

---

## **Student Orientation And Adventure Programs**

Outdoor orientation programs as a means of helping students to transition into college have experienced significant growth over the past decade. This is because universities strive to understand and meet the needs of young adults in transition. Early weeks of transition according to several studies may be important for long-term college adjustment. This is because new students experiences difficulties which emanates from leaving their families, long distance friendship, college demands and adjusting to new environment. This study aims to formulate a theory on how adventure programing improve student orientation and help them in academic success. As a leader, making use of theories in adventure programming is important as it helps to achieve predetermined outcome for adventure experiences.

This paper using a depended variable of overcoming fear and persistence. The outcomes expected are; student development, teambuilding and social bonding which ultimately lead to academic achievement and student retention. The theory which is based on my personal experience and mixture of literature review in orientation is formulated on the hypothesis that participating in an outdoor orientation adventure program improves adaptation to the university. In this study, adventure programs such as backpacking and wild – were used. These activities were selected because they help students to develop trust in each other, work as a team and achieve the ultimate goal. Translated into academic life, these variables will lead to academic success.

### **Overview of Orientation and Adventure Programming**

One of the deepest concerns in higher education right now is finding ways to fully engage student in learning. College demands and academic activities affect student satisfaction with college and their ability to remain in college until they graduate. The first years into college are usually a period of tremendous change for young adults (Vlamiš, n.d). Some students adapt easily and thrive in a new environment and others struggle with both social transformation and academics. Common stressors for first-year students include increased academic demand and loss of long term friendships from their high school or hometowns (Vlamiš, n.d). Orientation program strives to support the first year students to adapt both socially and academically.

In order to introduce students to college life, it is imperative to present as fully as possible all the perspectives that the college offers. Therefore, academic and extracurricular activities must be presented. During orientation, students should be aware of the opportunity to be socially integrated into the university culture (Nancy 1989). If students are not socially integrated within the first few weeks of arrival, they are less likely to stay at the institution. Social activities can include parties, games, concerts, icebreakers and students can also learn about the various student organizations in which they can participate (Nancy, 1989). While the social aspect plays an important role in the university experience, the importance of academics should not be overlooked. Orientation can help students to bon with each other, work together to shape their college experience.

An orientation program can take many forms, one of which is the use of adventure experiences. This type of orientation program takes place primarily outdoors and includes adventure

---

experiences combined with reflection activity (Wardwell, n.d). Adventure Orientation Program usually have many of the same goals as more traditional programs, but upon admission, students will see that they have entered into distinctly different and complex subsystems, known as a larger society with its own social, moral and educational practices. There is overwhelming evidence that a student's success is largely determined by experience. College orientation is a process that helps students integrate into the academic community.

Adventure programming is based on the concept of experiential learning. Experiential learning is defined as a learning process in which an individual actively participates in the learning process (Bell, Gass, Nafziger & Starbuck, 2014).Adventure Programming teaches the basics of communication, collaboration and trust in a fun environment (Bell et al. 2014). This is achieved by putting groups into unusual situations where they work together to solve unique problems. This gives them a sense of accomplishment. The role of a leader in adventure programming is extremely important. A leader develop teams and help students to work together within group to process the experiences and generalize the lessons learned into their academic life.

## Literature Review

A study carried out by Vlamis (n.d) on adventure orientation program showed that students develops a higher level of social support in adventure programs than any other activities which are aimed at orientation of students such as introducing students to the college environment was not effective. This is especially suitable because students may be more afraid of a lack of social integration than themselves. A study carried out by Bell (2006) on outdoor orientation program of adventure programing with Harvard students showed that students were more afraid of not having friends than failure. However, the use of adventure programs such as Wild/Outdoor, Recreational, volunteer programs resulted in high student retention, increase in friendship, increasing social skills development and improved teamwork (Bell, 2006). This is because adventure orientation programs are often designed to build and promote social ties. Teamwork can better meet student needs than other orientation programs.

There is a growing belief in physically challenging natural environment-based orientation programs. The emphasis on small group work helps first-year students adjust to college life. These beliefs are consistent with many college impact models and student theories such as Astin's input-environment-output model for student change (Vlamis, n.d). The model believe that students change by taking part in psychological and college adventure orientation. This is because these programs require students to put physical energy into tasks (Vlamis, n.d). Due to the intensity of time and the small group social environment, orientation programs often forces student to participate psychologically and physically.

These adventure orientation programs generally take one of five forms.

1. They occur in an unfamiliar or new environment.
2. They use small groups (7-12 people) led by 2-3 leaders.
3. They present challenging activities aimed at developing group support.
4. Participants work toward specific and intended goals.
5. The focus of adventure programs is on the delivery of lessons from adventure to the actual academic life.

---

## Theory Formulation

This theory using a depended variable of overcoming fear and persistence. The outcomes expected are student retention, student development, team building, social bonding which leads to academic achievement and student retention. The theory which is based on my personal experience and mixture of literature review in orientation is formulated on the hypothesis that participating in an outdoor orientation adventure program improves adaptation to the university. In this study, adventure programs such as backpacking and wild – were used. These activities were selected because they help students to develop trust in each other, work as a team and achieve the ultimate goal. Translated into academic life, these variables will lead to academic success.

## Variable outcomes

Adventure learning is a great way to engage and challenge physical education students. In my experience, activities such as wild adventures and backpacking, including climbing rock walls, walking across tall logs like a tightrope, and descending along zip lines were important in student develop. When student finally decent to the ground they will have a dealing of success, strength and victory. This is because task such as rock climbing with a back pack are challenging. Student might feel like they want to give up along the way and they may feel tired. However, by working in teams they will be able to motivate each other, develop the skills to endure and achieve the ultimate goal. This was supported by Vlamis (n,d) who said that during adventure learning, students work independently and collaboratively to solve challenges, solve problems, and support each other and this forces them to leave their comfort zone.

Students may be asked to participate in rock climbing, zip lining, rope courses, or other activities that require some degree of developmentally appropriate risk taking. By so doing they develop some skills which are essential in academic success. Through overcoming their fears and partaking in challenging task and being persistent thorough the activities, students will learn not to give up when their academic life becomes challenging. They also learn to work in teams, collaborate, and bond socially which helps them in academic achievement.

There are many benefits to incorporating adventure learning into your physical education curriculum. These benefits include:

- Strengthen students' ability to collaborate
- Enhancing students' problem-solving skills
- Increase student self-esteem and confidence
- Increased trust among students
- Enhance students' communication skills
- broadening the student's understanding of personal limitations

Therefore the theory states that depended variable of overcoming fear and persistence lead to outcomes such as teamwork, student development, teamwork which eventually lead to student retention and academic success.

## How Leaders Can Apply this Theory in Adventure Programs

---

Leaders can start with icebreaker activity. This is important as student will still not be comfortable with each other and some might have the fear of forming relationships. Icebreaking activities help students to relax and bond with fellow classmates. For example, a game such as 'Can I get to know you which involves some kind of physical activity can help students to loosen up and start to create bonds.

Next, the leader can incorporate some kind of team building activity. Team building activities require students to collaborate, communicate, and collaborate to successfully complete assignments. The leader can divide students into groups and ask them to build the tallest tower or 20 minutes to complete the scavenger hunt. These activities inspire trust and camaraderie among students.

## References

1. Bell, B.J (2006). Wilderness Orientation: Exploring the Relationship between College
2. Preorientation Programs and Social Support. *Journal of Experiential Learning*. Vol 29 (2) pp 145-167.
3. Bell, B, J Gass, M Nafziger, C.S & Starbuck, D (2014). The State of Knowledge of Outdoor Orientation Programs: Current Practices, Theory and Research. Retrieved from DOI: 10.1177/1053825913518891
4. Nancy, K.S (1989). Marginality and Mattering: Key Issues in Building Community. No Journal Source.
5. Vlamis, E.M.S (n.d). Effects of a College Adventure Orientation Program on Student Development Behaviors. University of New Hampshire.
6. Wardell (n.d). The Effects of the Outdoor Action Frosh Trip on Freshmen's Adaptation to Princeton University: A Study of Pluralistic Ignorance. Princeton University.