

Improving Student Retention with Summer Bridge Programs

Authors : Elizabeth Watson, Sara Vogt

Abstract : The transition from high school to college can be an exciting and confusing time for many students, especially college students with disabilities. In 1983, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater created a Summer Transition Program (STP) for such students as part of a US Department of Education Demonstration Grant. This program offers incoming students the opportunity to take 2 college courses and live on campus for 4 weeks to help introduce and familiarize them with typical college expectations and support services. Over the past 30 years, 48% of the students have graduated, exceeding the national college graduation rate for students with disabilities. This mixed methods longitudinal study will discuss how this program has increased retention and graduation rates, and success in the co-curricular and living environments for students with disabilities.

Keywords : disability, transition, post-secondary education, retention

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