

# Striving to Retain and Engage with Students Who Want to Leave: Outcomes on a Brief Coaching Intervention

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## ABSTRACT

Several institutions have implemented coaching techniques as a strategy to increase retention (Robinson, 2015). This true experimental study was conducted to examine what impact a brief coaching intervention has on students with low institutional commitment, low social integration, low satisfaction with the institution or low academic resiliency. This poster presentation will describe the research design, coaching intervention, findings, and implications for advisors and coaches working with students who indicate they want to leave the institution. Outcomes will focus on persistence, retention, and GPA. Additionally, this poster presentation will serve as a foundation to facilitate dialogue regarding the effectiveness of coaching students who want to leave.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences between coached students and non-coached students in relation to their persistence, retention, and GPA. The research questions guiding this study is below:

What are the differences between the first-year students in the control and treatment group in regards to progress toward degree (defined as persistence, retention, and GPA)?

What are the differences within the treatment group in relation to retention, academic performance, and the amount of engagement in the program?

## RELEVANT LITERATURE

Bean & Eaton (2001) explain "factors affecting retention are ultimately individual and that individual psychological processes form the foundation for retention decisions" (p.73).

Robinson (2015) found one of the main goals of coaching programs surveyed was to retain students.

Using a large, diverse sample, Bettinger & Baker (2015) found coaching college students can improve retention and persistence rates.

Students who are considered high-risk named the following as important factors that contributed to their persistence in college: "(a) encouraging, supporting, and believing in them; (b) motivating them and wanting to see them learn; (c) taking time for them, expressing an interest in them, and communicating to them that they are important; (d) relating to them on their level; and (e) pushing them to excel while at the same time helping them to understand difficult concepts" (Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011, p.338).

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### True Experimental Design

Sample: 60% of first-year students took the Mapworks survey.

210 students identified as "high intent to leave"

Randomized (n=210)

Characteristic	Control (n=105)	Treatment (n=105)
Female	49% (n=74)	51% (n=76)
Male	51.6% (n=31)	48.3% (n=29)
American Indian or Alaska Native	50% (n=1)	50% (n=1)
Asian	33% (n=1)	67% (n=2)
African American or Black	50% (n=4)	50% (n=4)
Hispanic or Latino	38.3% (n=18)	61.7% (n=29)
Multiracial	40% (n=4)	60% (n=6)
Unknown	100% (n=1)	0% (n=0)
White	54.6% (n=76)	45.3% (n=63)
Mean HS GPA	M=3.27, SD=.5	M=3.22, SD=.52



### Environment

Treatment (n=105)

#### Outreach

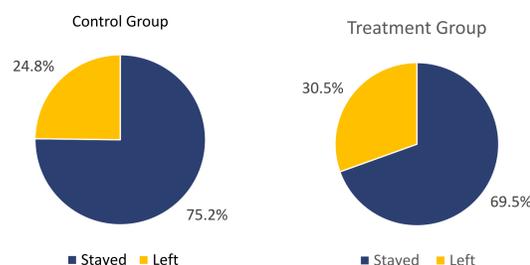
- Emails
- Phone Calls
- Text Messages
- Postcards

#### Coaching

- 4 coaches
- Goal: Meet 4x (2x in the Fall, 2x in the Spring)
- Model influenced by Bronfenbrenner Ecological Theory, Tinto's Retention Theory, Challenge & Support, Stoltzfus Coaching Model

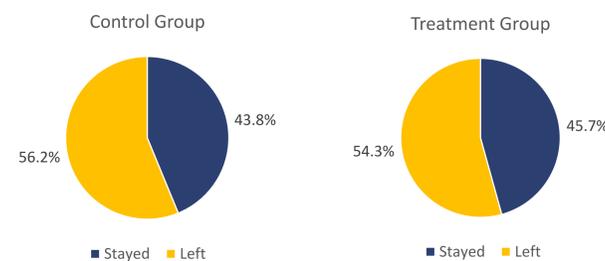
## Outcome

### Persistence: Fall to Spring



Chi-square test indicate no significant differences between the control and treatment group in regards to persistence from Fall to Spring semester (p=.354).

### Retention: Fall to Fall



Chi-square test indicate no significant differences between the control and treatment group in regards to retention from Fall to Fall semester (p=.781).

### Cumulative end of year GPA

Mean GPA	Control (n=104)	Treatment (n=103)
Mean GPA	M=2.60, SD=1.01	M=2.43, SD=1.15

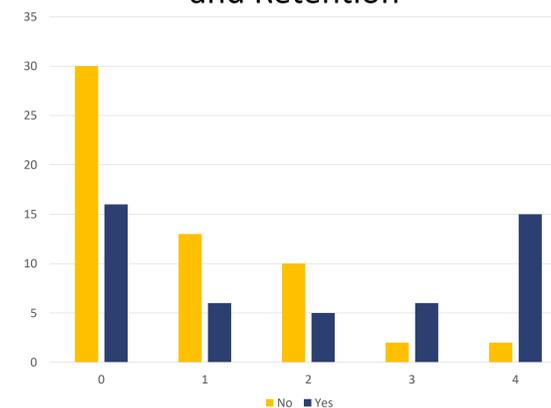
Independent samples t-test indicate no significant differences between the control and treatment group in regards to cumulative end of year GPA (p=.262).

### Engagement in Coaching and GPA

# of meetings	N	Mean Cumulative GPA	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
0	45	1.97	1.29	0.193
1	19	2.55	0.85	0.196
2	14	2.63	1.22	0.328
3	8	2.87	0.749	0.264
4	17	3.12	0.545	0.132
Total	103	2.43	1.15	0.113

One Way ANOVA suggests significant differences exist between the control and treatment group in regards to cumulative GPA and engagement in the coaching program (p=.003). A post-hoc Tukey test suggests there are significant differences in GPA between students who engage in 0 meetings and 4 meetings.

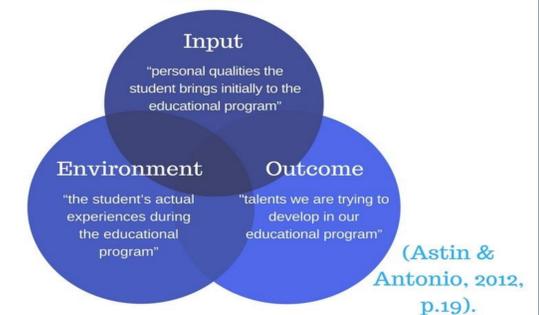
### Engagement in Coaching and Retention



Significant differences between the control and treatment group exist in regards to retention from Fall to Fall and engagement in the coaching program (p=.001).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Input-Environment-Outcome Model



## IMPLICATIONS

- Students in the coached group (regardless of participation) did not vary significantly from the control group in regards to persistence, retention, and GPA.
- Encouraging participation with students who want to leave the institution within the first 4 weeks of school is extremely challenging.
- Engagement matters - Students who did participate in 4 meetings had statistically significant higher GPA's and were more likely to be retained.
- The effectiveness of academic and college success coaching may be highly dependent on student population and engagement.
- Coaching meetings may need to be at least 4x a year to see increased retention and academic performance. However, more research needs to be done to explore academic and college success coaching.

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