



Student Motivations to attend Summer Bridge Programs and Impact on Student Intended Major Choice

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Virginia Tech Summer Academy

- Began in 2012
 - Pennsylvania State model
- First year or transfer students
 - Purpose: Ease transition to large university
- 6 weeks (July-August)
- Discipline-specific tracks
 - 2 classes/track
 - 25 tracks in 2013 (240 students)
 - 19 tracks in 2015





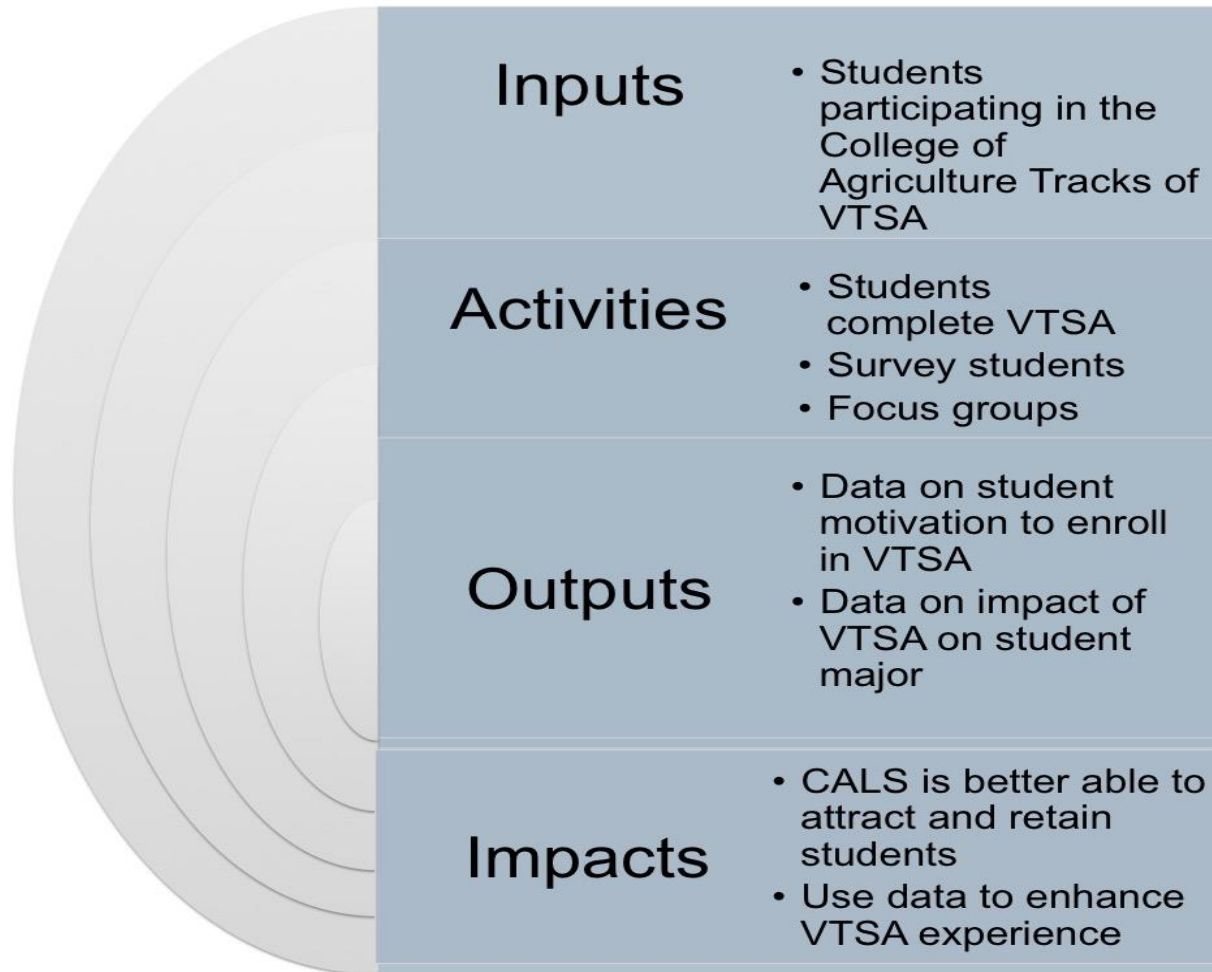
Objectives

- (1) Examine factors influencing students' participation in the Summer Academy program
- (2) Examine factors influencing students choice of College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALIS) tracks
- (3) Determine if Summer Academy classes impacted choice of intended major



Methodology

- Students enrolled in the tracks within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs).
 - 97 students were asked to participate in an online survey and 32 total responses were collected.
- Sequential Mixed Methods
 - Survey on Qualtrics
 - Students were contacted for participation in focus groups.
 - 5 agreed to participate.
 - Interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded for themes.
 - Second round of interviews pending





Survey Items

- How did you find out about the Virginia Tech Summer Academy?
- Why did you choose to enroll in the Summer Academy?
- Why did you choose this particular track?
- Did your Summer Academy class(es) have any influence on your intended major?

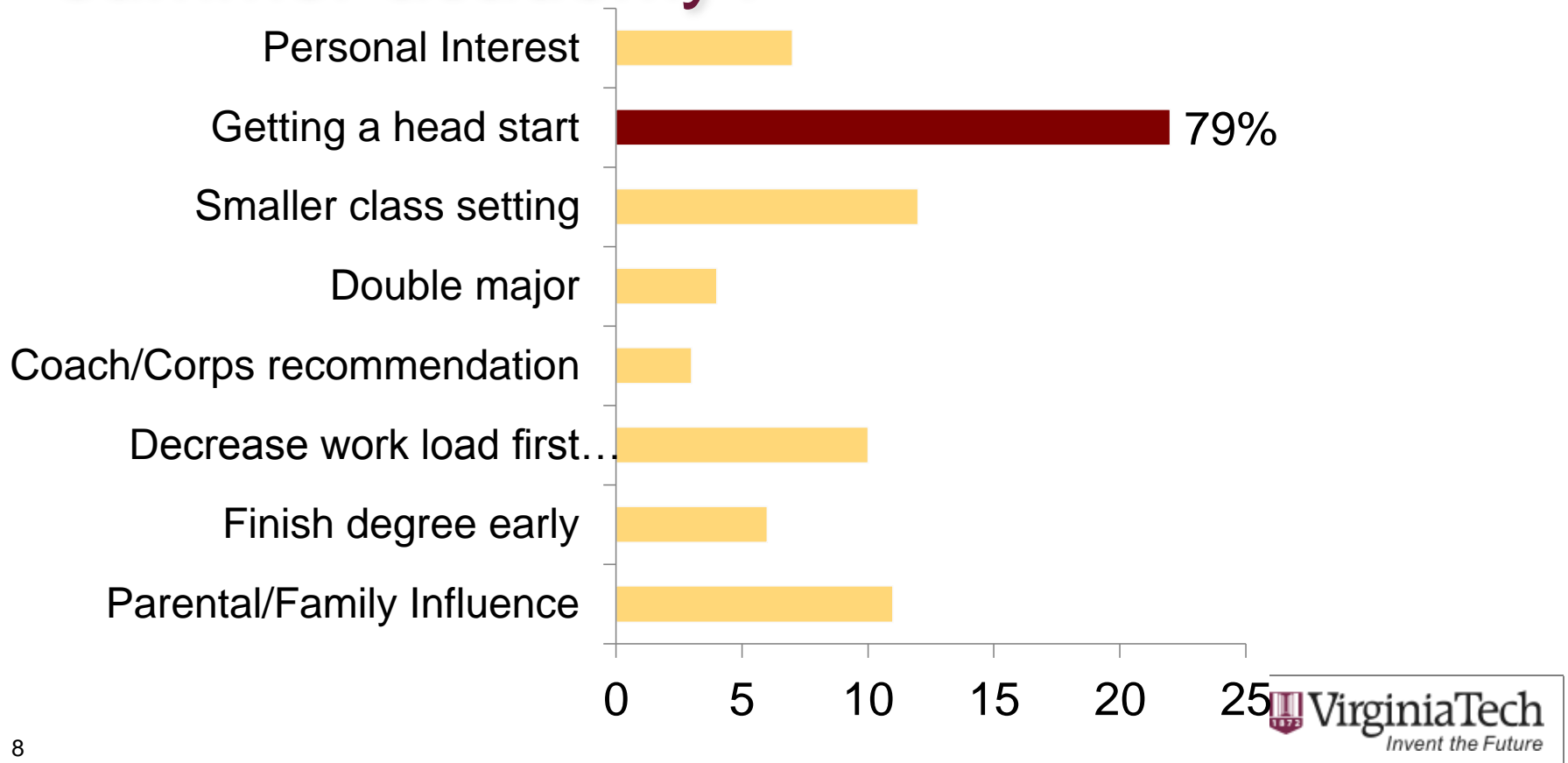


Results

- Data showed family influence was a primary attendance factor for 39% of students
- “Getting a head start” was a major factor for 79% of students.
- The CALS specific classes had an influence on intended major for 52% of participants.

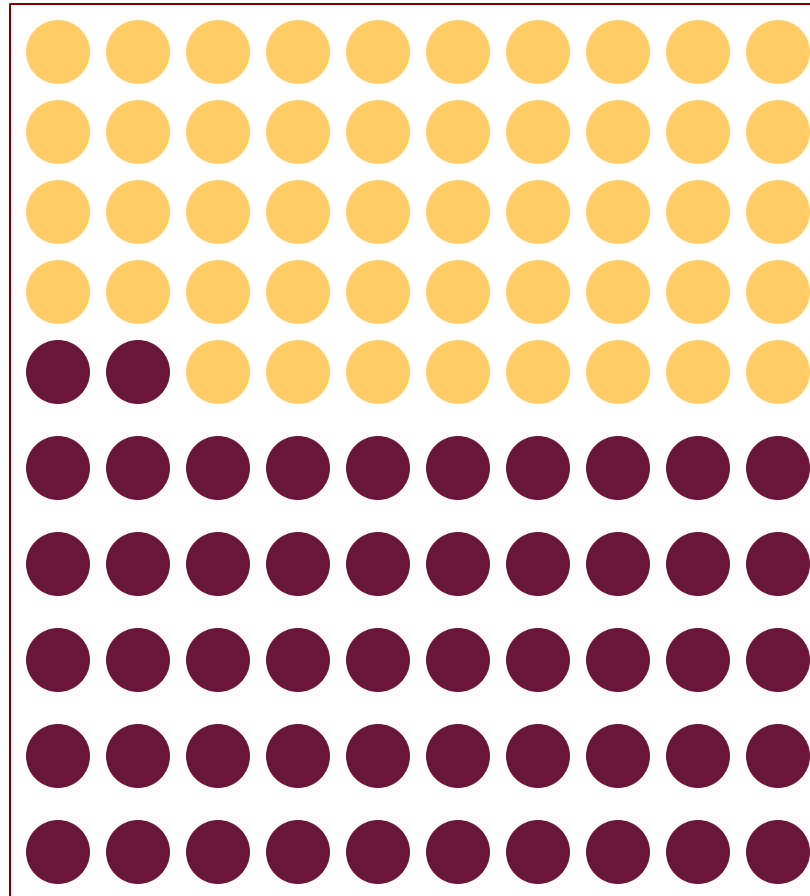


Why did you choose to enroll in the summer academy?





Did the VTSA have an influence on your major?



- **52% - Yes**



Results

- Focus group results indicate the summer academy impacted major selections, potentially increasing retention rates within both departments and college.
- In some cases, students reported courses confirmed their major choice, while others indicated their courses revealed unknown academic interests, causing them to switch majors.





Quotes

- Participant: “I didn’t know that HNFE existed before I took the class so then found out about the major, looked into it, then looked at it all through fall and met a bunch of students who were double majoring in biochemistry and HNFE and it’s just a 16 credit add on and there is a lot of overlap between the two and biochem is a small major anyway so why not.”



Future Research and Implications

- Early classes may have an impact on future academic choices
- Involvement in a summer bridge program could provide recruitment opportunities
- Relationships and class size
- Track VTSA students through academic career
 - GPA, course taken, academic success



Thank you – Questions?