Are We Out of the Woods Yet? Students’ Perceived Values of Outdoor Pre-Orientation Program Experiences Over Time

Victoria Heithaus
University of Dayton, stander@udayton.edu

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Recommended Citation
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**BACKGROUND**

Challenging environments foster student growth

Easier transition to college life

**FINDINGS**

- **Leadership Skills**
  - "I gained confidence, and learning to be yourself, and I don’t know that I would have gotten that otherwise." Camp Blue Camper
  - "In high school I always wanted to be the leader but there were other people on my [Camp Blue] team that were challenging me that I’d never seen before, like I’d never been challenged for leadership in high school.” Camp Blue Camper
  - "I think the main takeaway that turned into a skill for me was just realizing that, in coming to college, I was going to be encountering people that came from diverse backgrounds and had a lot of different life experiences from me.” Camp Blue Camper

- **Friendship & Socialization**

- **Confidence**

- **Stepping Outside Comfort Zone**

- **Diversity**

**FUTURE ACTIONS & IMPLICATIONS**

- **PROFESSIONALS**
  - Student Staff Training
  - Trends & Research
  - Institutional Values & Mission

- **STUDENT EXPERIENCE**
  - Physical & Mental Challenges
  - Socializing with Peers
  - Observing Student Leadership

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What are the perceptions of the value of Camp Blue among students 1-4 years post-program? What experiences at Camp Blue yielded the most positive evaluations?

**ABSTRACT**

Often the first welcome to university life for students comes in the form of an orientation program. Pre-orientation camps, like Camp Blue at the University of Dayton, serve to ease the transition through a leadership development lens. The purpose of this research is to examine the effects of the Camp Blue leadership lessons over time, assessing students’ perceived value of their camp experiences. A focus group comprised of six former campers, representing first-year through senior students, highlights some key themes and characteristics from the camp experience that remain relevant post-program. This study informs future practices for camp curriculum and activities, and assists orientation professionals in developing effective pre or extended orientation programs for new students.

**METHODS**

- Phenomenological research
- Focus group of 6 former Camp Blue campers (2012-2015)

**SELECT REFERENCES**


**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to my family for your support when I made the decision to get my masters degree. Thank you to Molly, Michele and Nasser for creating a space to learn and grow. This research was inspired by my work with New Student Programs and the amazing student leaders I have come to know. Re’Shanda, your passion for the field of orientation, transition and retention inspires me, and I hope one day I can positively impact this professional field too. Finally, I would like to thank Matt for telling me two years ago to "go for it".