

ASUA's Bear Down Camp: Executive Summary

ASUA's Bear Down Camp (BDC) is a four-day camp that provides a supplemental and integrative introduction to the University of Arizona for incoming freshman students in order to improve their connection, retention, and overall success. BDC offers students the necessary tools as well as an opportunity to cultivate valuable relationships with fellow Wildcats early on during their college careers.

The five main learning objectives of BDC are (1) traditions, (2) academics, (3) leadership and involvement, (4) campus and community resources, and (5) diversity and inclusion. These learning objectives are continuously integrated into various aspects of camp through the many activities and workshops that are employed through presentations and small group discussions amongst the participants. More information about UA's Bear Down Camp is available online: <http://bdcamp.asua.arizona.edu>.



One of the 31 small groups at the 2014 Bear Down Camp

Bear Down Camp is grounded in Schlossberg's Transition Theory. The theory (1995) notes how individuals process transitions, and the four factors that control an individual's ability to cope with the transition. Two of the major factors are support, primarily social support, and strategies, potential ways that individuals may respond to a transition. BDC assists in students' transition by allowing them to connect with other students experiencing the same transition as well as upperclassmen and staff who know resources to assist in the change. BDC is designed to be a strategy to cope with the transition of attending university by providing students a way to control their new environment, and the stress they will incur with this change.

In 2014, BDC conducted a web-based survey to identify if the learning objectives were being met. The results are outlined below. The conclusion of the executive summary outlines recommendations for future camps. The BDC evaluation survey was emailed to 195 participants. There were 78 responses to the survey, resulting in a response rate of nearly 40%.

Demographics (N=78)		Survey Participants	Fall 2014 BDC Participants
Gender	Female	63%	65%
	Male	37%	35%
Residency	In State	62%	64%
	Out of State	38%	36%
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	4%	Participants were not asked about race/ethnicity on their application
	Bi-racial	10%	
	Black or African American	5%	
	Hispanic/Latino	33%	
	White	47%	

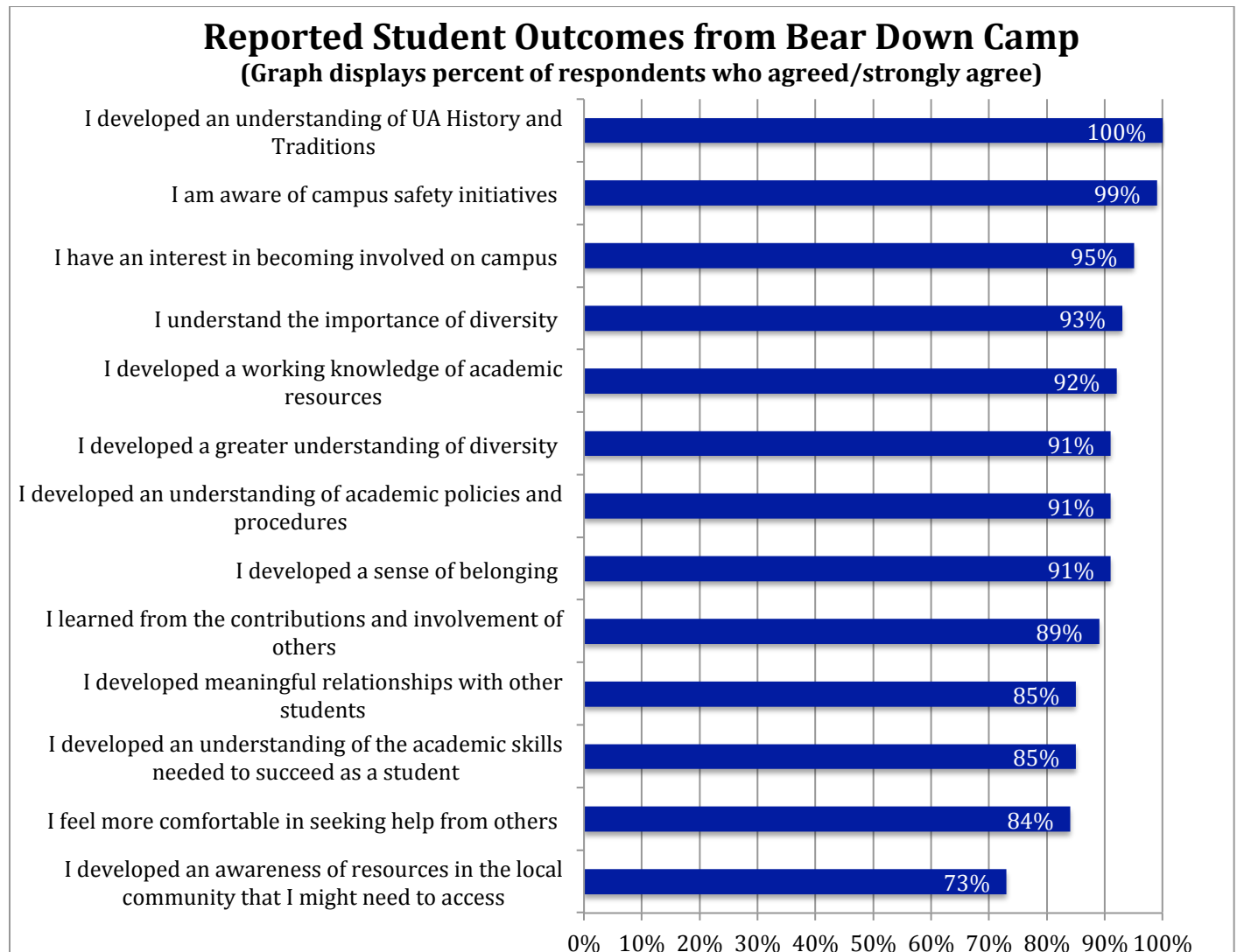


Bear Down Camp's Evaluation Findings

Participants were asked what they would tell a friend about what they learned at BDC. Results included the following:

- 20% Wildcat history and traditions
- 19% Services and resources on campus (SafeRide, ZonaZoo, Think Tank, Campus Health)
- 18% Approaches to make new friends at the UA
- 13% Strategies to be successful at college
- 10% New friends become like family
- 8% Involvement opportunities on campus
- 6% The Wildcat community (faculty, staff, and students) are here to help you be successful
- 2% Strategies to make college fun
- 2% Accept others differences

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with 13 statements that reflect the learning objectives from Bear Down Camp. The results from the statements are below.



Day of Service Evaluation Findings

In 2013, Bear Down Camp added a Day of Service on the last day of the program. The purpose of adding this component was (1) to assist students in identifying themselves as part of both the University and Tucson community, (2) to assist students in their awareness of major social issues that exist in the Tucson community, and (3) to provide students resources (i.e. VolunteerUA, Arizona.volunteermatch.org) on how to connect to volunteer opportunities. The survey also allowed us to understand students' past experiences related to volunteering. In 2014, we assessed the students' Day of Service experience. 55 Bear Down Camp participants completed the survey for a response rate of 28.2%. The findings illustrate students' ability to identify the needs or societal problems of our community, leading them to effectively address or discuss these issues in the future. The below information outlines the notable results from the survey.



Bear Down Camp students pick pomegranates outside of the Administration Building on campus on August 21st, 2014 for Day of Service.

95% of responding students participated in volunteering in high school.

74% of students reported "agree" or "strongly agree" when asked if they felt more connected to the Tucson community after completing the volunteer project.

Top 3 social issues identified in Tucson during the Day of Service

- 33% of students identified "Lack of access to basic needs" (eg. Diapers, clothing, shoes, hygiene, food) as a major social issue in Tucson.
- 18% of students reported identifying poverty and homelessness
- 14% of students reported identifying environmental issues.

Bear Down Camp and Day of Service Recommendations

Our current goal for BDC is for over 80% of students to understand and agree to the learning outcomes. Our recommendations for 2015 will consist of a hard review of the workshops presented at Camp, specifically "awareness of resources in the local community" as that outcome had the lowest agreement reported at 73%. Recognizing that a few other outcomes are close to our 80% goal, we believe that this review will help identify where a lack of comprehension is occurring, and where we can make the workshops stronger. To further address this issue, we plan to collaborate with other on-campus and off-campus partners, such Faculty Fellows and the Visitor's Center, who are experts in the areas reviewed at Camp.

For Day of Service, we have three main recommendations. From the evaluation, we know that many students did not know where they could find more volunteer opportunities. In the future, we will plan to provide VolunteerUA brochures, and ensure our logo and program information is accessible to all Bear Down Camp participants. Efficiency is our second area of improvement. To address this issue, we will recruit a select UA student volunteers to assist in directing the morning of the event. We will also provide directions to groups as they arrive instead of addressing everyone as a group after breakfast. Our last area of improvement will be in communicating with agencies and students after Day of Service. We will follow up with both agencies to see if students returned, and we will connect with students to see if they have decided to volunteer anywhere in Tucson because of their BDC Day of Service experience.



Conclusion

As we begin planning for the 2015 Bear Down Camp, we are excited to implement our recommendations to continue to improve our students' transition to college. Since 1998, we have been able to provide our students with a unique opportunity to learn about university traditions, campus and community engagement. We truly believe that this program is vital to many of our students' success, and we look forward to continue our work with incoming freshman in innovative ways through retention programs and ultimately having the students graduate from the University of Arizona.

References

Evans, N., Forney, S., Guido, F., Patton, L., & Renn, K. (2010) Schlossberg's Transition Theory. *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (p 213).

