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

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**BACKGROUND**

Challenging environments foster student growth

Easier transition to college life

“"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

**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**


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**FUTURE ACTIONS & IMPLICATIONS**

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

**PROFESSIONALS**

- Physical & Mental Challenges
- Socializing with Peers
- Observing Student Leadership

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

- Friendship & Socialization
- Leadership Skills
- Confidence
- Stepping Outside Comfort Zone
- Diversity

**FINDINGS**

**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?