



Build Academic Confidence Through Pre-College Programs



Primed with External Doubts

Disparity in Others' Expectations Creates Uneven Starting Point

When students enter higher education, they carry the expectations and doubts others have placed on them throughout their early years. These can include skepticism about their ability to succeed and whether college is right for them. Such misgivings can feed into a students' own self-doubts about what they can achieve. These external and internal pressures not only create feelings of anxiety and stress; they also affect college persistence and completion.

Others' Doubts Tarnish Interactions with College Faculty and Staff

40%

African American teachers were 40% more likely than white teachers to predict the same African American student would finish high school

7%

African American high school students were 7% more likely to finish college if assigned to teachers with higher expectations

39%

Of first-gen parents expect their child will attain a BA or higher



“

“Our study offers causal evidence that teacher expectations matter. Negative teacher biases can function like self-fulfilling prophecies that affect college-going.”

“Do Teacher Expectations Matter?” Brookings Institution, 2016

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A 2016 Brookings Institution study revealed a striking disparity in teacher expectations of their students: African American teachers were 40% more likely than white teachers to predict the same African American student would finish high school. Those higher expectations from African American teachers didn't just influence the classroom experience for students. African American high school students with at least one teacher who believed they would graduate from college were 7% more likely to finish than those who did not have such a teacher.

Source: Jeremy Redford and Kathleen Mulvaney Hoyer, “First-Generation and Continuing Generation College Students: A Comparison of High School and Postsecondary Experiences”, *Stats in Brief*, U.S. Department of Education, September 2017; “Parental Expectations for Their Children’s Academic Attainment,” *Child Trends Data Bank*, October 2015; Nicholas Papageorge and Seth Gershenson, “Do Teacher Expectations Matter?” Brookings Institution, September 2016

College Dreams Often Dashed by Low Confidence

Aspirations Challenged by Students' Doubts About Their Academic Abilities

In many cases, the gap between aspiration and outcomes for historically underrepresented students can be attributed to a lack of confidence or a lack of academic self-efficacy. Research has documented the stress that all students face on the path to college. However, that stress has a more significant impact on the confidence of underrepresented students.

Common College-Related Stressors for High School Students¹...

80% Difficulty Making Ends Meet Financially

75% Pressure to Do Well Academically in Classroom

67% Unable to Afford a College Education or Finding a Way to Pay

61% Unlikely to Be "Good Enough" to Enroll in College

51% Unprepared to Be Successful in Life After High School

...Have a More Extreme Impact on Historically Underrepresented Students

2x

Hispanic students are twice as likely to **require academic remediation if students lack academic self-efficacy²** (vs. comparable students)

20%

Black students are 20% less likely to enroll in college **due to challenges with college-going self-efficacy²** when compared to white peers

The findings of these studies about teacher, parent, and student expectations suggest that students ultimately develop college aspirations in very different environments. For many continuing generation, upper-class, majority students, college attendance is almost a forgone conclusion." Low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students, on the other hand, confront persistent doubt and skepticism that they will attend college or earn a degree.

1) n=1,512.

2) Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief (conviction) that he or she can successfully achieve at a designated level on a task or a specific goal, i.e., confidence.




Sources: "The State of Our Nation's Youth 2016-2017," Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, 2016, www.horatioalger.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/HA-2016-SONY-FINAL.pdf; Goyer et al., "Self-affirmation facilitates minority middle schoolers' progress along college trajectories," 2017, www.pnas.org/content/114/29/7594.full; EAB interviews and analysis.

Missing Less Visible Contributors to Stop-Out

Orientation and Bridge Programs Narrowly Focus on Social, Remedial Needs

A common way to ease the transition to college and ensure students are academically and emotionally prepared is through bridge programs, boot camps, and orientation activities. While these pre-college programs can have a positive impact on student success they do come with certain limitations. Intensive programming that focuses on specific student populations effectively support targeted students, but their size limit their scalability and reach. Conversely, large-scale orientation programs may touch every student on campus, but they do not provide the necessary transition support.

Common Pre-College Programs Don't Include All Necessary Supports

	Bridge Programs 	Basic Skills Boot Camp 	Traditional Orientation 
Targeted Academic Support	✓	✓	✗
Reaches All Incoming Students	✗	✗	✓
Social and Transactional Support	✓	✗	✓
Targets High-Need Students	✓	✓	✗



Stereotype Threat Triggers

"[E]ven passing reminders that someone belongs to...a group stereotyped as inferior in academics, can wreak havoc with test performance¹"



Shock to Highflyers

"Some of our students, especially from rural high schools, are devastated when they see their first grade"

Moreover, the emphasis on more traditional pre-college programming overlooks students who may still benefit from a confidence boost before walking into their first college course. Even high-performing students struggle as they transition to college and may not be prepared for some of the rigors of college-level coursework. This can be especially true for students from underrepresented groups because they must also contend with stereotypes and expectations placed on them by their peers and instructors.

1) American Psychological Association citing Claude Steele, Joshua Aronson, and Steven Spencer

Summer Bridge to Nowhere

Traditional Bridge Programs Lack Graduation Impact

Summer “bridge” programs targeting specific student subpopulations are far from novel—many, if not most, institutions have put these programs in place, often for first-generation students, students of color, or students who lag behind their peers in GPA or test scores. However, as research has shown, summer bridge programs often do not support timely completion, and despite their admirable intent, may further exacerbate existing student disparities. The examples below represent typical summer bridge offerings:

No Credit for Remediation or Skills Courses

“The Summer Bridge Program (SBP) is a four-week program [for] select first-time freshmen students [...] **Participants take math and English workshops**, designed to...”

*Representative summer
bridge programming language
– Large Public University*

Confidence Undermined by Being Classified “At-Risk”

...is designed for students from our partner high school and **students who self-identify as students of color or new American** [...] focuses on mentoring, community building, grit and identity development...”

*Representative summer
bridge programming language
– Small Private University*

Summer bridge programs suffer from two major pitfalls. The first is that these programs are usually comprised of non credit-bearing instruction, whether remedial courses or brief study skills workshops lasting one to three days. As a result, summer bridge programming does not directly impact students’ progress towards their degrees.

Secondly, while designed to build motivation, summer bridge programs may unintentionally signal to attendees that they are expected to struggle. Some of the language used around these programs can activate the much-studied “stereotype threat” effect; telling students that they are more likely to need support based on their demographic identity often undermines their confidence, even if the message is delivered in a positive light.

Source: What Works Clearinghouse,
“Summer Bridge Programs,”
Institute for Education Sciences,
2016; EAB interviews and analysis.

A Bridge Program Reimagined

Pre-Semester Boot Camp Creates Early Struggle and Recovery Opportunity

To address the issues associated with traditional pre-college programs, some institutions are scaling transitional support services to include all incoming students. The **University of Nevada, Reno** (UNR) does this through its Freshman Intensive Transition or NevadaFIT program which was created in 2014 to simulate the academic experience for students and prepare them for the rigors of college-level work. During NevadaFIT, students take a weeklong course based on their math placement scores with a full-time faculty member, and they also receive co-curricular support from a peer mentor.

Three Components of NevadaFIT's Success

Course Simulations -> Boost Readiness

- Pre-semester, for-credit course with semester-long corollary
- Week-long math intensive
- College-level, graded assignments and exams with in-depth faculty feedback



Peer-Led Cohorts -> Build Belongingness

- Peer mentors lead cohorts of six students through the first term
- Peer mentors are academic and social role models and help students balance competing priorities



University of Nevada, Reno

Mentors and Faculty -> Normalize Help-Seeking

- Daily academic and college navigation skills workshops
- Early introduction to available resources

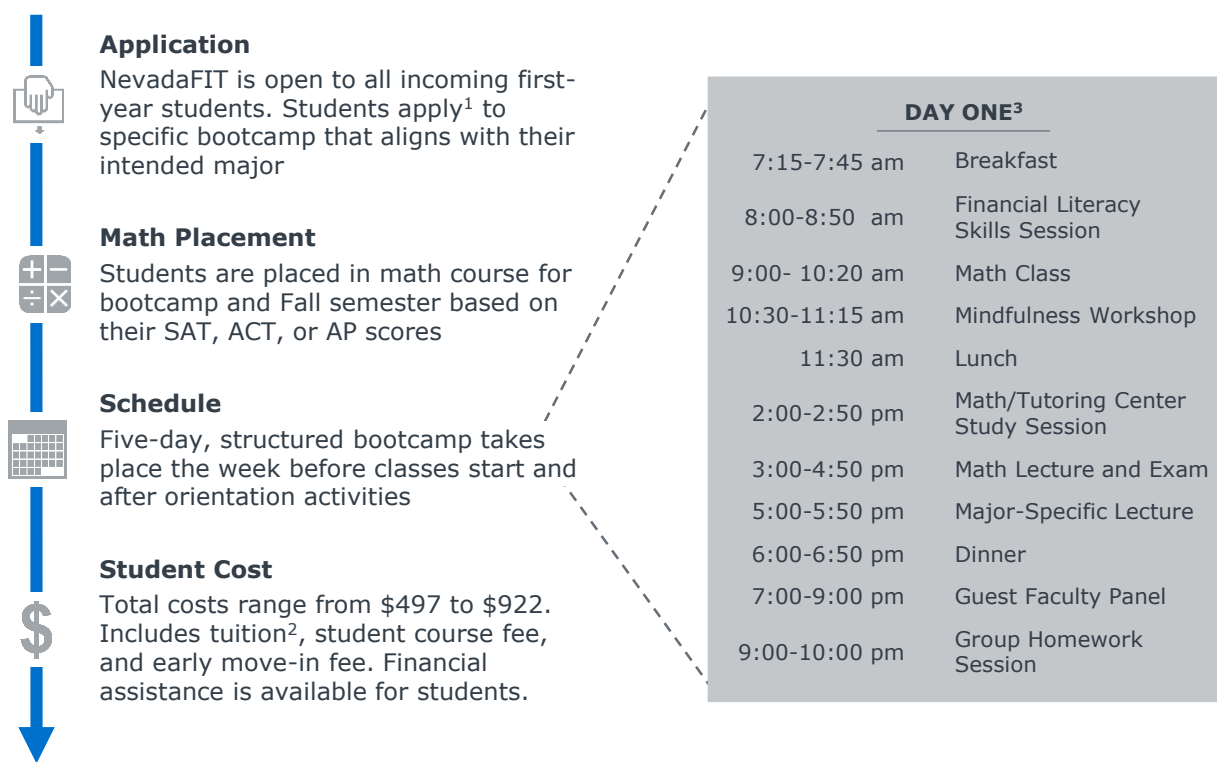
NEVADAFIT
Bootcamps for Academic Success

The experience occurs during the week immediately preceding the start of the fall term. The course and the faculty member typically match a course that the student will take in their first term. By taking a credit-bearing pass/fail course with a full-time faculty member, students learn how to overcome challenges in college-level work while still in a low-stakes environment. A key component of this learning process is the peer mentor's role in helping students find and take advantage of resources such as tutoring, career services, and academic advising. The peer mentors help to make the services more accessible and build a stronger sense of help-seeking behavior among incoming students who may be shy about seeking support.

Scalable Success Program

Structured Bootcamp Allows Students to Fail, Build Confidence, and Succeed

NevadaFIT is open to all incoming students who apply to the specific bootcamp that aligns with their intended major. Undeclared students can select a camp that is most appealing to their interests. This gives students the opportunity to learn more about different majors and explore a seemingly difficult major in a low-stakes environment. Students are placed in math course that corresponds to the course they will be taking in the fall semester – introducing them to key topics early and creating an academic cohort.



The rigorous schedule aims to cover both academic and life skills: students attend financial literacy training, learn about mindfulness, and engage with their faculty through lectures and panels. This helps set expectations about the rigors of college life and introduces students to useful skills and resources early in their college career. While the cost of the program can seem high, financial assistance is available to students. The student cost covers tuition, NevadaFIT course fee, and, for those applicable, an early move-in fee. In 2017 almost 30% of all participants received financial support to cover the cost of taking part in the program.

1) Participation is mandatory for students in the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources, ;College of Business, College of Education, College of Engineering, and College of Science.

2) Tuition rates based on University of Nevada, Reno fee schedule

3) Sample NevadaFIT schedule

Source: University of Nevada, Reno, NevadaFIT, How to Apply; University of Nevada, Reno, NevadaFIT Schedule; University of Nevada, Reno, NevadaFIT fees and costs; University of Nevada, Reno, NevadaFIT 2019week-of information; University of Nevada, Reno, Parent Information; EAB interviews and analysis.

Create Opportunities for Early Academic Wins

Students Looking To Fail, Build Confidence, and Succeed

Program organizers believe that the success of the program doesn't lie in an improvement in content knowledge but in creating an opportunity for students to learn how to "do" college early. By completing college-level coursework, receiving faculty feedback on their performance, and learning about available academic and social resources students are better prepared to begin their college career.

“

“What makes this work is focusing the program on what it means to be successful in a college class and letting students experience that early in their college career.”

Kevin Carman, Executive Vice President and Provost

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

”

“

“The most surprising part of NevadaFIT was how much more confident I felt about college afterwards...I felt like I could accomplish a lot within my first semester.”

NevadaFIT Participant 2015, Mentor 2016 and 2017

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, RENO

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NevadaFIT also helps build belonging as students assigned to the same mentor and study group are enrolled together in one or more classes in the fall semester. The continuation of this pre-college cohort helps create stability as students begin the term. Not only do participants report higher levels of confidence in their academic ability after completing the program but many often apply to become a mentor the following year. This creates a steady recruitment pool for program directors and allows students to build on their experiences through an experiential learning and leadership opportunity.

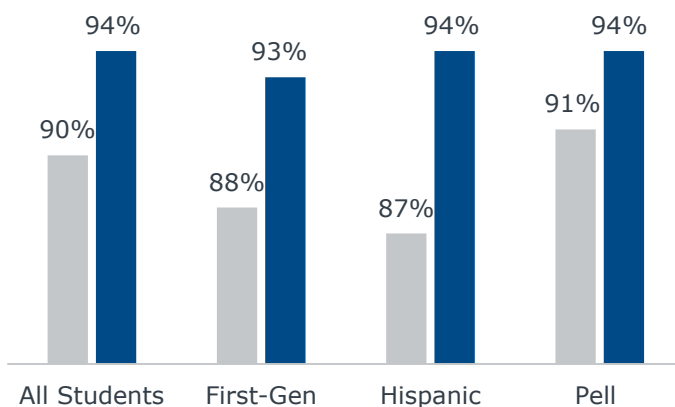
Acceleration of First Challenges Closes Gaps

Persistence Rates Rise for Multiple Student Groups after NevadaFIT

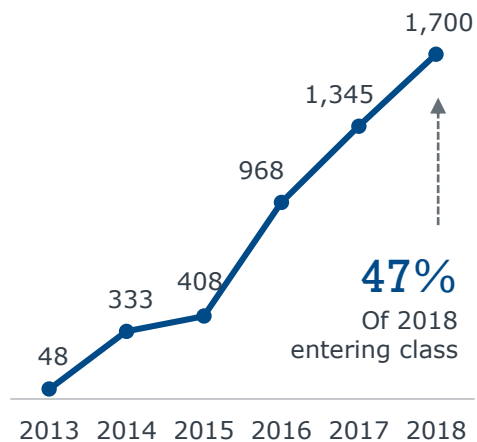
NevadaFIT has expanded from a small program in the biology department in 2014 to serving almost 1,700 new students each year. Approximately 37% of participants are first-generation students, 46% are underrepresented minority students, and 30% receive Pell grants. Nearly all these student groups have benefited, though demographic disparities remain in fall-to-spring persistence. For example, first-generation participants still persist at the lowest rates, but their persistence has improved since the program began.

Fall-to-Spring Persistence
Entering Class 2017

■ Non Participants
■ FIT Participants



NevadaFIT Participation



To encourage faculty participation, the institution provides them with a small stipend for their work outside of the regular academic year. The program's impact on retention and the subsequent revenue growth helps fund these. In its current iteration the program is optional for students but in the coming years, the University of Nevada, Reno will expand the program to make it mandatory for all incoming students.

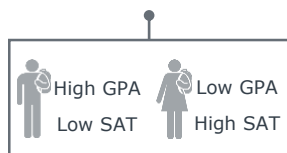
Getting a Head Start on Credit Momentum

Four-Step Guide to a Financially Sustainable, Credit-Bearing Summer Start

Like UNR, **Georgia State University** took a novel approach to the summer bridge concept. They believed that students who would typically need remediation could succeed in college-level courses with additional support. Typically, borderline-admitted students start later than others, as a way to manage capacity. Instead, Georgia State requires borderline admits to start college coursework the summer *before* their first year through its Success Academy program, allowing them to adjust to university life through smaller classes and with easier access to support services such as academic and financial counseling.



Mandatory “retroactive-enrollment” of borderline admits in summer of previous academic year



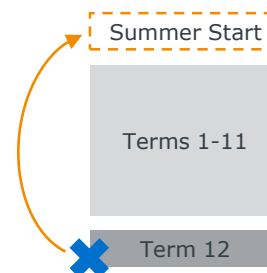
Students must fill out two FAFSAs



Enroll in 6+ summer credits in core requirements

- English (3 credits)
- History **or** Political Science (3)
- FY Orientation (1)

Students gain summer aid but lose regular 12th-term Pell eligibility



Credit Momentum Gains Outweigh Pell Eligibility Risk

Success Academy participants get head start on credit accumulation and expected to graduate in fewer than 12 terms.

About 300 borderline-admitted students are retroactively enrolled into Summer Session, which is technically part of the academic year before their intended fall start date. This technicality allows Pell grant-eligible students who file two FAFSA forms to fund their summer start term with federal aid. Pell funding requires part-time students to be enrolled in at least six credit hours of courses, so these early start students take seven credit hours in courses carefully selected to apply across all majors (limiting the delays due to major-switching later on).

Early start students attend courses already offered in summer term, taking classes as a cohort along with juniors and sophomores, which provides them with confidence-building role models—and also avoids extra costs associated with opening additional course sections.

Though students forego their 12th term of Pell eligibility by applying aid to summer instruction, previous experience of Georgia State faculty and administrators suggests that students who complete meaningful credit early and build confidence are unlikely to take six full years to graduate.

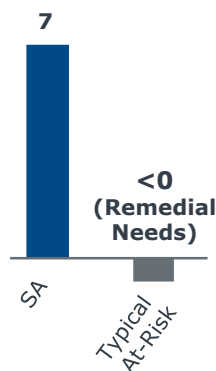
A Sprinting Start for Students in Need

Summer Academy Boosts Credit Accumulation and Confidence

The typical borderline-admitted student begins the first day of classes with a credit deficit, often requiring non-credit-bearing remedial courses before they can even begin for-credit coursework. In contrast, Georgia State's "Success Academy" (SA) courses are not remedial, allowing students to immediately begin accruing meaningful credit when they return to campus in the fall.

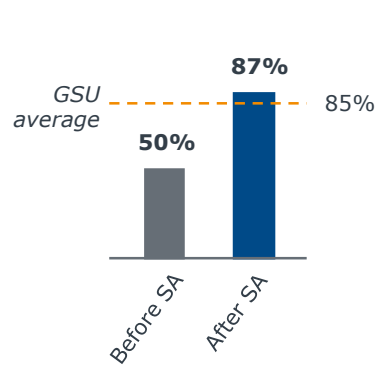
Head Start on All-Purpose Credits

Day One Credit Accumulation

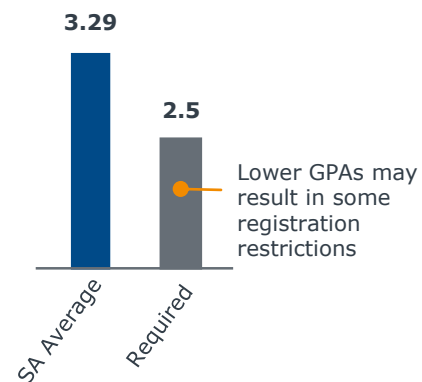


Raising the Retention Average

Fall-to-Fall Retention, Borderline Admits



Easily Clearing GPA Expectations



A Tool for Building Grit

The role of Success Academy (SA) is not just to create flexibility, but also to **build confidence** and show students they are capable of college-level work. Students with some on-campus experience under their belt **will do better in challenging courses later on.**

Tim Renick
Vice President, Georgia State University

The Success Academy allows Georgia State to reduce barriers not only to timely progression, but also more broadly to retention and persistence. In the past at Georgia State, only 50% of conditionally-admitted students persisted to the second year. Now, Success Academy students retain at an 87% rate—above the institutional average of 85%. Even though Georgia State reported lower high school test scores after admitting borderline students early, its reported retention rate rose.

Participants are also surpassing academic expectations. Borderline admits at Georgia State must earn a 2.5 GPA in order to register for courses without restrictions in the subsequent term. SA participants exceed even that mark, earning a 3.29 GPA on average. As noted by many institutional research studies, a first-term GPA this high is strongly correlated with future student success.

Finally, as the above quote from Tim Renick demonstrates, the benefits of Success Academy extend beyond GPA and credit accumulation to building grit and self-efficacy for an otherwise at-risk population.

Source: Renick T, "Georgia State University's Student Success Initiatives," Georgia State University, <http://ole.gsu.edu/files/2014/04/Student-Success-Award.pdf>; EAB interviews and analysis.

Checking the Pillars of Your Own Summer Programs

Critical Components of an Impactful Pre-College Student Success Program

While most institutions have a version of an early start program, there are some key elements of NevadaFIT and Summer Success Academy that lend itself to success. In the case of NevadaIT, since it is open to all students it does not single out vulnerable student populations and reaches students who otherwise may not have sought out additional support.

To avoid the risk of stigma or stereotype threat, Georgia State deliberately avoids references to students being “at-risk” or needing above-and-beyond support in its invitation to early start participants. Instead, the Success Academy invitation compares the program to those offered to honors students or athletes.



Scalability

Pre-term academic experience is available to all students to achieve scale and minimize stereotype threat activation



Academic Rigor

For-credit, pass/fail boot camp course allows students to complete college-level assignments with faculty feedback



Positive Messaging

For targeted programs, invitation emphasizes exclusivity of program, similar to those for honors students or athletes



Peer Support

Student cohorts have access to peer academic and social mentoring which normalizes help-seeking behavior



Career Relevance

Pre-term academic experience is operated by individual colleges to ensure it is relevant to students’ academic and career goals



Core Requirement

Programs can offer courses like English which apply to all majors. This ensures that no credits are lost if students switch majors

NevadaFIT also deploys peers effectively to serve as academic and social mentors. This introduces students to relevant college resources and normalizing help-seeking behavior while creating inter-class year connections. Similarly, at Georgia State students attend extracurricular programming, such as financial counseling, and engage with wraparound services such as advising, tutoring, and supplemental instruction as a cohort.



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