Virginia Tech Summer Academy

• Began in 2012
  • Pennsylvania State model
• First year or transfer students
  • Purpose: Ease transition to large university
• 6 weeks (July-August)
• Discipline-specific tracks
  • 2 classes/track
  • 25 tracks in 2013 (240 students)
  • 19 tracks in 2015
Objectives

• (1) Examine factors influencing students’ participation in the Summer Academy program

• (2) Examine factors influencing students choice of College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) tracks

• (3) Determine if Summer Academy classes impacted choice of intended major
Methodology

- Students enrolled in the tracks within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS).
  - 97 students were asked to participate in an online survey and 32 total responses were collected.

- Sequential Mixed Methods
  - Survey on Qualtrics
  - Students were contacted for participation in focus groups.
  - 5 agreed to participate.
  - Interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded for themes.
  - Second round of interviews pending
Inputs

- Students participating in the College of Agriculture Tracks of VTSA

Activities

- Students complete VTSA
- Survey students
- Focus groups

Outputs

- Data on student motivation to enroll in VTSA
- Data on impact of VTSA on student major

Impacts

- CALS is better able to attract and retain students
- Use data to enhance VTSA experience
Survey Items

• How did you find out about the Virginia Tech Summer Academy?
• Why did you choose to enroll in the Summer Academy?
• Why did you choose this particular track?
• Did your Summer Academy class(es) have any influence on your intended major?
Results

• Data showed family influence was a primary attendance factor for 39% of students.

• “Getting a head start” was a major factor for 79% of students.

• The CALS specific classes had an influence on intended major for 52% of participants.
Why did you choose to enroll in the summer academy?

- Personal Interest
- Getting a head start (79%)
- Smaller class setting
- Double major
- Coach/Corps recommendation
- Decrease work load first
- Finish degree early
- Parental/Family Influence
Did the VTSA have an influence on your major?

• 52% - Yes
Results

• Focus group results indicate the summer academy impacted major selections, potentially increasing retention rates within both departments and college.

• In some cases, students reported courses confirmed their major choice, while others indicated their courses revealed unknown academic interests, causing them to switch majors.
Quotes

• Participant: “I didn’t know that HNFE existed before I took the class so then found out about the major, looked into it, then looked at it all through fall and met a bunch of students who were double majoring in biochemistry and HNFE and it’s just a 16 credit add on and there is a lot of overlap between the two and biochem is a small major anyway so why not.”
Future Research and Implications

• Early classes may have an impact on future academic choices
• Involvement in a summer bridge program could provide recruitment opportunities
• Relationships and class size
• Track VTSA students through academic career
  • GPA, course taken, academic success
Thank you – Questions?