COASP: College Outreach & Academic Support Program Study 2014

Annual Progress Report
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ABOUT US

This study was commissioned by the Pre-Enrollment Program (PEP) committee in partnership with the Center for Higher Education Enterprise (CHEE). The PEP committee is a consortium of more than 15 first-year college outreach and academic support programs (COASPs) at The Ohio State University. CHEE is an interdisciplinary university research and policy Center that promotes the important role of education, especially through access, affordability, engagement, and excellence. For more about CHEE, visit our website at http://chee.osu.edu/

BACKGROUND: COLLEGE OUTREACH & ACADEMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS

College outreach and academic support programs (COASPs) have become increasingly popular vehicles of broadening participation, enhancing academic skills, and promoting engagement among students. While such programs have become more popular, there continues to be a pressing need for research and program assessment to determine whether and how COASPs are meeting their goals. Therefore, COASPs represent an excellent opportunity for scholars and student affairs practitioners to collaborate to ensure forward-thinking programming rooted in research and assessment with the ultimate goal of promoting student success.

The Ohio State University offers a diverse range of pre-college programming covering a broad spectrum of program foci, goals, and learning outcomes. Research suggests that programs, like those at The Ohio State University, have many of the components necessary to promote student success—a goal that each program shares (Swail & Perna, 2002).
The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of COASPs on students’ academic and social success at The Ohio State University. Although the programs have a diverse set of objectives and targeted student populations, program directors at Ohio State University have worked to identify a set of common goals or objectives they seek to realize:

**Student Outcomes:** Building community; Connecting students to resources; Addressing the transition to college.

**Institutional Outcomes:** Increased retention, GPA, & student satisfaction; Positive word of mouth about each sponsoring office; Student interaction in additional office events and programs.

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1 Source: PEP Committee Meeting Agenda, February 29, 2012
SAMPLE DESCRIPTIONS

Pre-Test

Pre-test results are based on a sample of 314 students across 12 programs. The composition of the sample was 58% White, 23% Black, 4% Latino, 8% Asian, and the remaining identified as other. The majority of the sample were women (55%). Ninety-four percent of participants identified as heterosexual.

Post-Test

Post-test results are based on a sample of 170 students across 11 programs. The sample was composed of 62% White, 21% Black, 4% Latino, 7% Asian, and the remaining identified as other. The majority of the sample were women (60%). Ninety-five percent of participants identified as heterosexual.
**KEY FINDINGS: STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Table 1. *Frequency of student activities per week.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean Scores (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studying for class.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.41 (1.07)</td>
<td>3.11 (1.25)</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting professor office hours.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.80 (0.83)</td>
<td>1.30 (0.63)</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on class projects.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.57 (0.93)</td>
<td>2.06 (0.81)</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.22 (1.08)</td>
<td>1.83 (1.04)</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in extracurricular activities (e.g., clubs, organizations, etc.).</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.76 (0.98)</td>
<td>2.20 (0.97)</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the gym or other recreational activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.23 (0.94)</td>
<td>1.76 (0.83)</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Frequency of web and social media use per week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checking email.</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.94)</td>
<td>(0.82)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Facebook/Twitter to contact existing friends and family.</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.84)</td>
<td>(0.56)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Facebook/Twitter to contact or meet new friends.</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: See appendix for additional information about survey scales.*
STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Students found their expectations regarding the amount of time they could devote to (a) studying for class, (b) visiting professors during office hours, and (c) completing class projects were greater than what they could manage after the program ended and they began to gear up for college. Similarly, students reported spending or expecting to spend less time (a) working, (b) participating in extracurricular activities, and (c) using the gym/recreational activities than they initially thought they would. Following participation in COASPs, students also reported using social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter) less than initially expected.
KEY FINDINGS: PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY

Table 3. Perceptions of diversity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item Mean Scores (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that diversity enriches the educational experience.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>+0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that the campus environment at OSU is open to diversity.</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
<td>(0.80)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSU needs classes that emphasize multicultural diversity.</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.17)</td>
<td>(1.13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not mind having a homosexual/gay friend.</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>+0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.05)</td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual behavior is just plain wrong.</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>+0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td>(1.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see the gay movement as a positive thing.</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>+0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.24)</td>
<td>(1.18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following program participation, students reported a number of positive gains. For instance, students reported being more willing to have a gay friend relative to their initial expectations. Participants also saw the gay movement as more positive on average following the program.

Students began with strong feelings that diversity enriches their educational experience and reported slightly stronger feelings after their program. Students felt the campus was slightly less inclusive than originally expected, but students typically agreed the campus was fairly inclusive on average.
**KEY FINDINGS: DIVERSITY EXPERIENCES**

Table 4. *Frequency of diversity experiences.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean Scores (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with individuals whose racial/ethnic background differs from your own.</td>
<td>3.14 (0.83)</td>
<td>3.11 (0.76)</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with individuals whose religious beliefs differ from your own.</td>
<td>3.12 (0.85)</td>
<td>3.07 (0.84)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with individuals whose political opinions differ from your own.</td>
<td>3.12 (0.91)</td>
<td>3.07 (0.91)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with individuals whose sexual orientation differs from your own.</td>
<td>2.84 (0.91)</td>
<td>2.93 (0.87)</td>
<td>+0.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On average, students’ expectations for holding serious conversations with those from a different racial/ethnic background, religious belief, or political opinion remained relatively stable pre- and post-program. Students continue to report a high frequency of interactions across diversity on average. Results suggest that they expected to encounter slightly more opportunities to meaningfully engage across diversity than they encountered in actuality.

Interestingly, students reported more frequent conversations with those from a different sexual orientation than they initially expected prior to program participation suggesting exposure to greater than expected diversity in terms of sexual orientation.
### Table 5. College readiness and preparation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am ready for the transition to college life.</td>
<td>3.34 (0.67)</td>
<td>3.34 (0.71)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry a lot about college expenses.</td>
<td>2.44 (1.01)</td>
<td>2.38 (1.00)</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use my study time efficiently.</td>
<td>2.77 (0.78)</td>
<td>2.64 (0.80)</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find academic work difficult.</td>
<td>1.93 (0.72)</td>
<td>2.36 (0.80)</td>
<td>+0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel unsupported by faculty.</td>
<td>1.67 (0.70)</td>
<td>1.72 (0.73)</td>
<td>+0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results suggest that, on average, participants maintained beliefs about their readiness to transition to college life. However, fewer students expressed anxiety or worry about costs associated with college.

Findings also seem to suggest that students gained a better understanding of study time management, as well as the nature and difficulty of academic work in college.

Interestingly, though students reported feeling slightly less supported by faculty, the average students’ expectations around faculty support remained relatively stable.
### KEY FINDINGS: SENSE OF BELONGING

Table 6. **Participants’ sense of belonging.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item Mean Scores (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of belonging at OSU.</td>
<td>3.34 (0.71)</td>
<td>3.39 (0.74)</td>
<td>+0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would choose OSU again, if I had it to do over again.</td>
<td>3.41 (0.73)</td>
<td>3.49 (0.76)</td>
<td>+0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends would miss me if I left OSU.</td>
<td>2.86 (0.89)</td>
<td>3.19 (0.92)</td>
<td>+0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/staff at OSU believe in me and my ability to excel.</td>
<td>3.13 (0.72)</td>
<td>3.16 (0.70)</td>
<td>+0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Change in Students' Sense of Belonging by Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taken together, results from our longitudinal assessment of survey data suggest slight increases in participating students’ sense of belonging over time (see Table 6). Obscured in such aggregate reports are important differences. For instance, increases in belonging from beginning to end-of-program are greater for women than men, suggesting that the influence of COASPs on belonging likely varies by sex. Similarly, while gains in belonging measures were modest in terms of relations with faculty/staff, gains in terms of peer relations (i.e., “friends would miss me”) were nearly 3 times that in other domains.
**KEY FINDINGS: SELF-EFFICACY AND WELLNESS**

Table 7. **Student self-efficacy.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.58)</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>+0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td>(0.75)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my ability to complete assignments and projects.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.61)</td>
<td>(0.69)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my ability to maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher at OSU.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8. **Student wellness.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item Mean Scores (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td>3.64 (0.60)</td>
<td>3.59 (0.56)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel lonely a lot.</td>
<td>1.79 (0.86)</td>
<td>1.82 (0.92)</td>
<td>+0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not sleeping well lately.</td>
<td>2.03 (0.94)</td>
<td>2.11 (0.97)</td>
<td>+0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am working out and feeling good right now.</td>
<td>2.79 (0.89)</td>
<td>2.69 (0.94)</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rather be home than here in college.</td>
<td>1.55 (0.73)</td>
<td>1.54 (1.62)</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td>2.01 (1.01)</td>
<td>2.14 (1.00)</td>
<td>+0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td>1.87 (0.90)</td>
<td>2.05 (0.99)</td>
<td>+0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Self-Efficacy and Wellness

Students reported feeling less confident in their ability to complete assignments and maintain a 3.0 GPA at OSU. Results suggest that students have more realistic expectations around academic demands and the rigor of college work following program participation.

On average, students’ perceptions about whether or not they would rather be home than in college stayed about the same. However, more students reported increased feelings of loneliness and trouble coping with stress as one might expect at the beginning of college.
### KEY FINDINGS: PROGRAM SATISFACTION & LEARNING

Table 9. Program satisfaction and learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Mean Scores (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test</th>
<th>+/- Δ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with program staff.</td>
<td>4.24 (0.84)</td>
<td>4.72 (0.62)</td>
<td>+0.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with program structure and organization.</td>
<td>4.19 (0.87)</td>
<td>4.41 (0.83)</td>
<td>+0.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with program communication to students.</td>
<td>4.27 (0.89)</td>
<td>4.56 (0.74)</td>
<td>+0.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much did you learn from your program?</td>
<td>3.08 (1.31)</td>
<td>4.50 (0.71)</td>
<td>+1.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On average, students were very satisfied with program staff, structure, and communication. Students reported learning reflected the largest gain among any of the items on the survey.

Results strongly suggest students are very satisfied with their program experiences and experience a significant amount of learning through COASP participation at OSU.
A majority of those students surveyed (97.7%) say they would recommend participating in their respective program to another student or peer.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. COASP staff should assess or elicit information about students’ initial expectations early on to help students set reasonable expectations and goals for themselves and incorporate strategies for managing academic and social activities in college, including practical tips around time management and study habits.

2. The observed gaps between students’ expectations and experiences seem to suggest the importance of COASPs that help students who have unrealistic expectations about college begin to develop the habits of mind imperative to their success.

3. COASP staff are encouraged to focus on students’ academic readiness for college, given that many of the greatest discrepancies uncovered in our analysis related to students’ expectations and experiences with academic activities like studying, meeting professors, and completing class projects.

4. Our findings suggest students begin with unrealistic expectations related to academics. It would behoove program directors and staff to help students set realistic expectations for academic activities through targeted and intentional strategies.
5. Data suggest that students participating in COASPs start with generally favorable attitudes toward diversity and positive perceptions of openness to diversity on campus. Program staff should aim to sustain these beliefs or deepen students’ understanding of multiculturalism and diversity. Two areas where program staff might direct specific attention is in terms of openness to diversity on campus and the need for multicultural courses. For instance, talking candidly with students about race relations on campus, cross-cultural interactions with safety officers, and non-western perspectives in the curriculum might be appropriate.

6. Across all four sense of belonging items there were positive changes from pre to post test. Small changes were observed in general belonging, choosing the campus again, and faculty and staff believe in my ability to excel. A moderate change in terms of friends missing you was observed. We recommend the use of COASPs to as an intervention to effectively raise sense of belonging among program participants. Our results suggest these programs build community, one of the key shared outcomes of PEP programs.

7. CHEE strongly endorses COASPs as an effective intervention for strengthening social ties among students.
8. CHEE underscores the importance of faculty and staff maintaining high expectations and strong beliefs in students’ ability to excel. For instance, COASP directors or COASP staff should invite faculty to participate actively in aspects of the program, communicate high expectations for all students, and celebrate students’ achievements frequently as a way of promoting sense of belonging.

9. Results suggest that changes in belonging are greater for women than men. COASP staff might pay close attention to gender differences that are presented in our report and think critically about support systems for men to facilitate the development of greater belonging.

10. While reported student wellness is generally good, students report small decreases across several wellness measures. COASP programming should incorporate strategies to link students to student wellness resources on campus such as the student wellness center, the student success center, and social support groups on campus. Additionally, programs might consider incorporating student wellness strategies into the curriculum to prepare students for a healthy college experience.

11. CHEE champions federal, state, and campus policies that provide funding for COASP programs and urges future investments in such interventions as a way of improving student success.
Vision
To become the country’s preeminent higher education and policy center, solving issues of national significance.

Mission
We exist to advance the higher education enterprise through the creation and dissemination of distinctive research that informs policy, strengthens communities and enables student success.

Core Goals

- **Educational Excellence**: to ensure student access and success.

- **Research and Innovation**: to make high-quality, distinctive contributions.

- **Outreach and Engagement**: to cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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APPENDIX: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

1. The COASP survey is administered once prior to start of program (pre-test), once following the program (post-test I), and a final time at the end of students’ first academic year (post-test II). Results from the pre-test and post-test for summer 2014 are described in this report.

2. Approximately 16 programs have participated in the COASP study over multiple years. A sample of those programs with data from summer 2014 are presented in this report.

3. Strength of “effect sizes” for pre-test/post-test mean differences is consistent with Cohen’s $d$: Modest = 0.01-0.2; Medium = 0.2-0.5; Large = 0.5 and above.

4. Table 1 scale ranges from 1 (1-5 hours per week) to 5 (21+ hours per week).

5. Table 2 scale ranges from 1 (1-5 hours per week) to 5 (21+ hours per week).

6. Table 3 scale ranges from 1 (not at all true) to 4 (very true). Items measuring views on homosexuality range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

7. Table 4 scale ranges from 1 (never) to 4 (very often).

8. Table 5 scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

9. Table 6 scale ranges from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much).

10. Table 7 scale ranges 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

11. Table 8 scale ranges 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).
12. Table 9 scale ranges from 1 (nothing at all or not at all) to 5 (very much or highly satisfied), respectively.

13. One section of our report focused on longitudinal changes in participating students' sense of belonging, as measured by our pre- and post-test survey designed for this investigation. Specifically, four items on the locally-constructed survey elicited information about the extent to which students' felt a sense of belonging at their institution, as if they made the right college choice, or as if friends would miss them if they left. Response options ranged from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much), with higher scores indicating more positive perceptions. To enhance the strength of our belonging index, we created a single composite measure (belonging index) based on factor analysis results that was highly reliable at the pre-test ($alpha = 0.81$, 4 items, $N = 314$) and post-test ($alpha=0.77$, 4 items, $N=170$). The figure on page 22 is based on this belonging index. For more about sense of belonging, see Strayhorn (2012).