

Building a sense of belonging among tertiary commuter students: The Non-Residential Colleges program.

Adam Fernandes, Allie Ford, Gerry Rayner and Lynette Pretorius, Monash University

Abstract

Student engagement at university is significantly influenced by the students' sense of belonging. At our university we developed a novel extra-curricular program designed to foster a sense of belonging in students who commute to university – the Non-Residential Colleges (NRC) program. This study examines whether participation in the NRC program changed students' perceptions about their university experience and their sense of belonging to the university community. We show that the NRC program appears to be effective in fostering a more positive university experience for students when compared with non-NRC students. Additionally, we demonstrate that the NRC program influenced students' sense of belonging through increased interaction with peers and staff as well as greater reported attendance on campus.

This article was presented at the 2017 STARS Conference in Adelaide, Australia in July 2017 and selected for publication in *Student Success* Volume 8, Issue 2.

Access published article at <https://studentsuccessjournal.org/article/view/380>