The Bounce Back Retention Program (BBRP):

Academic Status Three Semesters Later

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Abstract

This study provides results regarding the effectiveness of the Bounce Back Retention Program (BBRP), a semester-long voluntary course for students on academic probation (AP). This is the first phase of a longitudinal study of spring 2007 freshmen at San Diego State University (SDSU). Results were analyzed for three samples: 1) AP BBRP - Credit enrolled and earned course credit (n=81); 2) AP – BBRP No Credit enrolled but failed to earn course credit (n=44); and 3) AP- NonBBRP did not enroll in BBRP but were on AP (n=835). BBRP efficacy was assessed by comparing semester and cumulative GPA's, academic outcome (probation removal, probation continued, disqualification), and university departure rates between the three samples immediately after and up to 3 semesters later. Findings reveal AP BBRP = Credit students earned: higher GPA's, improved academic outcomes, and fewer departures from the university. The value of a theoretically-based programmatic approach to retention is discussed.

The Bounce Back Retention Program (BBRP): Academic Status Three Semesters Later

Students entering university are often suddenly faced with considerable challenges and demands in all spheres of their lives. Not only is there a substantial role transition and an expected shift towards adulthood, but there are also pressures inherent to college enrollment; e.g., physically and psychologically separating from family, changes in social support and peer group, financial and academic pressures. These profound changes and increased expectations can make college particularly difficult for students who also battle other significant stressors such as acculturation issues, financial strain, adjustment, and/or emotional problems. Regrettably, despite years of research dedicated to retention, university student departure rates have remained stable and quite high (Braxton, Brier & Steele, 2007). In 2006, the American College Testing Program reported that more than one out of every four students departed during the first year from a four-year college or university. A common frustration expressed by people in the field of higher learning, is the lack of success in translating theory into effective practice. This issue has led to institutions often falling short in terms of assisting their students to persist and graduate (Braxton, Brier & Steele, 2007; Tinto, 2007). Recently, though, attention has been directed towards creating empirically supported programs to assist vulnerable student populations, and such programs have been developed and instituted at various universities in service of promoting academic retention. The Bounce Back Retention Program (BBRP) is one such program. It was designed in 2004 by two experienced faculty members at San Diego State University (SDSU) Counseling and Psychological Services. At SDSU, academic retention of students, with a particular emphasis on retention of diverse students, is a stated university goal (2009).

The overarching goal of the program was to increase retention rates by reinforcing and strengthening the resiliency levels of students in academic crisis or those students most vulnerable to disqualification from the university (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski and Weinberg, 2007). The BBRP is theoretically grounded in Positive Psychology and Resilience Theory, both of which are strength-based models. This program is multidimensional in that it seeks to foster better academic skills as well as to enhance the psychological strengths critical for academic success. Unique to this program is its delivery by mental health professionals, who have the requisite skills to deal with complex emotional issues that may arise during the program sessions, and also foster a safe and receptive environment. Peer coaches are also utilized to provide additional support and modeling.

The purpose of the present study was to assess whether this experiential and theoretically based program met its intended goals of conferring immediate and long-term academic benefits to its participants. Such success was gauged by comparing participants' semester and cumulative grade point averages (GPA measured on a 4 point scale), academic outcome status and university departure rates to the same outcomes of a non- participant reference group (also AP students) at program completion, one year post program completion, and eighteen months post-program completion.

Retention

The study of university student retention is broad and complex. Some of the extant research is macro, examining national social policies, while some research is micro examining students' familial and personal characteristics. The BBRP was largely informed by the examination of two correlates of retention: institutional characteristics, and student characteristics. With regard to the former, Tinto (2000), a leading scholar in the field of retention

research, made a persuasive argument that institutions that are sincere about their commitment to increasing student retention should foster a "learning community" that is cooperative, collaborative and one which promotes student involvement in the learning process. A learning community, according to Tinto (2002), is simply a group of students, who learn better together due to the added social dimension of being in a group. Tinto (2000) believed that *social integration* was the key to sustaining academic success, satisfaction, and student enrollment. This sentiment was mirrored by Braxton, Brier and Steele (2007) who spoke of the benefit of fostering student affinity groups/student friendships and "communal potential"; i.e., students' perceptions that they are part of a sub-group of peers who have comparable values, beliefs and goals. Research suggests that such subgroup identification has been found to be particularly important for the retention of students whose cultures of origin differ from the predominate culture of the institution (Monzon, 2003; Kuh & Love, 2000). Bearing this in mind, BBRP was designed to be small in size and emphasis is placed on fostering intimacy, connectedness and group cohesion.

Tinto (2000) outlined several other specific conditions that he believed were necessary to help foster social integration. Specifically, he emphasized the quality of student-faculty contacts, the students' perception of the university's commitment to them, and the quality of academic advising. Additionally, he described the need for social and personal support. Finally, he highlighted the importance of expectations of success. More specifically, he opined that universities needed to expect success of their students in order for students to expect success of themselves (Tinto, 2002). The importance of conveying high expectations, particularly to students who are economically disadvantaged or are of an ethnic or cultural minority, is consistent with long-standing research done by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) and replicated by

many others. In essence, such research suggested that there was a self-fulfilling prophecy; i.e., pupils tend to perform more optimally when teachers believe and expect that these students are capable of performing well. To further enhance success, other researchers have agreed that students benefit most from clear and accurate expectations and guidance towards meeting their educational goals (Kadar, 2001; Salinitri, 2005).

On a more individualistic level, student attributes and personal variables also have much to do with attrition and persistence. Much research, for example, has focused on variables such as academic preparation and personality characteristics. Regarding the former, Herzog (2005) examined several factors contributing to persistence from the freshman year to the second year of college. The most significant variable in this study was academic preparedness, the extent to which students are equipped to meet core subject requirements upon entry to college.

Braunstein, McGrath, and Percatrice (2001) also found that academic performance was overwhelmingly the most significant factor affecting a freshman's decision to continue into the sophomore year. It is a common sense proposition that students who struggle academically during their first year of college are especially vulnerable to disqualification as well as to voluntary withdrawal due to feelings of discouragement or lack of self-efficacy. Research has found that the presence of certain skills; e.g., time management, test taking skills, and good study habits, served to buffer academic stress (Misra & McKean, 2000). In view of this research, one goal of BBRP was to assist students to attain scholastic skill-sets to which they may not have been previously exposed.

Personal qualities of the student, chiefly attitudes and expectations, have been found to be highly related to persistence and salient predictors of attrition and retention rates (Dynarski & Gleason, 2002). Worrell and Hale (2001), for example, found that an attitude of hope for a better

future prevailed among persistent students. Therefore, another objective of the BBRP curriculum development was to support students' strengths and expectations about their success and help them deal with self-defeating attitudes and cognitions that could act as barriers to their persistence. Interventions were specifically geared towards fostering students' development of realistic and congruent life and academic goals/aspirations.

Of particular interest to the creators of BBRP, was research highlighting the potential dynamic interplay between institutional and interpersonal characteristics as these relate to retention. Thayer (2000) was one such researcher who addressed the interaction between the personal and institutional. Not unlike Tinto's recommendations (2000), Thayer (2000) also supported the utility of learning communities, but added that essential to these communities' success was that the specific needs of students of color and first-generation students. Thayer suggested that relevant issues included, but were not limited to, addressing feelings of belonging, cultural differences, financial disparity, and lack of familiarity with academic culture and norms and he held that addressing such issues was essential to successful programming. Monzon (2003) reports on the need for institutions of higher education to reexamine current models of student persistence, particularly as they relate to the quality of support systems for ethnic minority students and implications for social and academic integration. For example, Monzon (2003) found that the Filipino American college students in his study were in a constant struggle of trying to achieve their academic goals without offsetting a delicate balance between familial expectations and university expectations. The BBRP curriculum endeavors to address these issues for all ethnic students by providing an open and accepting climate, and facilitating meaningful discussions which recognize and explore the importance of culture, congruence of student and parent goals, and individual differences.

Resiliency Theory and Positive Psychology

Research on "resilience", which is broadly defined as the ability to overcome adversity, started to gain in popularity in the 1980s when sociologists and psychologists began exploring why some children who seemed destined to failure actually became successful adults. Conventional wisdom prior to this time assumed that children who came from environments characterized by poverty, violence, substance abuse and involvement with the legal system would not complete school, establish successful careers, or be able to sustain successful relationships. This, however, did not prove to be the case for a substantial number of individuals (Elias and Haynes, 2008). These findings led to the investigation of "protective" factors that served to mitigate against future failure.

Unlike retention research, which has often been completed by specialists in the field of higher education, and which often focuses on institutional and sociological characteristics, research on resilience has primarily been the domain of psychologists, and as such, often focuses on characteristics of the individual (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski, and Weinberg, 2007). For the most part, such research has focused on children and young adolescents and only more recently has such research expanded to college- age populations. Research that has been done on this population seems to suggest that an individual's outlook is vital; i.e., resilient individuals tend to frame their difficulties as "challenges" and thereby put a positive perspective on adversity. These individuals have also been found to be more likely to endorse the belief that their adversity had added to their growth and development. The byproduct of such an outlook is an individual's ability to recover from negative or disappointing experiences without losing sight of his or her future goals (Banyard & Cantor, 2004; Beasley, Thompson, & Davidson, 2003; Shields, 2001). Naturally, then, a high level of resilience (which is often gauged by measures of self-efficacy,

positive regard for self, social supports, etc.) has been linked to better stress tolerance, emotional well-being and ultimately more successful outcomes in college (Fassig, 2004; Pengilly & Dowd, 2000).

Hand-in-hand with the evolution of resiliency research was the growing popularity of Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2000; Seligman, 2002). Both fields share a "strength based" orientation and instead of emphasizing limitations, pathology, and/or barriers, these orientations promote the importance of finding the strengths and accomplishments within the individual. According to Seligman (2000, 2002) the goal of positive psychology is to cultivate and optimize what is healthy within a person, rather than highlight and repair what is "broken." In other words, Seligman's focus moved away from "learned helplessness" (a tendency of people to give up due to a belief that they lack efficacy to change things) to "learned optimism" (a belief in self-efficacy and the potential for change and positive outcome). It is Seligman's assertion that success (academic and otherwise) is achieved through an internal state of well-being, which is engendered by feelings of belonging, belief in one's competence, and a sense of autonomy. He asserted that well-being is further enhanced by accessing "signature strengths." Seligman identified strengths that were consistent with the aforementioned resiliency variables including hope, wisdom, creativity, future mindedness, courage, spirituality, responsibility, perseverance, connection and altruism. The BBRP curriculum includes facets of both models. For example, student persistence is explored and highlighted as a personal strength, and the examination of social support is undertaken in order to establish or fortify positive connections.

From Theory and Research to Practice

It is the unfortunate reality that despite what research tells us about conditions that might assist us in fostering retention, many universities still take a punitive approach towards students

on AP, assuming irresponsibility or ineptness on the part of the student. This can evoke feelings of guilt and shame in students, neither of which has been a proven motivator for long-term change. Predictably, a review of the literature suggests that academic retention is enhanced when institutions, instead of blaming students, demonstrate an attitude of caring and support and take responsibility for retention via wide-range programming (Salinitri, 2005; Thayer, 2000; Tinto, 2000; Walters, 2004). Braxton, Brier & Steele (2008) collated much of the existing outcome research, and from this, they made some practical recommendations for best-practice interventions. In sum, some of their recommendations included but were not limited to their endorsement of the use of instructional approaches (e.g., orientations, workshops or credit-no credit classes) to serve first year students, high risk students and or under-represented students. Suggested topics included orientation to policies and procedures, program requirements, study skills (e.g., test-taking skills, reading skills, critical thinking abilities), and career exploration. These researchers also highlighted the importance of helping students identify their learning styles, towards the aim of assisting students to master appropriate learning strategies. Finally, these researchers also note the importance of using support services (e.g., advising, counseling, mentoring, and tutoring) to complement instructional intervention in the pursuit of assisting with academic, personal, and career development.

BBRP: Philosophy, Participants and Program

The super-ordinate goal the creators of the BBRP had was to take a collaborative versus punitive approach and develop a partnership between the college and its students. Moreover, there was a desire to create an empirically driven program and incorporate what was known about the retention research, and resiliency and Positive Psychology theories. Accordingly, BBRP was designed to focus on students' strengths, encourage an optimistic yet realistic

perspective, and highlight areas of resiliency that students were already evidencing towards the aim of fostering further resilience, increasing emotional well-being and ultimately enhancing academic performance and retention rates. It was also designed to educate and better orient students about the school's expectations and policies, and help students develop their academic identities. Moreover, BBRP operates on the assumption that the participants were motivated to improve their academic status, as evidenced by voluntarily enrolling in BBRP. It is also assumed that participants were persistent, having met the stringent admission standards of SDSU. In fall 2006, when the present samples were admitted to SDSU, of 41934 freshmen applicants, 48% (19974) of applicants were admitted (SDSU Office of Analytic Studies, 2009).

Description of the Participants, and the Curriculum

Contrary to stereotypes about students on academic probation (AP), e.g., that they are frivolous, unprepared, immature, or hedonistic, the facilitators of BBRP observed the participants to fit into general and often overlapping categories. Some of these categories include, students that work, students with English as a second language, first generation to college student, and the transfer student (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski and Weinberg, 2007). Some common difficulties for these different types of students are limited social support, and a lack of feeling affiliated with the university. While the student on probation may recognize that personal problems are impeding academic success, he or she typically does not seek out or utilize services that could be of assistance. In fact, academic requirements are often misunderstood and errors in judgement are common; e.g., students on probation may try to "correct" academic problems by taking too many credits or taking advanced classes without demonstrated proficiency in lower-level classes.

The BBRP has been employed by San Diego State University since 2003 and serves a highly diverse student population. BBRP is a multifaceted one hour a week class that meets for 15 weeks during an academic semester. Students who successfully complete the program receive one-unit of course credit. BBRP is considered an *intensive* intervention, which Seidman (2005) defines as an intervention which is time-intensive and includes demonstration of skill-set mastery. In BBRP, skill-set mastery is measured through improvements in GPA, positive academic outcomes, and continued university enrolment. Classes are experiential and the unique curriculum addresses two aspects of academic success: a) academic skills and b) resiliency traits. In terms of the philosophy (informed by the aforementioned research) *persistence* is reinforced along with accomplishment. While the environment tends to be less traditional than regular classes, typical classroom protocol is modeled and reinforced; e.g., regular attendance, punctuality, appropriate decorum such as turning off mobile phones, participation, respectful listening, etc., towards the aim of assisting students to adapt to the general university climate/expectations.

Each module was developed with the intent to bolster hope, clarify values, increase self-awareness, and strengthen the student's commitment to obtaining a college degree. Introspection is critical and students are continuously encouraged to reflect on, anticipate, and if possible, mitigate obstacles to their success. What is truly unique is that classes are run by both a mental health professional and a peer coach. The mental health professional acts as both a facilitator and instructor, one who can easily develop rapport, elicit and manage strong feelings, and help to facilitate the development of meaningful connections within the group. Student participants who require mental health interventions are referred to the campus counseling center for further

assessment. The peer coaches serve as student role models and mentors, adding credibility to topics introduced to the group (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski, and Weinberg, 2007).

BBRP classes were intentionally designed to be small in number, with the maximum number of students set at 15, so that a personalized and intimate environment is created. Such an environment serves to help normalize students' experiences, make their AP status feel less shameful, and create a sense of connection, which contrasts with all too common feelings of isolation often experienced by students with academic and personal difficulties.

Upon entry, students who register for BBRP take pre-tests on various topics including time management skills, emotional regulation abilities, and thinking (a brief mood survey). When participants complete these self-assessments they are given feedback on their baseline scores. Later in the semester, a second administration of these measures provides a comparison of change and improvement in these areas. The benefit of such testing is that it gives students quantifiable feedback on their progress.

The content of the curriculum is dynamic and multi-faceted. Some of it is more technical e.g., during one module, an academic advisor presents critical information on university policy and procedures. By contrast, other modules focus on emotional well-being, resiliency and the importance of persistence. Multi-media are used to augment lessons and facilitate class discussion. Regardless of medium or topic, all modules emphasize students' self-exploration, examination and reflection on their unique experiences (learning and otherwise) and their identification of strategies that work best for them. For example, students are taught to identify their learning style - visual, auditory, written/read, kinesthetic, or multi-modal - and they obtain study tips based on their own unique approach. Modules address basic academic preparation strategies; e.g., note taking systems, reading and study systems, time management/dealing with

procrastination. Other modules help highlight the importance of self-understanding and self-care and address related topics such as students' values, cognitions, emotional regulation, relationships and social support, and stress management (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski, and Weinberg, 2007).

Purpose of the Present Study/An Evaluation of Outcomes

Much effort was placed in creating and implementing the dynamic BBRP curriculum, and it was of vital importance for the creators to evaluate the efficacy of the program. Analyses were made both across and within subjects in terms of design. Participants were compared to a reference group of non-participants who were also on AP in order to determine if this program did, indeed, assist in improving GPA, in lifting AP status, in lessening disqualification and departure rates. These variables were not only measured immediately after program completion, but were assessed longitudinally, two and three semesters post BBRP, in order to ascertain whether the program conferred any lasting benefits. Three research questions were then formed:

Research Question 1: For Spring 2007 first-time freshmen on academic probation, to what extent did BBRP completion affect semester and cumulative GPA, both immediately after and three semesters after program completion?

Research Question 2: For Spring 2007 first-time freshmen on academic probation, to what extent did BBRP completion affect academic outcome status (rates of probation removal, disqualification, etc.), both immediately after and three semesters after program completion?

Research Question 3: For Spring 2007 first-time freshmen, to what extent did BBRP completion affect university departure rates, both immediately after and three semesters post program completion?

Methods

Participants and Demographics

At San Diego State University, all students whose GPA is below 2.0 are notified of their probationary status through the campus enrollment services office. Accompanying this notification is information on how to register for the Bounce Back Retention Program. If students voluntarily register, they choose, from six different scheduling options, the time and day of the week they are able to attend. Interested students then enroll in BBRP using the same process used to enroll in SDSU courses.

Two academic probation groups then emerge from each semester: those students on AP who enroll in the BBRP (AP – BBRP), and those students on AP who chose not to enroll in BBRP (AP - NonBBRP). In spring 2007, data were collected from all academic class levels (freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior) of AP - BBRP enrollees (N = 195) and the AP - NonBBRP comparison group (N = 2960). However, the present study focuses on *first-time freshmen* only from the larger groups, as shown in Table 1: at baseline N = 125 AP - BBRP students; N = 835 AP - NonBBRP students; and N = 3619 Non AP freshman students.

In terms of gender composition, 64% of the AP - BBRP were female and 36% were male. The composition of the AP - NonBBRP group was 50.1% female, 49.7 % male (data were missing in 2 cases). General student freshmen population, non-AP, of SDSU is 63% female, and 37% male. Although the BBRP population closely matched the larger SDSU population as far as gender, a significant difference exists in gender composition between those who registered for BBRP and those that did not , χ^2 (2, N = 960) = 2.14, $p < .05$, as shown in Table 2.

No significant differences were found between the average age of AP - BBRP, AP NonBBRP and Non-AP students, as shown in Table 3. As all students compared were first-time freshmen, the age distribution was expected to be narrow.

In terms of ethnicity, AP - BBRP and AP NonBBRP, were generally well matched. Both groups were predominantly represented by European American and Latino students. However, Filipino American students on AP were significantly less likely to enroll in BBRP, $\_^2 = (1, N = 97) = 41.58$, $p <. 01$. When comparing AP - BBRP participants only to the *non*-AP freshmen population, more students of color (Native American, African American, Latino American) were represented in AP - BBRP and fewer Asian American and European Americans were represented in AP - BBRP (Table 4). As shown in Table 5, when comparing ethnicity of *all* AP students (whether in BBRP or not), to the non-AP freshmen, two differences are found: more Latino-American students on AP (33%) than not (19%), and fewer European-Americans on AP (29%) than not (50%).

In terms of departmental college representation, Table 6 shows fewer students from the college of engineering participated in AP - BBRP, and more students from the following two majors participated in AP - BBRP: Undeclared Major and Liberal Studies, Interdisciplinary and Certificate Major.

Baseline semester grade point averages (GPA) , prior to the start of the spring 2007 semester, were not significantly different between the AP - BBRP (mean = 1.33, SD= .54) group and the AP Non-BBRP group (mean = 1.32, SD = .66).

Finally, in order to assess for baseline differences in pre-college academic preparation, results will examine eligibility indices (EI) across groups. EI is a cumulative score of a student's high school GPA multiplied by 800, plus the student's SAT score.

Procedure

An SDSU Institutional Review Board approved consent form, titled "The Role of Resilience on Retention Among At-Risk College Students" (#IRB1828), was signed by all students permitting their academic outcome data used for aggregate analyses. Personally identifiable information on any individual student was not reported. Students were given the option to waive consent to provide individual data for the aggregate analyses. These students would still be allowed to participate in the BBRP. No students declined to sign the consent.

BBRP participants attended 15 classes, 1 hour per week, throughout the spring 2007 semester at SDSU. Facilitators and Peer Coaches followed the curriculum set forth in the Bounce Back Retention Program Facilitator and Coach Manual (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski, Weinberg, 2007). BBRP participants were provided a Bounce Back Retention Program Student Manual (Hanger, Schmitz-Sciborski, Weinberg, 2007). In order for BBRP participants to receive course credit, completion of class assignments (e.g., self-assessments) and a 500-word reflection paper, as well as attendance of a minimum of 12 classes, was required. In spring 2007, 125 freshmen students enrolled in BBRP, with 81(65%) students earning course credit and 44 (35%) failing to earn course credit.

Data was compared between BBRP and non-BBRP students at three different points in time: immediately upon \completion of the spring 2007 BBRP, one year post program, and 18 months post-program. Data collected including the following: semester and cumulative grade point average (GPA; scale from 1 to 4); rates of probation removed, continued probation and disqualification; and rates of departure from the university.

Statistical Analysis

All data was obtained from the SDSU student data base (Student Information Management Systems; SIMS-R). The SDSU Office of Student Testing, Assessment and Research obtained the data and assisted in statistical analyses. The PC version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS/Windows Version 16.0) was used to compute demographic variables, descriptive statistics, chi-square analyses, and analyses of variance.

Results and Discussion

All results are from the spring 2007 cohort of first time freshmen. For the purpose of determining results, the BBRP participant group is divided in two categories: those who received course credit (AP – BBRP Credit, n = 81) and those who failed to earn course credit (AP – BBRP No Credit, n = 44). The comparison group, AP - NonBBRP, is comprised of 835 students.

Table 7 shows the distribution of eligibility indices (EI) across AP – BBRP Credit, AP - BBRP No Credit, and AP – NonBBRP. EI is a measure of pre-college academic preparedness, with 2900-3399 considered remedial and 3700 + considered "college ready." EI was computed to determine if baseline differences in academic preparedness existed between the three groups. Results show a similar distribution of EI across AP – BBRP, AP – NonBBRP and AP – No Credit students. In other words, baseline differences in academic preparedness did not exist as measured by the SDSU eligibility index.

Research Question 1: For Spring 2007 first-time freshmen on academic probation, to what extent did BBRP completion affect semester and cumulative GPA, both immediately after and three semesters after program completion?

Results of spring 2007 semester GPA and cumulative GPA reveal AP – BBRP Credit participants performed significantly better than both the AP NonBBRP and the AP – BBRP No

Credit students (**F** (2, 945) = 14.41, p < .0001, (**F** (2, 957) = 10.95, p < .0001 respectively). Further, the higher GPA's were sustained across time, with one exception: in fall 2008, AP - NonBBRP semester GPA was one tenth of a point higher (2.4 versus 2.3) than the AP – BBRP Credit GPA. Notably, as will be discussed, the university departure rates for AP - BBRP Credit were significantly lower than for AP - BBRP No Credit *and* AP - NonBBRP, and therefore comparisons of GPA's are drawn from a markedly diminished sample sizes in those latter two groups. See Table 8.

Given the significant difference at baseline for gender (higher proportion of females in AP-BBRP than in AP NonBBRP), analyses were conducted to determine if academic outcomes status varied by gender, measured immediately after program completion in spring 2007. No significant differences were found between gender and academic outcomes. In other words, both male and female AP - BBRP participants were equally likely to return to good academic standing and have AP removed, continue on probation or be disqualified.

Research Question 2: For Spring 2007 first-time freshmen on academic probation, to what extent did BBRP completion affect academic outcome status (rates of probation removal, disqualification, etc.), both immediately after and three semesters after program completion?

Academic outcome status was assessed as follows: probation removed, probation continued, and disqualification from the university.

With regard to academic outcome status for spring 2007, graph 1 illustrates that AP –BBRP Credit had the highest rate of returning to good academic standing and removing academic probation (58%) compared to AP - NonBBRP (29.8%) and AP - BBRP No Credit (27%). Further, AP – BBRP Credit had the lowest disqualification rates (18.5%) compared to AP - NonBBRP (51%) and AP- BBRP No Credit (50%).

In subsequent semesters, the differences in academic outcome status are mixed between the three groups. For example, in the spring 2008 semester, the lowest disqualification rate was found in AP - BBRP Credit and the students with the highest rate of probation removal were the AP - BBRP No Credit. In the fall 2008 semester, zero AP – BBRP Credit students were disqualified, 42 students were disqualified from AP NonBBRP, and 2 students disqualified from AP – BBRP No Credit.

Research Question 3: For Spring 2007 first-time freshmen, to what extent did BBRP completion affect university departure rates, both immediately after and three semesters post program completion?

Finally, enrollment persistence through the completion of the fall 2008 semester was assessed. Three semesters after the spring 2007 semester, 73% (59 out of 81) of AP – BBRP Credit demonstrated university enrollment persistence, 43 % (360 out of 835) of AP - NonBBRP students persisted, and 46 % (19 out of 41) of AP – BBRP No Credit students remained at the university. This enrollment persistence rate is based both on disqualification and undocumented reasons for departure from the university, as exit interviews are not routinely conducted at SDSU at present.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to assess whether BBRP met its intended goal of improving academic outcomes in college students. Analyses of the outcomes reveal the theoretical approach used in BBRP to be effective in all intended aspects, with the greatest positive impact seen when students earn credit for completing the program.

The positive impact of BBRP's theoretical approach cannot be attributed to higher levels of college readiness in the AP – BBRP Credit students, as the examination of eligibility indices

reveal a similar pattern of college readiness, as measured at SDSU, between AP – BBRP, AP NonBBRP, and AP – BBRP No Credit.

GPA's of AP - BBRP-credit students improved significantly. From the start of the spring 2007 semester to the end of fall 2008, the average semester GPA for this group increased from 1.33 to 2.3.

Academic outcome status for AP – BBRP Credit students was most improved immediately following the completion of BBRP. More AP – BBRP Credit students removed their AP status and fewer were disqualified than the AP NonBBRP and AP – BBRP No Credit students.

Most notably, university departure rates reveal AP BBRP Credit students persisted at the university at higher rates, with 73% of students enrolled at the start of their third year in fall 2008.

Findings suggest that the theoretical approach used in BBRP is beneficial to students on AP. Highlighting individual strengths, developing practical academic skills, and providing support in a non-punitive environment are all critical facets of BBRP, as is the strong theoretical approach of the program, based in Positive Psychology and resilience literature. Further, the full positive impact of BBRP is only garnered when AP students earn credit by completing the program.

The findings of this study must be considered in light of its limitations. Clearly, AP BBRP Credit students were more likely to be highly motivated to improve their academic status, more than students on AP who chose to not enroll, or even those who enrolled in BBRP and did not complete the program. Their motivation is a factor that must be considered as part of the beneficial results.

It remains unclear why 35% of BBRP students did not complete the course. In the future, the feasibility of exit interviews will be examined, so that program departures can be more fully understood. Additionally, the student who departed from the university who did not participate or did not complete BBRP may have chosen to depart for varied reasons, and the conclusion that those students departed due to poor academic performance cannot be made. Again, exit interviews would clarify the departure picture. It also remains to be seen whether BBRP is as effective longitudinally with other class levels (sophomores, juniors, seniors).

Higher rates of students with undeclared majors were noted in BBRP. While this might be due to the freshmen status of the cohort, it may also suggest that students who are not committed to a particular major may be ambivalent about committing to college. This hypothesis remains to be explored.

While it is encouraging that Latino American students on AP were numerous in their efforts to seek assistance through BBRP, a preventative approach would better serve Latino American students, potentially reducing rates of AP status in the first place. Naturally, a preventative approach which would preclude AP status would benefit all students, and is presently being developed at SDSU.

Regrettably, fewer Filipino American students on AP sought assistance through BBRP, and future directions must include targeted recruitment of Filipino American students. Recruitment efforts must also be aimed at increasing the participation of males and college of engineering students in BBRP.

The problem of low levels of academic retention at universities is one that warrants further investigation. It is important for individuals to obtain a college degree and share in the

benefits a college education provides. If obstacles can be diminished or removed for degree-seeking students, then the benefits of a well-educated community can be reaped.

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Table 1: First Time Freshmen Sample Groups	
	Frequency
AP - BBRP	125
AP - NonBBRP	835
NON AP	3619
Total	4579

Table 2: First Time Freshmen Gender				
	F	M	MISSING	Total
AP - BBRP	80 (64%)	45 (36%)	0	125
AP - NonBBRP	418 (50.1%)	415 (49.7%)	2	835
NON AP	2262 (63%)	1354 (37%)	3	3619
TOTAL	2760	1814	5	4579

Table 3: First Time Freshmen Age				
AGE OF STUDENT	AP- BBRP	AP- NonBBRP	NON AP	Total
17 THRU 18	91	651	2870	3612
18	32	164	705	901
19	2	18	25	45
20	0	0	9	9
21	0	2	5	7
22	0	0	2	2
23	0	0	1	1
24	0	0	2	2
25+	125	835	3619	4579

Table 4: First Time Freshmen Ethnicity of AP - BBRP, AP - NonBBRP and Non AP						
ETHNICITY OF STUDENT	AP - BBRP		AP - NonBBRP		NON AP	
MISSING CASES	9	7.2%	67	8.0%	51	1.4%
NATIVE AMERICAN	2	1.6%	4	0.5%	18	0.5%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	9	7.2%	44	5.3%	154	4.3%
LATINO AMERICAN	40	32.0%	278	33.3%	696	19.2%
SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN	3	2.4%	22	2.6%	98	2.7%
ASIAN AMERICAN	5	4.0%	46	5.5%	206	5.7%
FILIPINO AMERICAN	7	5.6%	90	10.8%	291	8.0%
EUROPEAN AMERICAN	43	34.4%	234	28.0%	1801	49.8%
OTHER	3	2.4%	33	4.0%	137	3.8%
NO RESPONSE OR DECLINE	4	3.2%	17	2.0%	167	4.6%
TOTAL	125	100.0%	835	100.0%	3619	100.0%

Table 5: First Time Freshmen Ethnicity Composition of All Academic Probation versus Non Academic Probation						
	AP		NON-AP		Total	
NATIVE AMERICAN	21	1.2%	42	0.6%	63	0.7%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	104	5.9%	287	3.9%	391	4.3%
LATINO AMERICAN	582	32.8%	1500	20.5%	2082	22.9%
SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMERICAN	56	3.2%	186	2.5%	242	2.7%
ASIAN AMERICAN	115	6.5%	471	6.4%	586	6.4%
FILIPINO AMERICAN	158	8.9%	492	6.7%	650	7.1%
EUROPEAN AMERICAN	611	34.4%	3570	48.7%	4181	45.9%
OTHER	71	4.0%	299	4.1%	370	4.1%
NO RESPONSE OR DECLINE	59	3.3%	482	6.6%	541	5.9%
Total	1777	100.0%	7329	100.0%	9106	100.0%

Table 6: College by Group of First Time Freshmen								
COLLEGE	AP - BBRP		AP - NonBBRP		NON AP		Total	
Arts and Letters	10	8.0%	90	10.8%	316	8.7%	416	9.1%
Business Administrations	26	20.8%	199	23.8%	790	21.8%	1015	22.2%
Engineering	6	4.8%	88	10.5%	215	5.9%	309	6.7%
Health and Human Services	9	7.2%	50	6.0%	251	6.9%	310	6.8%
Professional Studies and Fine Arts	24	19.2%	161	19.3%	833	23.0%	1018	22.2%
Sciences	22	17.6%	134	16.0%	564	15.6%	720	15.7%
Undeclared	24	19.2%	98	11.7%	533	14.7%	655	14.3%
Liberal Studies, Interdisciplinary, Certficates	4	3.2%	15	1.8%	117	3.2%	136	3.0%
Total	125	100.0%	835	100.0%	3619	100.0%	4579	100.0%

Table 7: Eligibility Index (EI)						
	Range		Range		Range	
	2900-3399	3400-3499	3500-3599	3600-3699	3700+	Total
AP - BBRP Credit	22 (30.1%)	9 (12.3%)	7 (9.6%)	8 (11%)	27 (37%)	73 (100%)
AP - Non BBRP	222 (30.1)	70 (9.5)	70 (9.5)	101 (13.7)	275 (37.3)	738 (100)
AP - BBRP No Credit	10 (27)	4 (10.8)	2 (5.4)	6 (16.2)	15 (40.5)	37 (100)
NonAP	261 (7.5)	114 (3.3)	171 (4.9)	370 (10.7)	2542 (73.5)	3458 (100)

Table 8: Semester and Cumulative GPA's Over 3 Semesters

	AP- BBRP - CREDIT			AP - Non BBRP			AP - BBRP NO CREDIT		
	N	SD	AP - BBRP - CREDIT Means	N	SD	AP - Non BBRP Means	N	SD	AP - BBRP No CREDIT Means
ADJUSTED SEMESTER GPA FOR SPRING 2007	81	.67	2.29	825	1.00	1.70	42	0.83	1.56
ADJUSTED CUMULATIVE GPA FOR SPRING 2007	81	.53	1.93	835	.67	1.58	44	0.55	1.50
ADJUSTED SEMESTER GPA FOR SPRING 2008	60	.60	2.33	370	.91	2.32	18	0.91	2.07
ADJUSTED CUMULATIVE GPA FOR SPRING 2008	60	.35	2.34	374	.48	2.29	18	0.44	2.07
ADJUSTED SEMESTER GPA FOR FALL 2008	59	.66	2.30	360	.88	2.41	19	0.98	2.17
ADJUSTED CUMULATIVE GPA FOR FALL 2008	60	.35	2.36	363	.50	2.36	20	0.51	2.16

Graph 1: Spring 2007 Academic Status Outcome by Group