

Generating sustained student connectedness through student induction

Background/context. This study examines the efficacy of an induction session on day one of university to facilitate sustained peer networks. Such networks enhance student belonging, reduce anxiety and lead to higher study persistence (Hausmann et al., 2009), and address recent challenges associated with student connection and isolation rates.

The initiative/practice. Students were invited to complete an optional pre-induction form. The information provided here was used to group students at the induction session with peers with similar personal and study interests. Students who didn't complete the form were randomly assigned to separate groups, not based on interest similarity. In the induction session, students completed a collaborative activity with their groups. Assigning students to groups with peers with similar interests is based on literature arguing that individuals who exhibit commonalities are more likely to develop sustained friendships (Bryden et al., 2011).

Methods of evaluative data collection and analysis. First, students completed a survey with Likert and open-ended questions measuring their induction session satisfaction. We compared responses to test whether satisfaction differs depending on whether students complete the form. Second, we surveyed students in the later stage of the teaching semester following the induction to measure to what extent they kept in touch with peers they met at induction and whether this differs depending on pre-induction form completion.

Evidence of outcomes and effectiveness. We find that students who completed the form are significantly more satisfied with opportunities to meet peers and also the information provided at the induction session. We found significantly and substantially higher proportions of students kept in touch with peers from their induction session groups when they had completed the pre-induction form.

References.

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- Hausmann, L. R., Ye, F., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2009). Sense of belonging and persistence in White and African American first-year students. *Research in Higher Education*, 50(7), 649-669.