

Designed for Student Success - A Discovery Camp Experience

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‘Strategies for supporting wider participation in HE’

This study explores first year Bachelor of Physical Education (BHPE) students’, mentors’ and lecturers’ attitudes and beliefs following their experiences participating in a significant transition activity - the ‘Discovery Camp’. The camp was structured to address course expectations, teaching and learning needs and administration issues of first year Bachelor of Health Physical Education (BHPE) students and inculcate a sense of belonging for the students to the university, the course and the cohort.

Students in their 2nd,3rd and 4th years of the BHPE acted as peer mentors and BPE lecturers assisted in the facilitation of the camp emphasising and creating an inclusive culture or ‘sense of belonging’. The intention of the Discovery Camp is to provide a launching place to engender relationships between first year students, mentors and staff. This relationship building is the foundation for creating opportunities to develop a culture of BPE students committed to learning to become Health and Physical Education teachers. The setting was selected to create a relaxed atmosphere and incorporated team building activities and course information sessions, delivered by the Deakin mentors and staff.

Subsequent to this further support mechanisms were put in place to ease the transition into university both socially and academically. To enhance the relationship between students in the BPE, the Deakin mentors, in cooperation with the Physical Education Student Society (PESS), followed-up with a social barbecue early in the university trimester. Additionally, to support students academically an “Assignments R Us” workshop to develop essay and research skills was also delivered through the library to support students in writing skills necessary for their first assignment task.

Discussion Objectives –To share the research findings with other professionals in Higher Education and examine and explore how the value of a camp setting can enhance, and develop first year students initial transition into their course through the joint efforts of 2nd,3rd and 4th year cohorts/mentors and academic staff.