

Presentation to **Retention, Progression and Success in HE** conference February 7th 2012

Exploring the impact of pre-entry work on retention and success

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Widening Access, Student Retention and Success National Programmes Archive literature synthesis

Key findings:

- Many more students consider withdrawing than actually do
- Much pre-entry work implicitly addresses areas associated with poor retention
- Much pre-entry work involves groups at greater risk of early withdrawal



Widening Access, Student Retention and Success National Programmes Archive literature synthesis

Factors associated with improved retention:

- A good fit between the young person's prior expectations and those within the HE context
- Academic preparedness, sufficient to meet course needs
- Social integration within the HE context
- Access to additional support to meet specific /additional needs
- Development of a robust learner identity





University of Sussex
First-Generation Scholars

University of Sussex First-Generation Scholars' scheme

- Student life cycle approach pre entry, on course and post graduation
- All under same banner
- Widening Participation located in Student Services
- Focus on developing programme to enhance retention and success
- Partnership with academic schools through WP leads in each School
- Partnerships with 68 schools and colleges across London and Sussex
- Launch event for First-Generation Scholars
- Embedded evaluation to inform development



University of Sussex evaluation seeks to:

- Strengthen the evidence base for future practice
- Assess and maximise impact across key areas - informing future choices and supporting academic and personal development
- Include all stakeholders – young people, teachers, student tutors, academics and the WP team
- Take account of contextual differences between partner institutions, contributing to effective targeting
- Raise awareness of key WP issues and messages



<i>Findings from on-line, post activity questionnaire for teachers</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	Not relevant	Other
Insights that will inform future educational choices	27 48.2%	26 46.4%	1 1.8%	0	1 1.8%	1 1.8%
Developed academic skills	7 12.5%	19 33.9%	1 1.8%	5 8.9%	12 21.4%	1 1.8%
Had a positive impact on aspirations	30 53.6%	21 37.5%	1 1.8%	2 3.6%	0	2 3.6%
Had a positive impact on motivation	24 42.9%	26 46.4%	1 1.8%	4 7.1%	0	1 1.8%

Biology experience day (Year 12)

- *I think I now understand more about science at university in general. I also learned some new things about biology.*
- *A greater understanding of the topics covered in life sciences, the way in which they are taught at degree level and the type of environments I would be working in.*
- *I got a good taste of what university is like and started to think I might like to do a degree in life science. A very interesting day learning about different courses and aspects of biology. It opened my eyes up to an area of science I hadn't ever given any consideration to.*



English seminar (Year 12)

- *Got to understand how Uni life actually functions and how lectures and seminars work*
- *More of an understanding of what English would be like at university*
- *I have been able to experience being a University student*
- *Learnt what a degree in English involves. Realised how much more work I need to do for A-Levels*
- *An insight into both the literary history of the USA as well as the cultural and expansionist elements of the USA. Seminar skills too.*
- *When analysing texts for coursework or exams, I have better knowledge of how to do this*



Year 10 Summer School

- *The sessions and lectures gave me a much clearer idea of how students learn at uni and what learning is like.*
- *I think I have gained a lot of new confidence, confidence in meeting new people and making friends with people I may not usually know. I also have more experience in presenting information in front of big crowds. My group work skills have also improved.*
- *This summer school really opens your eyes. It makes you seriously consider your options for the future and gives you a real insight into life at university.*



Year 12 Summer School

- *Helped me in to being more confident into choosing and deciding on the subject I want to study at university*
- *It's given me a better insight into physics and gave me an idea of whether or not physics is for me*
- *It gave me a needed insight into my subject and given me the confidence of continuing physics based subjects*
- *I know what I want to do, why I want to do it and how I am going to do it.*



Campus tours and IAG

US

University of Sussex

First-Generation Scholars

- *I have got a more realistic view of what university life holds for students.*
- *I have a clearer understanding of the jump from college to uni and what it will entail.*
- *I have gained an insight into what University life is like and all the facilities available at Sussex as well as an insight on how to get through the transition period.*
- *Knowledge on what uni life is really like and the encouragement to start planning towards what courses to do.*
- *I hope to use the information provided in the IAG session to better my chances of getting into the right university for me*



In school tutoring programme – the student tutors

- *Gained more confidence in myself that I can use my abilities in a very positive way. I can communicate better with various types of people and my organisational skills have improved too.*
- *I have gained confidence in a work environment; this was my first job.*
- *I have established experience of teaching and explaining concepts to students. This has helped my own understanding and confidence*
- *I was considering dropping out of uni but when I got this job after just a few weeks I realised that I have a passion for teaching and I now intend to stay on and do a PGCE*
- *I find it fulfilling to be able to help others learn and I also find it humbling to be reminded of the opportunity I have at university.*



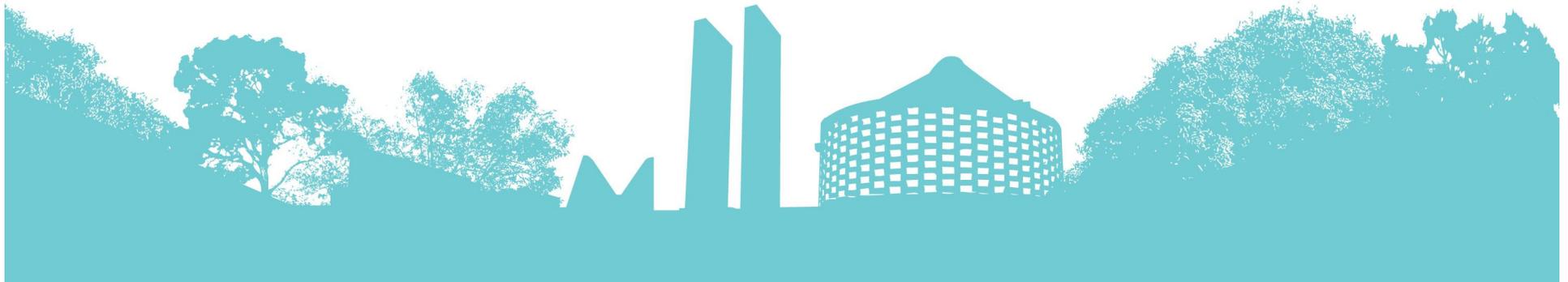
Academic leads for WP

Has this work given you any new insights into WP that will help you to meet the challenge to widen access?

• I have been told by WP teachers that their students do very little self-directed learning and need to be explicitly taught study skills and how to manage their time when they get here.

Do you see this work as having the potential to advance WP work in the future within your academic dept/school?

• We are attempting to build study skills sessions into first and second year courses.



Areas for development

- Balance of activity across the age range
- Ensuring coherence and progression
- Maximising the contribution to learning
- Refining approaches to delivery and targeting to take more account of differences between partner institutions
- Extending collaborative approaches to evaluation



Retention and success

Retention is an important measure of success

High quality pre-entry work:

- empowers young people to make informed choices;
- provides a space to extend and enrich learning;
- makes an important contribution to retention;
- can enrich the student experience and develop skills for employment and life.

