the following questions guide the study:

1. What are the demographics and characteristics for the UAFS freshman class study participants from 2008 to 2011? The characteristics include gender, first-generation status, whether they were required to enroll in a remedial course and ACT composite score.
2. Are there significant differences in the persistence rates after the first year of college between students who participated in Cub Camp and students who did not participate?
3. Are there significant differences in the academic performance, as measured by grade point average, after the first year of college between students who participated in Cub Camp and students who did not participate?
4. Are there significant differences in persistence rates and academic performance after the first year of college between Cub Camp participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course and non-participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course.
5. Are there significant differences in persistence rates and academic performance after the first year of college between male and female students who participated in Cub Camp and their gender counterparts who did not participate?
6. Are there significant differences in the persistence rates and academic performance between first-generation college students who participated in Cub Camp and first-generation students that did not participate?

Research Design

This study used a quantitative ex post facto research design to compare two groups of students utilizing self-reported student records and institutional archival retention and academic performance data. “The designation ex post facto, from Latin for ‘after the fact,’ indicates that an ex post facto research study is conducted after variation in the variable of interest has already been determined in the natural course of events” (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p 332). An ex post facto design was appropriate for this kind of study since the study utilized archival data and the outcomes had already been determined through the natural progression of time.

This study compared two groups of students populated by first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen at the UAFS from 2008 to 2011 who self-selected to participate in the Cub Camp program, a four-day freshman experience camp. For comparative purposes; for the years 2008 to 2011, approximately 200 non-participants from each freshman class were randomly selected. The study participants totaled 1,130 with 490 Cub Camp participants and 640 non-participants. The only criteria used in their selection was that they were first-time, full-time in-coming college freshmen.

Variables

The dependent variables in this study were considered institutional archival data including academic performance and persistence rate. Academic performance was measured by a student’s overall cumulative grade point average (GPA) at the end of their freshman year. Participants’ overall GPA was figured on a 4.0 scale. Persistence rates were measured by the percentage of student within each sample that persisted through the 11th day of their sophomore year.

Independent variables in this study include: ACT composite score, gender, remedial course work, and first-generation college student status. Gender and first-generation college student status were self-reported by the student on their University admissions application. ACT composite scores were either provided by a high school counselor or were directly sent to our Admissions Office from ACT, as directed by the student. Students without ACT composite scores were eliminated from this study. Whether or not a student was required to enroll in at least one remedial course was provided by the institution.

Instrumentation

The data utilized in this study was institutional data owned by UAFS some of which was collected from the student admissions application (i.e. gender, ACT composite score, etc.). Other data was institutional archival data, which is generated by the student as a function of being a student (i.e. grade point average, retention, etc.) Approval was sought through Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UAFS and the IRB at the University of Arkansas (UA). The institutional data was provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The institutional archival data were analyzed including first-year cumulative grade point average and enrollment information. Descriptive statistics were analyzed for the participant group and the comparison group.

The Cub Camp Office maintains attendance records on all Cub Camp participants and was able to provide that information to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided institutional archival data for the Cub Camp participants, and populated a comparison group of approximately 200 similar non-participates from each year 2008 to 2011. The comparison group was populated using a truly random selection process. All

of the participants' data were combined onto one Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. For the purposes of this study, the Cub Camp participants' data were combined into one cohort (Group A) and all non-participants were combined into another cohort (Group B).

Population

The participants involved in this study were first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen students from four entering classes from fall 2008 to 2011 at the UAFS. First-time, full-time in-coming students are defined as students who are entering their first semester of college at their first institution of higher education. The population was selected due to the programmatic consistencies during this time period and the completeness of the participant data from 2008 to 2011.

Human Subjects Consideration

Approval for this study was sought through the IRB at UAFS and an approval letter was forwarded to the University of Arkansas IRB for approval. The researcher had no contact or communication with the study's participants. The data was coded in such a way that the identity of participants was protected and kept private from the researcher and the audience.

Data Collection

The Cub Camp Office maintains registration/attendance rosters from each camp. Those rosters were provided to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness where the students were codified and their descriptive statistics compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. By rule, Cub Camp participants must be first-time, full-time in-coming college freshmen. For

comparative purposes; for each year, a test group of approximately 200 students who are first-time, full-time in-coming college freshmen were randomly selected and their data compiled into the Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The students' data was codified in order to protect the identity of the individual participants and non-participants. The data was entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

Data Analysis

1. Describe the characteristics of students who chose not to participate in Cub Camp. Characteristics include gender, first-generation status, whether they were required to enroll in a remedial course and ACT composite score. Mean and standard deviations were calculated for ACT composite scores. A frequency table was used to describe gender, first-generation status and enrollment in remedial courses.
2. Describe the characteristics of students who chose to participate in the Cub Camp program. Characteristics include gender, ACT composite score, first-generation college student status, and whether or not the student was required to take remedial courses. Mean and standard deviations were calculated for ACT composite scores. A frequency table was used to describe gender, first-generation status and enrollment in remedial courses.
3. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the persistence rates between Cub Camp participants and non-participants. A two-portion t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.
4. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the academic performance between Cub Camp participants and non-participants. An independent

- samples t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.
5. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in persistence rates between Cub Camp participants and non-participants who were required to take remedial course work. A two-portion t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.
 6. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the academic performance between Cub Camp participants and non-participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course. An independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.
 7. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in persistence rates between male and female Cub Camp participants and non-participants. A two-portion t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.
 8. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in academic performance between male and female Cub Camp participants and non-participants. An independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.
 9. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in persistence rates between first-generation college student Cub Camp participants and non-participants. A two-portion t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.

10. Determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in academic performance between first-generation college student Cub Camp participants and non-Cub Camp participants. An independent samples t-test was used to analyze the data. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a first-year experience program known as Cub Camp. The study sought to compare students who participated in Cub Camp from 2008 to 2011 with a comparison group of first-time, full-time in-coming freshman who did not participate in the program from the same time period. The study was designed to identify possible statistically significant differences in self-reported student records and institutional persistence and academic performance archival data. Additionally, this study includes a description of demographic and background statistics for both Cub Camp participants and the comparison group, and it was designed to determine whether there were any gender, college readiness, first-generation student related statistically significant differences in persistence rates and academic performance of Cub Camp participants and the comparison group. Excluded from this study were part-time students, students with concurrent credit or transfer credit, and any students who did not have an ACT composite score.

Research Question 1

What were the demographics and characteristics for the study participants from 2008 to 2011? The characteristics include gender, first-generation status, and college readiness.

The participants for this study were first-time, full-time in-coming freshman at UAFS in four freshmen classes from 2008 to 2011. First-time, full-time in-coming freshmen were students enrolling in their first college or university and enrolling in at least 12 college credit hours. The total number of participants in this study was 1,130.

The students who attended Cub Camp for each year from 2008 to 2011 were combined and assigned to a cohort (Group A). For comparative purposes, similar students from each year 2008 to 2011 were randomly selected to populate a second cohort (Group B). The only criterion used in their selection was that they had not attended Cub Camp and that they were first-time, full-time in-coming freshman from 2008 to 2011 with a composite ACT score.

Group A was made up of 490 first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen Cub Camp participants from 2008 to 2011. Group B was made up of 640 first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen non-participants from 2008 to 2011. The number of females in Group A was 331(67.6%). The number of males in Group A was 159 (32.4%). The number of females in Group B was 366 (57.2%). The number of males in Group B was 274(42.8%). Of the years being analyzed (2008 – 2011); every year, female students attended Cub Camp at a significantly higher rate when compared to men.

Table 1

Study Participants by Gender

	Group A Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011		Group B Non-Participants 2008 – 2011	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Female	331	67.6%	366	57.2%
Male	159	32.4%	274	42.8%
Total	490	100%	640	100%

Of the participants sampled for this study, 552 (48.8%) self-reported as being first-generation college students, 436 (38.6%) reported that they were not first generation college

students and 145 (12.8%) participants reported that their status as being unknown. Group A has 236 (48.2%) students that reported being first-generation college students, 195 (39.8) participants were non-first-generation, and 62 (12.7%) participants were unknown. Group B has 317 (49.5%) participants that reported being first-generation college students, 242 (37.8%) participants were non-first-generation and 84(13.1%) were unknown. The distribution of first-generation college students and non-first generation students in Cub Camp (2008 – 2011) reflects the overall University population.

Table 2

Study Participants by First Generation Status

	Group A Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011		Group B Non-Participants 2008 – 2011	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
First-Generation	236	48.2%	317	49.5%
Non-First-Generation	195	39.8	242	37.8
Other	62	12.7	84	13.1
Total	490	100%	640	100%

The mean ACT composite score for all participants was 21.99 (SD = 3.68). The mean ACT composite score 22.54 (SD = 3.82) and 21.57 (SD = 3.53) for Groups A and B respectively. The ACT composite scores ranged from 12 to 32. The median score for Group A was 22 and the mode was 19. The median score for Group B was 22 and the mode was 21.

Table 3*ACT Composite Scores*

	Group A	Group B	Total Group
Number of Records	490	640	1,130
Mean	22.54	21.57	21.99
Median	22	22	22
Minimum	12	12	12
Maximum	31	32	32
Range	19	20	20
Standard Deviation	3.82	3.53	3.68

Of the participants sampled for this study, 315 (27.8%) were required to take at least one remedial course. Group A had 111(25.2%) students who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course. Group B had 204 (31.8%) students were required to enroll in at least one remedial course. At least a quarter of the population that attended Cub Camp in any given year were required to take at least one remedial course.

The study also examined academic performance as measured by cumulative GPA at the end of the first-year of college. GPA was measured on a 4.0 scale. All of the participants had a mean GPA of 2.44 (SD = 1.11). Group A had 490 records and Group B had 640 records for a total 1,130 records. Group A had a mean GPA of 2.58 (SD = 1.01), while Group B had a mean GPA of 2.34 (SD=1.17). The minimum GPA was .00 and the maximum GPA was 4.0.

Table 4*First-Year Grade Point Average for Study Participants*

	Group A	Group B	Total Group
Number of Records	490	640	1,139
Mean	2.58	2.34	2.44
Median	2.76	2.49	2.61
Minimum	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00	4.00
Range	4.00	4.00	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.01	1.17	1.11

Data for persistence were collected for the freshman to sophomore year. Persistence was determined by enrollment on the 11th day of the sophomore year. The persistence rate for all student participants is 69.9%. Group A had 353(72.0%) of 490 students persisted and Group B had a 437(68.0%) of 640.

Table 5*Freshman to Sophomore Year Persistence Information*

	Group A		Group B		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	353	72.0%	437	68.2%	790	69.9%
No	137	28.0%	203	31.7%	340	30.1%
Total	490	100%	640	100%	1,130	100%

Research Question 2

Were there statistically significant differences between the persistence rates after their first year of college for students who elected to participate in Cub Camp and students that did not participate?

A two-proportion z-test was conducted to compare Group A and Group B in terms of persistence rates. An alpha significance level of .05 was used. The test determined that there was not a significant difference in the persistence rates of Group A and Group B. The z-statistic from the two tailed z-test was $z = 1.1$ with an observed significance level of $p = .2741$. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference of persistence rates between those students who attend Cub Camp and those who did not attend.

Table 6

Comparison of Persistence Rates

Groups	n	Fall to Fall Persistence	Proportion	z	P*
Group A Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	490	353	.7204	1.1	.2741
Group B Non- Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	640	437	.6828		

* $\alpha = 0.05$ two tailed

Research Question 3

Were there statistically significant differences between the cumulative grade point averages of Cub Camp participants and non-Cub Camp participants after their first year of college?

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare academic performance of Group A and Group B. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance. The test determined that there was a significant difference in the academic performance of Group A ($M = 2.577$, $SD = 0.9681$) and Group B ($M = 2.344$, $SD = 1.0814$), conditions $t(1100.790) = 3.808$, $p = 0.0002$. The differences in means (mean difference = -0.233 , 95% CI: 0.1109 to 0.3548) was small ($r = 0.114$).

Table 7

Independent-Samples t-test Comparison of Academic Performance

Groups	n	M	SD	t	P*
Group A Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	490	2.576	0.968	3.808	.0002
Group B Non- Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	640	2.343	1.081		

Research Question 4

Were there statistically significant differences between students who were required to take remedial courses and who elect to participate in Cub Camp and similar students that did not participate in terms of persistence rate and GPA after their first year of college?

Remedial course work is required when a student is deemed to need additional preparation for college level course work. College entrance exam scores and sub scores are commonly used to determine whether a student is ready for entry level college course work. In order to be deemed college ready by the University of Arkansas Fort Smith, a student would have had to score at least a 19 on the ACT English, Math, and Reading subtests.

Group A participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course totaled (110 of 490) 22% and Group B participants totaled (203 of 640) 31%. Participants in Group A that were required to enroll in at least one remedial course had a persistence rate of (72 of 110) 65.5%. Students in Group B who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course had a persistence rate of (118 of 203) 58.1%. A two-proportion z-test was conducted to compare the persistence rates. Group A participants 77 of 110 participants were required to enroll in at least one remedial course and Group B had 119 out of 203 participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course. An alpha level of .05 was used. There was not a significant difference ($p = 0.2266$) in the persistence rates of Group A and Group B participants who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course.

Table 8

Comparison of Persistence Rates of Students Enrolled in at Least One Remedial Course

Groups	n	Fall to Fall Persistence	Proportion	z	P*
Group A Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	110	72	.654	1.2	0.2266
Group B Non- Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	203	118	.581		

* $\alpha = 0.05$ two tailed

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare academic performance of participants in Group A who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course and participants in Group B who were also required to enroll in at least one remedial course. There was not a statistically significant difference in persistence.

Group A participants had 110 students enrolled in at least one remedial course with a mean grade point average of 2.41 (SD = 1.01) after the first-year of college and in the Group B 203 (35.8%) students were required to enroll in at least one remedial course with a mean grade point average of 2.03 (SD = 1.17) after the first-year of college condition $t(313) = 0.531, p = 0.595$. No significant difference was found in academic performance.

Table 9

Independent- Samples t-test Comparison of Academic Performance of Student Required to Enroll in at Least One Remedial Course

Groups	N	M	SD	t	P*
Group A Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	110	2.41	1.01	0.531	.595
Group B Non- Cub Camp Participants 2008 – 2011	203	2.03	1.17		

* $\alpha = 0.05$

Research Question 5

Were there statistically significant differences between male and female students who elected to participate in Cub Camp and similar students that did not participate in terms of persistence rate and academic performance after their first year of college?

In order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists in the persistence rate of male and female Cub Camp participants and male and female non-Cub Camp participants, a two – proportions z-test was run. An alpha level of .05 was set in order to determine significance.

The number of males in Group A totaled 159 of which 117 students persisted to the 11th day of their sophomore year. The males in Group A had a persistence rate of 73.6%. Group B had a total of 274 males of which 179 males persisted through the 11th day of their sophomore year. The males in Group B had a 65.3% persistence rate.

The result of the z-test indicated that there was not a significant difference between the persistence rates of males from Group A and males from Group B. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance. The p-value was calculated at .0885, which suggests that Cub Camp may not have had an impact on the persistence rates of male Cub Camp participants.

There were 331 females in Group A of which 236 persisted through to the 11th day of their sophomore year. The females from Group A had a persistence rate of 71.3%. The number of females in Group B totaled 366 of which 258 persisted through to the 11th day of their sophomore year. The females in Group B had a persistence rate of 70.5%.

The z-test indicated that there was no a significant difference between the persistence rates of females from Group A and the females from Group B. The p-value was calculated at .081, which indicates that Cub Camp may not have an impact on the persistence rates of female Cub Camp participants.

In order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists in the grade point averages of males and females Cub Camp participants and male and female non-Cub Camp participants, a t-test was conducted. An alpha level of .05 was used to determine significance.

Males from Group A earned a mean cumulative grade point average of 2.44 and males from Group B earned a 2.15 mean cumulative grade point average. Group A female participants

earned a mean cumulative grade point average of 2.64 and females from Group B earned a 2.48 mean cumulative grade point average at the end of their first year of college.

Table 10

Academic Performance by Gender

	N	Variance	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Males (Group A)	159	1.01	1.00	.079
Females (Group A)	331	1.01	1.00	.054
Males (Group B)	274	1.30	1.17	.070
Females (Group B)	366	1.37	1.17	.061

The between groups mean difference was calculated at .293 with 431 degrees of freedom for the male participants for both groups. The t-value was 2.69 and the p-value was calculated at 0.0072. The p-value was determined to be significant.

Table 11

Academic Performance for Male Participants

Groups	Mean Difference	DF	t-Value	p-Value
Males Group A, Group B	.293	431	2.69	.0072

$P < .05$

A t-test was then conducted to compare the cumulative grade point average of females from Group A with the cumulative grade point average of females from Group B. An alpha level of .05 was set in order to determine significance. The between group difference was .151 with

695 degrees of freedom. The t-value was calculated at $t = 2.69$ and the p-value was calculated at $p = .042$. The p-value was determined to be significant.

Table 12

Academic Performance for Female Participants

Groups	Mean Difference	DF	t-Value	p-Value
Females Group A, Group B	.151	695	2.03	.042

$P < .05$

The t-test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the females from Group A and the females from Group B in relation to their academic performance. The results suggest that Cub Camp may have an impact on the academic performance of its male and female participants.

The statistical test results indicate that both male and female Cub Camp participants (Group A) performed better academically than their non-Cub Camp participant (Group B) counterparts. While both male and female Cub Camp participants (Group A) performed better academically, the tests results did not show a significant difference in their freshman to sophomore retention rate.

Research Question 6

Are there statistically significant differences between first-generation college students who participated in Cub Camp and similar students that did not participate in the Cub Camp program based upon persistence rates after their first year of college?

In order to determine whether or not a significant difference exists between first-generation college students who participated in Cub Camp and similar students that did not participate in the Cub Camp program based upon persistence rate, a z-test was conducted. An alpha level of .05 was set to determine significance.

The number of participants from Group A that self-reported being first-generation college students was 235 of 490 (47.9%). The number of participants from Group B that reported being first-generation college students was 316 of 640 (49.3%). The number of first-generation college students from Group A that persisted to the 11th day of their sophomore year totaled 176 or 74.9%. While 209 or 66.1% of the first-generation college students from Group B persisted to the 11th day of their sophomore year.

A two-proportion z-test was conducted to compare Cub Camp participants in persistence rates and non-Cub Camp participants. An alpha significance level of .05 was used. The p-value was calculated at $p = 0.026$. Thus, this test suggests there is a significant difference in the persistence rates for first-generation Cub Camp participants and their non-participants. These results indicate that Cub Camp attendance may impact persistence rates for first-generation colleges.

Table 13*First-Generation Persistence Information*

	Group A		Group B	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Yes	176	74.9%	209	66.1%
No	59	25.1%	107	33.9%
Total	235	100%	316	100%

Research Question 7

Are there statistically significant difference between first-generation students who elected to participate in Cub Camp and first-generation students that did not participate in terms of GPA after their first year of college?

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the academic performance of first-generation Cub Camp participants and first-generation non-Cub Camp participants. There was a significant difference in the academic performance of first-generation student from Group A ($M = 2.49$, $SD = .956$) and first-generation students from Group B ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.09$) conditions $t(549) = 2.77$, $p = 0.0058$.

Table 14*First-Generation Grade Point Average*

	Group A	Group B	Total Group
Number of Records	235	316	551
Mean	2.49	2.24	2.35
Median	2.76	2.49	2.60
Minimum	.00	.00	.00
Maximum	4.00	4.00	4.00
Range	4.00	4.00	4.00
Standard Deviation	1.01	1.17	1.08

Summary of Results

College student retention is an important issue for colleges and universities around the country. Many institutions have invested in first-year experience programs hoping to improve the first-year of college for many in-coming students, while increasing student persistence towards a degree. Having a retention plan and effectively executing that plan is vital for success in this arena, but it is also important to study these programs to ensure that they are having the intended impact. This study was designed to investigate the impact of Cub Camp and to determine whether or not significant differences in persistence rates and academic performance exist between students.

The descriptive data collected on the study's participants indicate that Cub Camp participants were not dissimilar from the participants in the comparison group. Both participants

were all first-time, full-time in-coming college freshmen at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith from 2008 to 2011. The study's participants had a similar mean composite ACT scores, Group A 22.54 and Group B 21.57. The study compared the academic performance and persistence rates of Cub Camp participants and non-participants using a series of independent samples t-test and two-tailed z-tests. The study further compared the academic performance and persistence of the two groups considering gender, college readiness, and first-generation college student status.

The study found a significant difference exists between Cub Camp participants and non-Cub Camp participants in terms of academic performance, but no significant difference was found to exist between Cub Camp participants and non-Cub Camp participants in terms of their persistence rate. The study also found a statistically significant difference between male Cub Camp participants and non-Cub Camp participants in terms of academic performance. The study also found a statistically significant difference between female Cub Camp participants and non-participants in their academic performance.

The study compared the persistence rates of male Cub Camp participants and non-Cub Camp participants and found no significant difference. When comparing the persistence rates of female Cub Camp participants with female non-Cub Camp participants no significant difference was found.

The study compared first-generation Cub Camp participants with first-generation non-Cub Camp participants and found a significant difference in both persistence rates and academic performance. Finally, no significant difference was found in either persistence rates or academic

performance when comparing Cub Camp participants with non-Cub Camp participants based upon college readiness.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

To increase retention, many institutions have implemented interventions that include First-Year Experience (FYE) programs. FYE programs are designed, among other things, to help students make the transition from high school to college with the hopes of increasing student retention. At the University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS), Cub Camp is a freshman experience camp designed to help students integrate socially and academically, while introducing students to campus traditions, academic resources, and the involvement opportunities available to them at UAFS. UAFS implemented Cub Camp in 2004 with the hope of increasing freshmen retention rates and bolstering campus life.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of Cub Camp on the persistence rates and academic performance of in-coming freshman. The study sought to compare first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS) who elected to participate in Cub Camp with a group of randomly selected similar students who choose not to participate in Cub Camp from 2008 to 2011.

The 1,130 participants in this study were first-time, full-time in-coming freshmen from 2008 to 2011. This study utilized an ex post facto research design and institutional archival data to compare Cub Camp participants (Group A) and a non-participant comparison group (Group B).

Discussion

The results of this study, as it pertains to persistence, are consistent with the literature. Even in FYE studies without selection bias and with sound methodology there are mixed results

(Wilkie and Kuckuck, 1989; Raymondo, 2003; & Fidler, 1991). In this study Cub Camp participants were found to have slightly higher persistence rates (72%) than the comparison group (68%). These results were determined not to be statistically significant. FYE programs have shown they do not always accomplish their stated goals. The data suggests that Cub Camp's attempt to impact the freshman to sophomore year persistence rates fell short between 2008 and 2011. The lone exception being first-generation college students.

It is important to consider as an explanation that UAFS offers a number of programs and activities other than Cub Camp which are designed to help retain students, acclimate to campus, and integrate socially and academically. One such program is freshman orientation which is encouraged for all incoming freshman and provides students with a brief introduction to many of the items that are covered during Cub Camp. Thus, a student who chooses not to attend Cub Camp would be exposed to information that would be helpful as they acclimate to UAFS.

When persistence was considered in factors such as gender and college readiness no significant difference was found to exist. However, when we compared the persistence rates of first-generation college students from Group A (74.9%) with those from Group B (66.1%), the findings were considered statistically significant. First-generation college students are often described in the literature as "at-risk" meaning these students display characteristics that prior research has found to correlate with a greater probability of dropping out of college. According to Barefoot (2000), "Creating structures wherein upperclassmen students mentor new students is especially important for students who are in one or more at-risk categories. Women, students of color, first-generation students, and other nontraditional students benefit from getting to know others who share their innate characteristics and who have been successful in higher education" (p.15). Cub Camp provides the opportunity for first-generation college students to connect with

their upperclassmen peers creating relationships that continue throughout the first-year of college, which might be one possible explanation for these results.

When the first-year mean cumulative grade point average was compared for first-generation college students from both Group A and Group B, the results were found to be statistically significant. This was also true when we compared all participants from Group A with Group B and when we compared the two groups based on gender. This impact on academic performance seems to support Astin's Theory of Involvement, which claims that involvement is connected to academic performance (Astin, 1999). When a student voluntarily participates in a first-year experience program like Cub Camp, they are investing in their student experience. Thus, this type of involvement has proven to have many positive outcomes.

When considering the persistence and academic performance results of students who were required to enroll in at least one remedial course, it is clear that these results are consistent with the literature. Being required to take remedial courses means that the student was not academically prepared for entry level college course work. While it is clear that the Cub Camp program can provide a great benefit to its participants, it cannot erase the effects of being an underprepared student.

Practice Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a FYE program known as Cub Camp on the academic performance and persistence rates of first-time, full-time in-coming college freshman at UAFS. The study might also provide evaluative data by which programmatic decisions can be made.

1. The results of this study show that Cub Camp participants have higher persistence rates than non-participants. However, the persistence rates are not statistically significant except for when first-generation college student participants were compared with their non-participant counter parts. It is recommended that the information presented at Cub Camp be reviewed and efforts made to rework the program to emphasize concepts that might lead to increased persistence rates. Strategies might include an increased focus on academic resources and study skills, additional opportunities to connect with faculty during Cub Camp, and more intentional programs during the academic year designed to bring participants and camp staff back together to help nurture the mentor/mentee relationships.
2. The results of this study found that Cub Camp had a positive impact on the retention and academic performance of first-generation college students. The UAFS should market Cub Camp heavily through a series of mailers, e-mails, post cards, and social media to students who indicate that they are first-generation. Additionally, Cub Camp could be promoted to first-generation college students through UAFS TRIO programs.
3. The study found that Cub Camp participants have significantly higher grade point averages than their non-participant counter parts. This information could also be used to market the program to future students.
4. While the study found a significant difference in the academic performance of Cub Camp participants, this finding alone does not necessarily lead to increased retention and graduation rates. The American College Test (2005) program reports that of the 45 percent of students who drop out of college less than 25% report poor academics as the

main reason they dropped out of college. Thus, Cub Camp should continue to make an effort to improve the post-camp support of the student participants.

Research Recommendations

1. A similar quantitative study could be conducted on Cub Camp considering different variables including high school grade point average, financial information, and ethnicity. These factors have all been associated with college student retention. Tross, Osher, and Kneidinger (2000) suggest that high school grade point average is the best predictor of college retention.
2. A similar qualitative study could be conducted on impact of Cub Camp on the transition from high school to college. Hearing first-hand from the students who attend Cub Camp could provide insight into the impact that Cub Camp has on a student's decision to persist.
3. A mixed methods study could be conducted centering around the impact of Cub Camp on the upperclassmen counselors and chairs with relation to academic performance, student satisfaction and graduation rates. Cub Camp focuses primarily on in-coming freshmen, but the upperclassmen Chairs and Counselors spend a significant amount of time learning about campus resources and preparing to teach in-coming freshman how to succeed in college. It stands to reason that the Chairs and Counselors would be impacted through this process. Additionally, a greater understanding of the impact of Cub Camp on upperclassmen Chairs and Counselors would be beneficial for programmatic decision making.

4. A quantitative comparative study could be conducted to compare the student satisfaction level of Cub Camp participants and non-participants. The University of Arkansas Fort Smith has not always been a first-choice institution for in-coming college freshmen. Understanding the impact of Cub Camp on student satisfaction level as it relates to retention might provide important data for making programmatic decisions.
5. A study could be conducted to determine whether or not Cub Camp impacts persistence from the sophomore year through graduation. A study of this nature would provide longitudinal data to the institution concerning the potential impact of Cub Camp on graduation rates.
6. Further research could be conducted to learn more about the impact of Cub Camp on first-generation college students. As the literature indicates, first-generation college students are considered to be at-risk and are more likely to drop out of college. A deeper understanding of the impact Cub Camp has on first-generation college students could have an impact on programmatic decision making.

Chapter Summary

Cub Camp is a first-year experience program held annually at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS) prior to the beginning of each fall term since 2004. Cub Camp introduces first-time, full-time in-coming freshman to campus traditions, involvement opportunities, and the many academic resources available to them at UAFS. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of Cub Camp on academic performance and persistence rates for first-time, full-time incoming freshmen who participated in Cub Camp. In order to compare Cub Camp participants from 2008 through 2011, a similar group of non-participants from the same time period were randomly selected to populate a comparison group.

The purpose of this study was to determine if any significant differences exist in academic performance and persistence rates. Further the study sought to explore the impact of Cub Camp on academic performance and persistence when considering variables such as gender, first-generation status, and college readiness. The study utilized institutional archival data and data that was self-reported by the student on the admissions application. The findings in this study may be used to provide evaluative data in order to make programmatic decisions.

The results of this study show that Cub Camp had a positive impact on the academic performance of its participants. The study also found that Cub Camp had a positive impact on first-generation college students in terms of persistence and academic performance. Further research should be conducted in order to further understand the impact of Cub Camp on first-generation college students. The administration and staff at UAFS should continue to work to improve the Cub Camp program to the benefit of their student body.

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Appendix A: University of Arkansas Fort Smith IRB Approval

**University of Arkansas - Fort Smith
Institutional Review Board
Response to Request for Review**



UA Fort Smith IRB	Registration 13-024 Date 1-6-2014										
Principal Investigator	Name Telephone	E-mail									
Project Title or Description	A Comparison of Academic Performance and Persistence of Incoming Freshmen Participants in a First-Year Experience Program										
The items checked need to be completed for further review	<p>Add advisor/student contact information</p> <p>Add a statement that the participant is at least 18 years of age. (Under 18 require parental/guardian permission.)</p> <p>Add a statement that participation is voluntary and that participation can be withdrawn at any time without penalty.</p> <p>Provide a signature and date line for participants on the consent form.</p> <p>Add a space on the Parental Permission form for the child's name.</p> <p>Develop a simple assent form for review</p> <p>Add statement regarding video/audio tapes must include where they will be kept, for how long, when or if they will be destroyed, who will have access to them, etc.</p> <p>A statement from the school, institution, facility, etc., granting permission to conduct research is needed</p>	<p>A cover letter for mail surveys is needed.</p> <p>A copy of the survey instrument is needed.</p> <p>A copy of the consent form is needed.</p> <p>A copy of the assent form is needed.</p> <p>A statement of how the data will be kept confidential is needed.</p> <p>What is the expected duration of the study?</p> <p>How will you protect the privacy of the subjects?</p> <p>How will you recruit subjects?</p> <p>Address debriefing or attach form</p> <p>References are needed.</p> <p>Comments: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>									
<p>Recommendations:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Exempt from Review</td> <td>Expedited Review</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Signature: _____</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date: Institutional Review Board Coordinator</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Approved with conditions noted which must be met prior to initiation of research</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Not approved</td> </tr> </table>			Exempt from Review	Expedited Review	Signature: _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted	Date: Institutional Review Board Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved with conditions noted which must be met prior to initiation of research		<input type="checkbox"/> Not approved	
Exempt from Review	Expedited Review										
Signature: _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted										
Date: Institutional Review Board Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved with conditions noted which must be met prior to initiation of research										
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<p>Full Board Review</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted</td> <td>Signature: _____</td> <td>Date: 1-6-14</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Approved with conditions noted which must be met prior to initiation of research</td> <td colspan="2">Institutional Review Board Coordinator</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Not approved</td> <td colspan="2"></td> </tr> </table> <p>Signature: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Institutional Review Board Coordinator</p>			<input type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted	Signature: _____	Date: 1-6-14	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved with conditions noted which must be met prior to initiation of research	Institutional Review Board Coordinator		<input type="checkbox"/> Not approved		
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved as submitted	Signature: _____	Date: 1-6-14									
<input type="checkbox"/> Approved with conditions noted which must be met prior to initiation of research	Institutional Review Board Coordinator										
<input type="checkbox"/> Not approved											
<p>Note: Approval Expires one (1) year from the date above. If significant changes are made to this protocol, prior approval from the IRB must be obtained. If you disagree with the final IRB recommendation, you may appeal the decision.</p>											

Appendix B: University of Arkansas IRB Protocol

IRB Project Number

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL FORM

The University Institutional Review Board recommends policies and monitors their implementation, on the use of human beings as subjects for physical, mental, and social experimentation, in and out of class. . . . Protocols for the use of human subjects in research and in class experiments, whether funded internally or externally, must be approved by the (IRB) or in accordance with IRB policies and procedures prior to the implementation of the human subject protocol. . . Violation of procedures and approved protocols can result in the loss of funding from the sponsoring agency or the University of Arkansas and may be interpreted as scientific misconduct. (*see Faculty Handbook*)

Supply the information requested in items 1-14 as appropriate. **Type** entries in the spaces provided using additional pages as needed. In accordance with college/departmental policy, submit the original **and** one copy of this completed protocol form and all attached materials to the appropriate Human Subjects Committee. In the absence of an IRB-authorized Human Subjects Committee, submit the original of this completed protocol form and all attached materials to the IRB, Attn: Compliance Officer, ADMN 210, 575-2208. Completed form and additional materials may be emailed to irb@uark.edu. The fully signed signature page may be scanned and submitted with the protocol, by FAX (575-3846) or via campus mail.

1. Title of Project: A Comparison of Academic Performance and Persistence of Incoming Freshman Participants in a First Year Experience Program
2. (Students **must** have a faculty member supervise the research. The faculty member must sign this form and all researchers and the faculty advisor should provide a campus phone number.)

Name	Department	Email Address	Campus Phone
Principal Researcher: David L. Stevens	RHRC	dave.stevens@uafs.edu	479-650-1133
Co-Researcher			
Co-Researcher			
Co-Researcher			
Faculty Advisor: Kit Kacirek	RHRC	kitk@uark.edu	575-4875

3. Researcher(s) status. Check all that apply.

Faculty Staff Graduate Student(s) Undergraduate Student(s)

4. Project type

Faculty Research Thesis / Dissertation Class Project Independent Study /
 Staff Research M.A.T. Research Honors Project Educ. Spec. Project

5. Is the project receiving extramural funding? (Extramural funding is funding from an external research sponsor.)

X No Yes. Specify the source of funds

- 1 -

Describe any risks or discomforts associated with the study and precautions that will be taken to minimize them.

Benefits: Other than the contribution of new knowledge, describe the benefits of this research.

Administrators and student leaders have invested a great deal of resources into the Cub Camp program, and the researcher would like to provide those groups with some information detailing their return on investment. Additionally, other Student Affairs professionals who may choose to read my research, and be inspired to create a similar program at their institution.

12. Check all of the following that apply to the proposed research. Supply the requested information below or on attached sheets:

- A. Deception of or withholding information from participants. Justify the use of deception or the withholding of information. Describe the debriefing procedure: how and when will the subject be informed of the deception and/or the information withheld?
- B. Medical clearance necessary prior to participation. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- C. Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from participants. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- D. Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to participants. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- E. Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects. Describe the procedures and note the safety precautions to be taken.
- F. Research involving children. How will informed consent from parents or legally authorized representatives as well as from subjects be obtained?
- G. Research involving pregnant women or fetuses. How will informed consent be obtained from both parents of the fetus?
- H. Research involving participants in institutions (cognitive impairments, prisoners, etc.). Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.
- I. Research approved by an IRB at another institution. Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.
- J. Research that must be approved by another institution or agency. Specify agencies or institutions involved. Attach letters of approval. Letters must be on letterhead with original signature; electronic transmission is acceptable.

13. Checklist for Attachments

The following are attached:
<input type="checkbox"/> Consent form (if applicable) or
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter to participants, written instructions, and/or script of oral protocols indicating clearly the information in item #9.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letter(s) of approval from cooperating institution(s) and/or other IRB approvals (if applicable)
<input type="checkbox"/> Data collection instruments

14. Signatures

I/we agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to insure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects/respondents are protected. I/we will report any adverse reactions to the committee. Additions to or changes in research procedures after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review. I/we agree to request renewal of approval for any project when subject/respondent contact continues more than one year.

Principal Researcher _____ Date

Co-Researcher _____ Date

14. Signatures

I/we agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to insure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects/respondents are protected. I/we will report any adverse reactions to the committee. Additions to or changes in research procedures after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review. I/we agree to request renewal of approval for any project when subject/respondent contact continues more than one year.

Principal Researcher _____ Date
Co-Researcher _____ Date
Co-Researcher _____ Date
Co-Researcher _____ Date
Faculty Advisor _____ Date

Appendix C – Cub Camp Daily Schedule

Day One

4:00 pm	Check-in
5:00 pm	Welcome/Camp Rules
5:15 pm	Individual Camp Time #1
6:15 pm	Campus Tour: Den Group Time #1
7:30 pm	Welcome Party

Day Two

9:00 am	Breakfast
10:15 am	Individual Camp Time #2
11:15 am	Den Group Time #2
12:15 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm	Chancellor's Welcome
2:15 pm	All Camp Time #1
3:30 pm	Individual Camp Time #3
4:30 pm	Den Group #3
5:30 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm	All Camp Time #2
8:40 pm	Den Group #4
9:20 pm	Individual Camp Time #4

Day Three

9:00 am	Breakfast
10:30 am	Involvement Information Sessions
12:00 pm	Lunch
1:25 pm	Individual Camp Time #5
2:20 pm	Den Group #5
3:00 pm	All Camp Time #3
4:10 pm	Individual Camp Time #6
5:00 pm	Fair Day on Verde
7:00 pm	Mixer
9:15 pm	Camp Dances
10:00 pm	Camp Fire Speakers

Day Four

10:30 am	Brunch
12:00 pm	Individual Camp Time #7
1:00 pm	Den Group #6
1:45 pm	Group Picture

Appendix D – Cub Camp Chair Application



Cub Camp 2015 Chair Information and Application

CONCEPT: Cub Camp is a four day, on-site experience for first-time, full-time freshmen designed to meet the following goals:

- Prepare incoming students for a realistic view of college life in regard to academics, social activities and emotional changes.
- Promote school spirit, loyalty, and pride.
- Promote a positive attitude about attending UA Fort Smith.
- Develop leadership skills in the students who are coordinating Cub Camp.

STRUCTURE:

Freshmen Structure

- First-time, full-time students will be sent applications to attend Cub Camp.
- Students will be divided into individual camps
 - Camps will be divided into Den Groups (DGs) of 10 to 12 freshmen per DG

Leadership Structure

- Cub Camp will be coordinated by the Director Staff.
- Cub Camp will be divided into camps.
- Each camp will be led by up to two student chairs.
- Each Den Group will be led by up to two student counselors.

SELECTION PROCESS: Chairs must be upperclassmen (sophomore or higher). Full-time students (12 hours or more) with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.25.

Applications are due by **Wednesday, November 5th, 2014 by 4:00 p.m.** to the Welcome Center in the Student Activities Office. Those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted by the Cub Camp office. Interviews will take place on **November 17th and November 18th.**

The following events are **mandatory** requirements for all chairs:

- Weekly meetings
- Available in Fort Smith a week prior to Camp and the days of Camp.
- All monthly work days: March 14th, April 11th, May 16th, June 13th, July 18th, and August 8th
- All summer 2015 New Student Orientation dates
- CUB CAMP!! August 13th – 16th

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CAMP CHAIR:

- Work with counselors to help prepare them for camp.
- Coordinate den groups.

- Hold weekly counselor member meetings as necessary.
- Coordinate meetings to prepare skits, banners, and any necessities needed to make Cub Camp a success.
- Assist in the training of the counselors.
- Ensure that all Cub Camp activities are completed.
- Any and all responsibilities necessary to execute Cub Camp



Cub Camp Chair Application

Applications are due by **Wednesday, November 5th, 2014 by 4:00 p.m.** to the Welcome Center in the Student Activities Office. Applications submitted after this time will not be accepted. **Applications must be typed.**

Those applicants selected for an interview will be contacted by the Cub Camp office. Interviews will take place on **November 17th and November 18th.**

ANSWERS TO ESSAY QUESTIONS SHOULD BE TYPED. PLEASE WRITE YOUR LAST NAME ON THE TOP RIGHT-HAND CORNER OF EACH PAGE. ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE TYPED.

Student Name: _____

Number of hours in which you are currently enrolled: _____

Cumulative GPA: _____

ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. How has Cub Camp impacted campus life?
2. What do you feel qualifies you to be a chair for Cub Camp? Give an example of a time that you had to lead a group.
3. Why do you believe Cub Camp is an important activity for freshmen to participate in?



Cub Camp 2015 Counselor Information and Application

CONCEPT: To prepare first time – full time UAFS freshman for a successful transition into college through an interactive networking experience geared toward helping new students, learn about ongoing traditions, culture and pride at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith.

STRUCTURE:

Freshmen Structure:

- First-time, full-time students will be sent registration forms to attend Cub Camp with an anticipated attendance of 300+ freshmen.
- Students will be divided into five camps of equal participants.
- Camps will then be divided into smaller Den Groups (DG's) dependent on camp size.

Leadership Structure:

- Cub Camp will be coordinated by the Director Staff.
- Cub Camp will be divided into individual camps (5).
- Each Camp will be led by one or two student chair (s).
- Each Den Group will be led by one (1) or two (2) student counselors.

EVENT DATE: Slated dates: Thursday, August 13, 2015 through Sunday, August 16, 2015.

REQUIRED DATES:*

There will be monthly mandatory all camp meetings from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. held on Saturdays beginning on March 14th. **Please make accommodations NOW.**

Slated dates for all camp meetings are as follows:

March 14, 2015	April 11, 2015	May 16, 2015	June 13, 2015
July 18, 2015	August 8, 2015		

**If you are more than five (5) minutes late to staff meetings, it will be counted as an*

absence.

**No more than 2 absences will be tolerated for a counselor.*

SELECTION PROCESS: Full-time students* (12 hours or more) with a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.25 may apply.

* Students must be enrolled Full-time for Fall of 2015.

Applications are due by **Wednesday, February 4, 2015 by 4:00 p.m.** in the Welcome Center in the Smith-Pendergraft Campus Center.

Each applicant will be scheduled for an interview with the Directors Staff of Cub Camp 2015. The dates and time will be first come first serve and a sign up for those times will be posted after February 4th.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNSELOR:

- Any and all responsibilities deemed necessary by your chair or D-staff to execute Cub Camp effectively.
- Preparing, rehearsing, and performing structured skits for the campers during Individual Camp (IC) Time.
- Preparing games and icebreakers for IC time.
- Preparing a thorough well designed, and personalized DG time before Cub Camp focusing on the given themes for each time.
- Maintaining a positive attitude, inside and outside camp, about UA Fort Smith while instilling University pride.
- Prepare freshman for a successful college experience.
- Be able to accommodate and adapt to any and all types of personalities, for whatever needs the freshman may have.
- Be able to communicate and interact effectively with all freshman and staff.
- Be respectful of all staff members.
- Encourage the participation in other student activities across campus.
- Play an active role in keeping-in-touch with, and interacting with DGs outside of Cub Camp for the entire academic year.
- Assist in developing leadership skills through being proper role models.
- Encourage a positive and welcoming environment for all staff, freshman, and University staff.
- Complete a yearlong plan on maintaining contact and positive interaction with DG members.



Cub Camp 2015 Counselor Application

Applications are due **NO LATER** than **Wednesday, February 4th, 2015 by 4:00 p.m.** in the Welcome Center. Applications submitted after this time will not be accepted.
Please check your UAFS email daily!

Name: _____

UAFS E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Student ID Number: _____

Number of hours in which you are currently enrolled: _____

Cumulative GPA: _____

Describe yourself in only the box below:
Use words, illustrations, etc.

Appendix F – Cub Camp Participant Camp Evaluation

Cub Camp Evaluation Form

#CubCamp2015

Camp: _____

DG Leader(s): _____

Circle the response that most closely applies to you. **Please be honest!** Do not write your name anywhere on this form.

1. Registering for camp was easy.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. Camp staff were easy to contact before camp.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Cub Camp check-in ran smoothly.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. My counselors kept me well informed of the Camps activities and events.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. My counselors kept things fun.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. There was plenty of variety in the activities at camp.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. My DG Leader(s) was very accessible and easy to talk to.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. My counselors kept a positive attitude.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. The camp accommodations were suitable.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I feel more prepared for College after attending Cub Camp.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. I feel more educated about UAFS traditions.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. I feel as though Cub Camp encouraged me to get involved on campus.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. I would recommend Cub Camp to my friends.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. The entertainment at Cub Camp was fun and informative.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

The most beneficial thing about Cub Camp was:

The least beneficial thing about Cub Camp was:

Did you find your campfire speaker(s) beneficial?

Any additional comments:

Appendix G – Chair/Counselor Camp Evaluation

Cub Camp Evaluation Form

Chairs/Counselors

Camp: _____

Circle the response that most closely applies to you. **Please be honest!** Do not write your name anywhere on this form.

1. I knew what was expected of me for Cub Camp.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The Director Team kept me well informed of what was going on.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I felt well trained to handle situations at camp.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. My chairs communicated with me regularly with clear communication.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I felt camp ran smoothly.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Registration/Check In for Cub Camp ran smoothly.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I felt having two chairs was beneficial to my camp.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. My chairs kept a positive attitude.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I would like to return as a counselor (if not graduating).

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I would like to return to Cub Camp as a chair (if not graduating).

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. I feel more educated about UAFS traditions.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. I feel as though Cub Camp encouraged me to get involved on campus.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. I would recommend being a Cub Camp Counselor to my friends.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

The most beneficial thing about Cub Camp was:

The least beneficial thing about Cub Camp was:

Any additional comments, say anything and everything:

Appendix H - Den Group Ice Breakers & Activities

1. Dance game - Form a circle. One person starts by walking around the inside of the circle and chooses one person to dance to. That person then has to let the “dancer” have their spot in the circle and they have to do the move that the “dancer” did and then has to continue around the circle and find someone else to dance to.
2. Hands Vibe Game – Lay on your stomachs on the floor with your faces on the inside of the circle. Lay your hands at shoulders on the floor with the people on each side of you intertwined. One person starts by clapping hand to the floor and the next hand must do this and then continue in the order of hands, not people.
3. Song Game – Choose a word like “love” and think of as many songs as you can with that word in them. This is a good team game.
4. Switch Game (on bus) – The person on the inside of each seat had to move every few minutes so that everyone had a chance to get to know other campers.
5. Singled-out – Like the show, one male/female stands up to try and win a date. If a male is trying to single-out a female, then all the females stand and as the male says “ I like blondes, etc” each female that does not fit that description has to sit until there is one left. The couple can sit together on the bus or attend the mixer together.
6. Spoon-string Game – Two lines of people. Each person at the front of the line has a spoon with a long piece of yarn attached. On “go” they must pull the spoon through an article of clothing and pass it on to the next person who must do the same. The team with the spoon and the yarn completely through all the articles of clothing first wins. (can also be done with ice)
7. Telephone – someone starts by whispering a sentence into someone’s ear. They must keep whispering to the person sitting next to them and see if the last person still has the same sentence at the end.
8. Starburst Color Game – For each color Starburst a camper picks up they must give a different fact about themselves.
9. Playdough – Use playdough to have each camper make something that describes their personality/themselves. After everyone is done, smash all the items together to demonstrate that all the different qualities of students are what makes up the University.
10. Q-Tip Game – For every Q-tip you stick in a hole on your face (nose, ears, mouth), you have to tell something about yourself.
11. Make your own jewelry.
12. Two Truths and a Lie – Write down two factual statements about yourself and one false statement. Share your statements and let your fellow campers guess which one is false.

13. Write a letter to yourself – write a letter to yourself outlining what you expect to get from your first semester of college. Seal them in a self-addressed envelope. Counselors will mail them out to campers at the end of the semester.
14. Cup Game –Goal is to keep the cup going.
15. Dominoes – or other games (i.e. twister, monopoly, life)
16. Cards – Spoons
17. Newspaper Towers – have two groups try to construct a tower out of a stack of newspapers and scotch tape with a time limit. Whoever as the tallest tower that is also self-standing when the time runs out wins.
18. Make up a sign – Sit in a circle. Someone starts by making up a sign/symbol (clap, flick ear, scratch head, etc...). Everyone in the circle goes in turn making up a different sign. After everyone has gone around and made up their sign, the first person starts again by doing their sign and then anyone else's. That person then has to do their own sign and someone else's. If you miss your sign/turn, then you are out. Continue until there are only two left.
19. Ball Game – Get a large beach ball and section off little areas with a question in each area. You start by saying the person's name you're going to toss to, then toss the ball. Whatever question the person's right thumb lands on, they have to answer it. (No question should be embarrassing).

Questions:

Favorite Counselor?

Favorite Word?

Favorite Music?

Favorite Book?

Favorite TV Show?

Favorite Movie?

Cleanfreak or slob?

Have you ever budgie jumped?

Have you ever gone scuba diving?

Cats or dogs?

Favorite Cereal?

Where do you want to go on your honeymoon?

How do you like your steak?
Ever gotten a speeding ticket?
Birds or fish?
Longer trip you've taken?
Favorite Video game character?
Paper or Plastic?
What would your parents name you if you were the other sex?
Do you canoe?
Favorite Tasty treat?
Favorite Skit so far?
What's your sign?
English or math?
Biggest fear?
Person you admire?
Bar soap or liquid soap?
What kind of milk?
Scariest moment?
Favorite Superhero?
Favorite Sport?
Birthday?
If you could change your eye color, what would it be?
Rain or sunshine?
Class?
Holiday?
Movie?
Ice Cream?
Veggie?

Something funny that happened recently?

Do you sing in the shower?

Do you like roller coasters?

Christina or Britney?

Winter or Summer?

Peanut Butter or jelly?

Favorite Article of clothing?

Major?

A word you don't like?

Tell us a secret

Strongest belief?

Where were you born?

How old are you?

City (suburbs) or country?

Favorite Vacation spot?

Your best feature?

Hot or cold?

Favorite Celebrity?

How do you like your eggs?

Harry Potter or The Lord of the Rings?

Dream job?

Dream car?

Cars or trucks?

Pen or Pencil?

Favorite Smell?

Favorite Color?

Favorite Jellybean flavor?

Tacos or Burritos?

Favorite. Language?

Best gift you've ever received?

20. Do you love your neighbor? – Everyone sits around in a circle in chairs, minus one chair for the person leading the group. The leader stands in the middle of the circle and starts by saying “Do you love your neighbor?”. The group responds “Yes, we love our neighbor”, the leader replies “especially those (i.e. who like the color purple)”. Everyone who (likes the color purple) stand up and run to a different chair. You cannot sit back down in the same chair or the one on either side of you. The game continues with the person left standing.
21. Balloon pop game – Each player blows up two balloons then ties a string on the end of each balloon. The player then ties the other end of each balloon to each of their legs. Players stand in a circle and on the “go” try to pop the other players balloons. The last person with at least one balloon unpoped wins.
22. Draw your pig – Give each person a sheet of paper and a pencil with the instructions “draw pig”. People will laugh but this is really fun. After they finish (you may have to give a time limit), describe the following.
 - If the pig is drawn on the top of the page, the person is an optimist and a very positive person.
 - If the pig is drawn in the middle of the page, the person is a realist and factual person.
 - If the pig is drawn at the bottom of the page, the person is going through a few changes in his/her life.
 - If the pig is facing left, the person is traditional, friendly and remembers birthdays and dates.
 - If the pig is straight, the person is direct, likes to play devil’s advocate and does not avoid issues.
 - If the pig is facing right, the person is innovative, action-oriented-not date oriented.
 - If the pig is very detailed, the person is analytical, cautious and suspicious.
 - If the pig has little detail, the person is emotional, bored by detail and a risk taker.
 - If the pig has four feet, the person is secure, stubborn and has firm beliefs.
 - If the pig has less than four feet, he/she is going through major life changes.
 - The larger the pigs’ ears, the better a listener the person is.
 - And last, the longer the pigs’ tail, the better the persons sex life is.

23. Lap sit – Have your group get into a circle. Have them position themselves so that their right shoulder is closest to the center of the circle. Move the circle in very tight. Challenge them to slowly (and safely) bend at the knees so that they are sitting on the knees of the person behind them. It takes teamwork to achieve success.
24. Count off – Someone will call out the number one, then someone else (no sequencing, visual clues or planning allowed) must call out the number two, then the number three, and so on. If more than one person calls out the same number, the group must start over at one.
25. Hospital tag – In this activity everyone is “it”. The objective is to keep from being “tagged” by another player, but to tag as many other people as possible. The first time you are tagged you have to put a hand on where you were tagged – for instance, if you are tagged on the top of the head you then have to play with one hand on top of your head. You can then resume to tag others. The next time you are tagged you have to put your other hand where you are tagged that time. The third time you are tagged you’re in the emergency room, that’s a nice way of saying you’re out (sit down to signify this) and can no longer attempt to tag other people. Play in an open space.
26. No laughing – Get the group to sit in a circle. Give them the instruction that one participant will start with a word and pass it on to the participant sitting on their right. When that participant receives the word they must repeat it twice to the participant on their right. That participant must then pass the word on to the participant on their right saying it three times, and so on. After the instructions have been given, the first participant is given the word ‘HA’ to start the exercise. Ask the group to treat this exercise seriously and not to laugh.
27. Signs – Place signs along the full length of the walls in the training room, with “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” at opposite ends with “undecided” in the middle. Now instruct the participants that as a statement is made each individual must stand somewhere along the wall indicating their feeling or belief about the statement. Now read out a statement from a prepared list of current controversial and even fun statements.
28. Human knot – Ask the participants to stand in a tight circle, ask to all raise their left hand in the air. The
29. The magic wand – You have just found a magic wand that allows you to change three things about you/your life. You can change anything you want. What would you change?
30. Marooned – You are marooned on an island. What five items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded. You can do this individually then make everyone decide as a team.
31. Toy story – Have each person think of their favorite childhood toy, then describe how that toy relates to them. Why do they like this toy? You could even have them draw it or make it out of play dough or legos.

32. Line up – Have participants line up by:
- Shoe size
 - Length of arm's reach
 - Alphabetically by favorite color
 - Number of siblings you have
 - Hair color, lightest to darkest
 - Age, youngest to oldest
 - Length of time with current employer
 - Alphabetically by first name
 - Alphabetically by last name
 - Number of pets owned
 - Hair length, longest to shortest
 - Number of bones you've ever broken
33. Animals - Give each slip of paper out and instruct the group that they have to find the people in the room who have the same animal as them without talking. Give them a few minutes. They should make sounds and jesters that let them know what animal they are. Once they find each person in their group they should continue around until they find all the monkeys, or all the dogs, etc.
34. Blob tag - Its helpful to have a pretty large, open space for this energizer. The facilitator is it. When she or he tags someone they lock arms and then jointly attempt to tag someone else. As each person is tagged they lock arms with those who are already it. The game is over when the last person is "captured." Some boundaries must be set up for this activity to keep folks from roaming too far a field. This game typically takes less than 10 minutes to complete.
35. Dream vacation - Ask participants to introduce themselves and describe details of the ideal, perfect dream vacation.
36. Favorite t-shirt - Ask attendees to bring (not wear) their favorite T-shirt to the session. Once all participants have arrived, ask each person to show the shirt to the group and ask them to explain how the T-shirt best resembles their personality.
37. Hum that tune - Each person in the group is given a small piece of paper with the name of a nursery rhyme or other song written on it. Participants are to go around humming their tune until they find everyone else singing the same song. Then they form a group.

38. Koosh toss/group juggle - Facilitator tosses 1 ball to someone in the group whose name they know, saying their name and then the other person's name (e.g. Nancy to Tom). Tom (person who receives the ball) tosses ball to someone whose name he knows (e.g. Tom to Mark). Mark tosses to someone whose name he knows and so on, saying both names all the way around the circle. The ball is tossed to each person one time only until everyone in the circle gets it and all names have been said.

Round 2 – The facilitator tosses the balls to the same person (Nancy to Tom to Mark, etc.) only this time with 2 balls in succession (not at the same time) saying both names, both times. Balls get tossed to the same people they were originally tossed to, first one ball, and then the next, all the way around the circle stopping when they get back to the facilitator.

Round 3 – The facilitator starts again only with all three balls this time. Saying names each time, all three balls get tossed, in succession, in the same order until they get back to the facilitator.

By the time there are three balls going, it gets pretty chaotic and fun. By now all names have been said so many times everyone should have a pretty good idea of who's who and they are pretty warmed up and ready to go. When someone drops a ball, simply give them a chance to just pick up where you left off--no need to start again.

39. Say cheese - As each participant arrives, take their picture with a Polaroid camera and hang their photo on a piece of flip chart paper in the entrance area of the meeting room. Hang them in groups of two or three photos (depending on size of meeting - you may have only 2 per group or more if the group is large). Use your creativity and decorate the flip chart paper to extend a Warm Welcome and set the tone of the meeting. Once all participants have arrived, ask them to find their partner from the photo display on the easel. They are to spend about 5 - 10 minutes getting to know the person. Then have them introduce their partner to the rest of the group and share something they discovered they have in common.

40. Toilet paper game - Pass around a roll of toilet paper and ask participants to take as much as they want. Some folks by nature will take many "squares" and some just a few. Once everyone has had the roll, and you've finished other business, ask everyone to introduce themselves and share with the group as many "things" about themselves as number of "squares" they took!

41. Yarn game - Start with a ball of yarn. Say your name and an interesting fact about yourself. Then, holding the end, toss the ball to another participant. That person will say his/her name and an interesting fact, then, holding on to part of the yarn, toss the ball to another person. By the time everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn that can be displayed on the wall of the training room with tacks or tape or worn on the wrist as a bracelet.

42. Who am I - Place a sticky note on the back (or forehead) of each participant. The participants are to figure out who they are, but can only do so in the following manner. Find a partner and read each other's sticky notes. You may ask the other person three

questions to which there are yes or no answers. Once your questions have been asked and answered, make a guess as to your identity. If you are correct, move the sticky note to your chest and you become a "consultant" who gives clues to those still trying to figure out their identities. If you are not correct, find a new partner and repeat the process.

43. Penny game – Give each participant a penny. Each participant then looks at the date on the coin and must tell the group something that happened to them during that year.
44. You know what I really like about you – Each person gets a sheet of paper (or some other object they can keep) and writes their name on it then “you know what I really like about you...”. Each participant passes the paper to the person on their left, they write a nice comment, then keep passing. Each person ends up with their own keepsake.
45. Duck duck goose – all participants sit a circle. The person ‘ducking’ says a personal characteristic about themselves as they go around the circle. The rest works like “duck, duck, goose”.
46. Life saver relay – Divide groups into two teams. Give everyone a toothpick to hold between their teeth. Place a life saver on the toothpick of the first person on each side. The game begins. The life saver is passed from person to person by lining up the toothpicks so that the lifesaver slides onto the next person’s toothpick. No one can use their hands. Should a life saver be dropped, that team begins again with the first person. The first team to relay a lifesaver to the end of the line is the winner.
47. Banana Race – Give each player a banana with the instruction to peel and eat it while holding one hand behind their back (they only need to take one bite of the banana) on a given signal they begin. The first one who takes a bite and then whistles, wins.
48. Totem Truths – Each person must look at the totem animals provided and draw a picture of the animal that best describes them. When everyone is finished, each person must explain why they chose that animal. After everyone has gone, place all the animals on a wall or line on the ground and explain that everyone’s personalities is what makes up your group. (see attached for totem pole animal descriptions).

Discussion Questions

Day 1 Questions:

- What is your favorite color, movie, tv show, sport?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Where do you live?
- Do you have any pets?
- What’s your major?

Day 2 Questions:

- Who do you look up to in life? Why?
- Which family member are you closest to? Why?
- What do you look for in a friend?
- What is your most embarrassing moment?
- What is your most annoying habit?

Day 3 Questions:

- What makes you happy in life?
- What makes you sad?
- Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?
- Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
- What are three things that scare you?
- What have you done that you are proud of?
- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- If you could change one thing about your family, what would it be?
- Tell me three good things about yourself.
- Tell me what challenges you in life?
- What is your biggest challenge in starting college?
- What is your biggest fear?
- If you were sure you would not fail, what would you do?