

“SO THEY SAY THEY LIKE IT HERE BUT DO THEY REALLY?”

**Assessing Affiliative Behavior through Sense of Belonging on First
Generation, Low Income College students**

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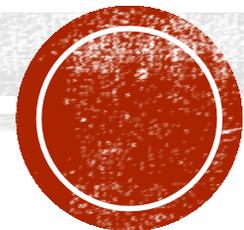
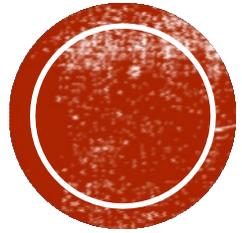


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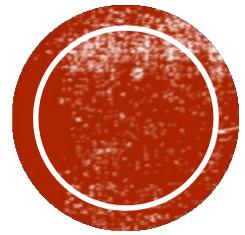
- Short questionnaire
- Overview and History
- A profile of our participants
- Why they belong?
- Q&A





YOU WILL TAKE A SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE

If you have not received one, please raise your hand and we will bring one to you!



OVERVIEW AND HISTORY



OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

- US Department of Education added coaching as one the Competitive Preference Priorities (CPPs) to its last grant competition. Designed to nudge TRIO programs into research.
- We previously included social belong/sense of belonging (loosely). This CPP helped us to develop a framework/philosophy for a deliberate/intentional approach to this area.
- We based our IRB-approved study on research by Walton & Cohen (2011); Sparkman, Maulding & Roberts (2012); and the Search Institute (2014) who are among a myriad of researchers providing voice to the notion that in order to persist in college, students must have social belonging.



RESEARCH & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- In order to persist and graduate from college, Walton & Cohen (2011) found that students must have social belonging. Social belonging is defined as “sense of having positive relationships with others”.
- Additionally, Sparkman, Maulding & Roberts (2012) noted that there are non-cognitive predictors of student success in college: items such as integration into the campus, a sense of belonging, and commitment to their career, among others.
- In addition to a sense of belonging, the Search Institute noted that students need a “thriving mindset.”



The Developmental Relationships Framework: Thriving Mindset

Express CARE

Show that you like me and want the best for me.

Be Present—Pay attention when you are with me.

Show Interest—Make it a priority to understand who I am and what I care about.

Be Dependable—Be someone I can count on and trust.

CHALLENGE Growth

Insist that I try to continuously improve.

Inspire—Help me see future possibilities for myself.

Expect—Make it clear that you want me to live up to my potential

Stretch—Recognize my thoughts and abilities while also pushing me to strengthen them.

Limit—Hold me accountable for appropriate boundaries and rules.

Provide SUPPORT

Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

Encourage—Praise my efforts and achievements.

Guide—Provide practical assistance and feedback to help me learn

Model—Be an example I can learn from and admire.

Advocate—Stand up for me when I need it.

Share POWER Hear my voice and let me share in making decisions.

Respect—Take me seriously and treat me fairly.

Collaborate—Work with me to accomplish goals and solve problems.

Expand the POSSIBILITIES

Expand my horizons and connect me to opportunities.

Explore—Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.

Connect—Introduce me to people who can help me grow.

Navigate—Help me work through barriers that could stop me from achieving my goals.



KEY PERSONNEL & COMPONENTS

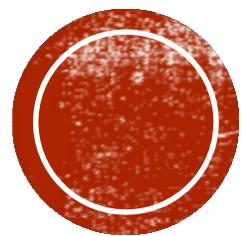
▪ **Academic Coaches & Peer Mentors**

- We employ college students who serve as peer mentors and academic coaches. They share their experiences, encourage students, communicate with students on a consistent basis and walk with them as they transition into and through college.
- Mentoring/Coaching is used to enhance academic advising and aid with retention.
- Program participants are required to have at least three contacts with program staff.
- An additional goal is to provide social integration for participants. Students are connected with key faculty, staff, alumni, and individuals within the surrounding community.

▪ **Non-cognitive Factors**

- The program was designed to include a robust offering of activities (directly related to program objectives) that provide a number of services to enhance student academic achievement and college success.
- Topics include tools for success such as professional socialization/networking, career development, transitional skills, leadership development, diversity and self-advocacy.
- Workshops are available both face to face and online.
- Programming has been intentionally designed to address targets at each academic level (freshman – senior year).
- At intake we administer the Social Belonging Intervention and Non-cognitive Questionnaire.





MEET OUR SCHOLARS

A PROFILE OF OUR SCHOLARS

▪ Project BEST

- 47 students completed the surveys for the 2017-2018
- Our participant split is as follows:
 - 34 females and 13 males
 - 7 freshman, 8 sophomores, 17 juniors, 13 seniors**
- The majors were a mix of interdisciplinary studies program and assorted liberal arts majors (i.e.- criminal justice, social work, education etc...)
- Project BEST have majors that are traditionally considered apart of STEM fields/careers (i.e.- Nursing, Kinesiology, Biomedical Sciences etc...). However STEM is defined as a major under which calculus is a required requisite.
 - 28% are Health Science majors
 - 8.5% are Nursing majors

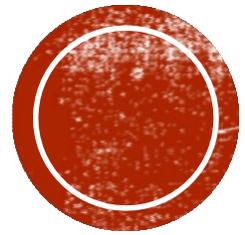
▪ PRIME STEM

- This was their first year being administered this survey
- 19 students completed the survey for the Spring 2018 semester
 - Our participant split is as follows:
 - 13 females and 4 males
 - 5 seniors, 8 juniors, 1 sophomore and 3 freshman
- The majors reflected in the sample were a mix of engineering, biomedical sciences and computer science

*results are based on the 2017-2018 school year

** 2 students were removed as they were duplicate statistics





WHY DO THEY BELONG?

SENSE OF BELONGING

- We define sense of belonging as the specific feelings and/or experience(s) that can ingratiate a scholar to their chosen university. As such, these experience foster affiliative behavior with the university which is referred to as belonging.
 - Sense of belonging occurs 2 ways:
 - Through explicit and continuous experiences as part of the students collegiate journey (i.e.- involvement with a student organization and/or fraternity/sorority)
 - Through a singular and distinct moment in time that affirmed either their belief in themselves or their ability to see themselves with their degrees (i.e.- a role modeling experience)
 - On our questionnaire, we explicitly ask our Project BEST students if they are involved in a role on campus and what are the benefits/challenges of such an endeavor
 - Of those surveyed, 46% were involved on campus involved in a student organization on campus
 - The benefits of involvement listed were: networking, getting an opportunity to meet new people and have career building as well as social networking opportunities
 - It can be inferred that student involvement foments sense of belonging. This in turn fosters affiliative behavior with students who are attending UCF.
 - To be clear, our scholars are proud UCF students because of their involvement on campus NOT the other way around



SENSE OF BELONGING

- The 2017-2018 school year was the first time that we measured sense of belonging in our STEM cohorts.
 - The survey was an excerpt from Moschetti et. al for scholars to read and then respond to a series of statements in regards to it
 - The survey is Likert scaled 1-5 with 1 being “Strongly agree” and 5 being the converse
 - It was used to take note of a few things:
 - Understanding of social capital
 - Scholars’ perception of support coming from their social capital
 - Any beliefs and/or feelings of affiliation with UCF due to their social network
 - Belonging was directly discussed on the survey. Our exact questions was “I have had experiences that foster feelings of belonging at UCF.” 74% (14/19) of students were able to answer in the affirmative- “Agree or Strongly agree” with the aforementioned statement
 - 2 students gave a “neutral” or “disagree” response to the statement of belonging
 - Such a response is not usual as 1st generation STEM majors struggle overall with belonging experiences due to the lack of role modeling and low self-efficacy in their chosen professions



SENSE OF BELONGING

- Unlike the Project BEST survey, the PRIME STEM survey lacked a free essay response question. However, students were given a survey on support which lends itself to understanding the potential networks that students are entrenched in to garner a sense of belonging.
- Students also felt support and belonging via their acceptance in the UCF community, friends and their professors
 - The most affirmative sense of belonging in our respondents is sourced from students who are most actively involved on campus through either a student organization and/or campus employment
- To inquire about specifically about belonging, the PRIME STEM survey asked the following statement: “I have had experiences that foster feelings of belonging at UCF”
 - 74% of the participants have had a belonging experience
 - In future machinations of the Sense of belonging survey, we will interrogate the direct experiences that they have had to create affiliative feeling with UCF.
- We also inquired about their support systems here at UCF (i.e.-Friends)
 - We have examined their support systems in a separate survey. We have found that the students extended web of support from friends, family and organizations have a contributing role in their sense of belonging here at UCF.



SENSE OF BELONGING

- Traditionally, STEM students struggle with belonging during their coursework in college
 - The struggle can be linked to several sources: lack of connectedness to campus due to course load, lack of mentorship, decreased self-efficacy due to a lack of role models
- Accounting for these known gaps in the STEM scholar experience, the PRIME STEM program builds in belonging experiences to ensure retention and successful matriculation amongst its students
 - Programmatic supports:
 - Learning communities
 - For the 2017-2018 school year, the learning communities centered around 2 major clusters: Engineering and Health Sciences
 - The learning communities meet 3-4 times a semester to do activities as well as network with industry professionals
 - The intent is for students to network with peers and to gain valuable role modeling and/or mentorship from the relevant career professionals
 - STEM Career Academy
 - Hosted annually by the PRIME STEM program, students spend the day undergoing career preparedness workshops to optimize their career readiness. At the end of the day, the students have the opportunity to utilize those skills to network with career professionals and /or internships
 - We have had a couple of students gain mentors and/or internships from this event. As a result, these students assert that without TRiO their collegiate experience would have been vastly different. TRiO is life-changing for these students

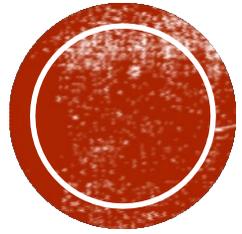


STUDENT NOTABLE QUOTABLES

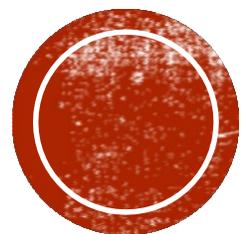
- Project BEST

- “Being part of an organization allowed me to make friends, explore interests, and advance my career.” –Project BEST graduate
- “Gamma Sigma Sigma has help[ed] me with creating friendships as well as bonds with completely different people”-Project BEST graduate
- “I have joined an organization and the benefits I can [think] of is that you get to network with peers, potential employers and be exposed to other people’s careers”-Project BEST graduate





QUESTIONS?



**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR
YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!**

REFERENCES

- Search Institute (2014). Developmental Relationships Framework.
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