

Q Success: A First Year Seminar (FYS) Transition Program

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BACKGROUND

- ❖ Transition from high school to university can be overwhelmingly stressful for students.
- ❖ First-Year Seminar (FYS) programs can address the common challenges students face when adjusting to their new lives at university.
- ❖ A strategically developed FYS program can act as an important intervention that eases transition to university and builds resilience in students.

PROGRAM DESIGN & OBJECTIVES

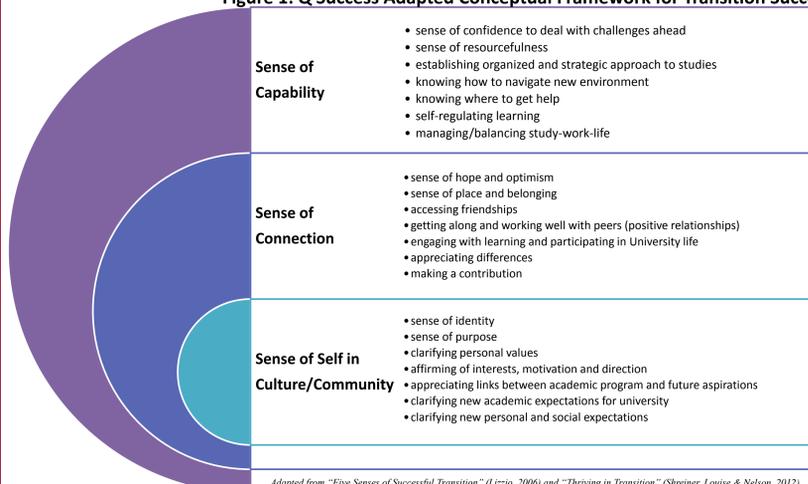
Q Success was designed to achieve two interrelated student and university goals:

- 1) To ensure that the personal and academic transition needs of incoming students were being addressed.
 - 2) To establish an early touch-point to raise awareness, foster resilience, and influence help-seeking behavior concerning mental health as it relates to student success in higher education.
- ❖ The pilot year program ran for nine weeks between September-November 2013.
 - ❖ Key transitional issues were discussed in weekly seminars, led by a pair of upper year mentors/facilitators and supported by professional staff.
 - ❖ The program used an experiential learning approach to encourage students to reflect on and apply personal skills (e.g. time management, healthy coping, resilience, help-seeking behavior) and academic skills (e.g. note taking, study and learning strategies, exam preparation, writing skills) to support their personal and academic success.
 - ❖ To respond to greater demand than spots available, *Q Success* v.2 was created and offered to all students who were not selected to participate. This was an on-line version of the program content that provided students who opted-in with study tips and links to academic skill development resources through weekly emails.

METHODS

- ❖ The *Q Success* program evaluation and assessment integrated the following qualitative and quantitative tools: the *Q Success* self-assessment intake survey (quantitative); the *Q Success* pre and post session evaluations (qualitative); the post program evaluation surveys (quantitative); and student specific institutional data (i.e. GPA and retention data).
- ❖ A *Q Success* conceptual framework guided the surveys to assess students' sense of integration in the university community and culture, their sense of connection to the university and peers, and their sense of capability to navigate the university and respond to transition challenges (see Figure 1). Survey questions were also designed to assess participating students perceived level of academic capability, personal health habits, and mental health knowledge and self-care habits.
- ❖ Content analysis and statistical tests (chi-square, t-test, and logistic regression) were used to analyze the data.
- ❖ Student participants self-selected and completed an application form (N=282). 105 students were randomly selected to participate, and organized into three cohorts of 35 students. After attrition, *Q Success* comprised of 83 first year students. *Q Success* v.2 participants comprised 55 first year students.
- ❖ The pilot year had an over-representation of under-represented and marginalized groups (first generation (two fold increase) and international students (four fold increase). Near proportionate representation and proportionate representation (relative to first year cohort) for aboriginal students and students with disabilities, respectively.

Figure 1: Q Success Adapted Conceptual Framework for Transition Success



RESULTS

<i>Q Success</i> (incl. v2)	<i>Q Success</i> (incl. v2)
Benchmark	End of Program
X Area of Weakness (self-report)	✓ Program Impact (self-report)
Mainstream Student Population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Having clarity in academic and personal interests ❖ *Confidence in writing skills ❖ *Knowledge of new academic environment 	Mainstream & Vulnerable Student Population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Refined goals and understanding of success ❖ Developed personal and academic skills to influence academic success ❖ Regular identification of weekly goals & expectations ❖ Awareness and willingness to use campus resources ❖ Ability to manage personal and academic stresses ❖ Creation of an Individual Learning Success Plan ❖ Sleeping the recommended 7-9 hours a night ❖ Awareness of strategies to sleep in new environment ❖ Ability to choose healthy coping strategies ❖ Identification and access of healthy lifestyle resources ❖ Use of healthy lifestyle strategies ❖ Ability to identify the signs of mental health distress ❖ Confidence in reaching out to a friend who needs help (only <i>QSuccess</i>) ❖ Awareness of the mental health resources (only <i>QSuccess</i>) ❖ Commitment to reduce mental health stigma (only <i>QSuccess</i>)
Vulnerable Student Population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strategies to support learning and studying ❖ Using strategies to manage commitments ❖ *Spending 150 minutes a week on physical activity ❖ Strategies to sleep better in a new environment ❖ Ability to choose & prepare healthy meal options ❖ Eating recommended fruit & vegetable servings ❖ Choosing healthy ways of coping with stress ❖ Ability to use strategies that manage stress ❖ Being aware of mental health support resources ❖ Awareness of when to seek mental health support ❖ Feeling comfortable reaching out for help ❖ Being aware of writing support services available ❖ *Knowledge about your new personal and social environment and expectations 	

*Statistically significant difference (intervention and control)

Table 1: Q Success and Q Success v.2 Impact

Figure 2: Q Success Mental Health Program Evaluation Survey Questions

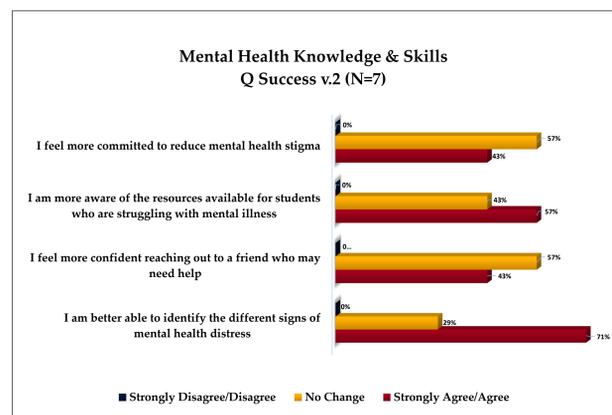


Figure 3: Q Success v.2 Mental Health Program Evaluation Survey Questions

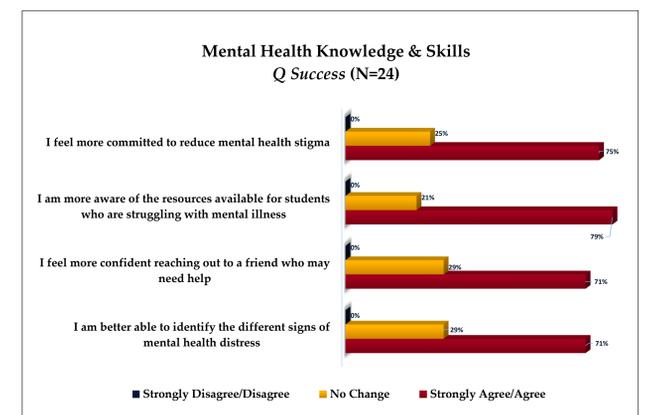


Table 2: T-test on Mid-Year GPA of Q Success Students and Matched Control

Group Statistics					
2-tailed t-test					
	QSV2	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Mid-Year GPA	Q Success Participants	80	2.8856	.85973	.09612
	Control	80	2.9669	.81966	.09164

t=-0.612, $\alpha=0.542$, 95% CI=-0.34356, 0.18106

Table 3: Chi-square and logistic regression on eligibility to return to university.

Eligible to Return					
Logistic Regression/Chi-Square Test					
		Eligible to Return		Total	
		No	Yes		
Q Success Participation	No	Count	5	75	80
		Expected Count	4	76	80
	Yes	Count	3	77	80
		Expected Count	4	76	80

$\alpha=0.468$ (chi-square); $\alpha=0.537$, Exp (B)=1.711, 95% C.I.=0.395, 7.414

CONCLUSION & FUTURE DIRECTION

- ❖ The benchmark findings demonstrate that students who self-selected into *Q Success* were in fact students who felt under-equipped for first year university, and in seeking out *Q Success* wanted extra support in navigating their transition from high school to university.
- ❖ The post-program evaluation revealed that *Q Success* had a positive impact on the personal and academic outcome, personal health habits, and mental health knowledge and self-care habits of participating first year students (see figure 2 and 3).
- ❖ The program did not have an impact of the GPA or retention (i.e. likelihood that they will be eligible to return for their second year) of participating first year students (see table 2 and 3).
- ❖ Going forward, the pilot evaluation informed both the coordination and evaluation of the 2014/2015 implementation of *Q Success* by laying the groundwork for a more enhanced student learning experience (increased peer mentor involvement, student centered learning, learning communities etc.), in addition to a more rigorous program evaluation (empirically validated survey tools (Thriving Quotient) and in-depth vulnerable population analysis).