

The Post-soar Experience



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The Post-SOAR Experience: Determining the Perceived Needs of Post-SOAR Participants During the Second and Third Years of College

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This article presents the results of a pilot study about academic and social experiences of provisionally admitted undergraduate students who participated in the University of Central Florida's Seizing Opportunities for Academic Retention (SOAR) program, a six-week summer residential opportunity designed to assist participants in their initial transition to the university. Through quantitative and qualitative analyses, coding of interview transcripts, and interviews conducted with past and present SOAR participants and staff, this article supports student retention and involvement theories, which claim that students who are actively engaged in college or university academic and social systems report the most satisfaction with their collegiate experiences.

Transitioning from high school to college can be difficult for most students, especially for those who identify as First Time in College (FTIC), often disadvantaged by economic, cultural, and/or educational circumstances. This transition from high school to college presents challenges and opportunities which may assist or hinder these students' successes in college (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). Tinto (1993) emphasized that the process of becoming integrated into college academic and social systems involves three steps: *separation, transition, and incorporation*. Separation involves a students' disassociation from their past environments and communities. Transition occurs post-separation and allows students to observe where they have been in their lives, where they currently are, and where they need to be. Lastly, incorporation transpires when students are able to adopt new norms and behaviors to adjust to their new environments, a process known as academic and social integration (Milem & Berger, 1997). Once students successfully navigate these three stages, they have become integrated into their respective institutions.

Crucial to students' academic and social integration, then, are student support services and programs designed to assist with the separation, transition, and incorporation processes. Such programs are grounded in Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (1993) and Tinto's

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