



Contribution ID: 46

Type: **Poster only**

Belonging and Engagement for a Successful Transition to Higher Education

Belonging and Engagement for a successful Transition to higher education, was a final year undergraduate physics project carried out at the University of Glasgow. This study aimed to identify factors impacting a student's sense of belonging and engagement as they transition to higher education, as well as emphasizing any common trends identified from students. For undergraduate students, one of the most crucial points in their journey through higher education is a successful transition (Parker et al., 2017, Strayhorn, 2012). The transition period for students occurs in their first few weeks as they are adjusting to the new and different world of higher education. Studies have shown that most students who leave higher education early do so at the beginning of their course (Thomas et al., 2017) as well as indicating that students that do not have a successful transition are more likely to drop out of higher education than their peers who had successfully adapted to university life (Kantanis, 2000, McInnis et al., 2000). This highlights the importance of a successful transition and making it a crux of higher education (Thomas et al., 2017). Data was obtained via questionnaires distributed to two different first-year physics cohorts over two consecutive years. Each cohort received one survey in the first few weeks of their transition period and another at the end of their first semester. An additional survey was also issued to second-year students with the aim of identifying any changes in their belonging and engagement since their first year. The key findings from the study performed at the University of Glasgow included that female students initially entered higher education with lower self-confidence in their academic abilities than their male peers. Additionally, social integration and students' relationship with staff were highlighted as crucial factors during students transition period.

Kantanis, T., 2000. The role of social transition in students': adjustment to the first-year of university. *Journal of Institutional Research*, 9(1), pp.100-110.

McInnis, C., James, R. and Hartley, R., 2000. Trends in the first year experience: In Australian universities.

Parker H, Hughes A, Marsh C, Ahmed S, Cannon J, Taylor-Steeds E, Jones L and Page

N 2017 Understanding the different challenges facing students in transitioning to university particularly with a focus on ethnicity

Key words

Belonging, Engagement, Transition

Region

UK/Ireland

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Session Classification: Poster session