

DOES OUTREACH INFLUENCE ENROLMENT?

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KEYWORDS: Kickstart, outreach, enrolment

ABSTRACT

Universities often offer a range of programs for high school students as outreach activities. These programs have various objectives amongst which are the implicit intention to recruit. One such outreach program is the Kickstart program run by the School of Physics at The University of Sydney. Historically, survey data for this program was focused on evaluating the performance of the staff involved and content of the program, not the students' engagement or education. This was a useful tool, but once enough data was collected, it was necessary to move to a different focus of student engagement, education and enrolment.

The aim of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness in three domains of the Kickstart program, Education, Engagement and Enrolment. An interest in the project is to gather data on the enrolment aspect of Kickstart or "Does coming to Kickstart encourage enrolment in Sydney University Physics?" To conduct the evaluation of the program, student and teacher surveys gather responses to the program. A survey was designed and iteratively modified, and currently the project has completed the second phase of data collection. The purpose of this second phase was to gain consistent results with previous versions of the survey. The results show clear responses from students regarding engagement and education, and a clear indication that the survey is not appropriate for answering the question regarding enrolment. The data so far has eliminated a number of ways of answering this question. A key issue is whether the question on 'Does outreach influence enrolment?' is answerable and even more importantly, should we attempt to answer this question.

Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, University of Sydney, Sept 26th to Sept 28th, 2012, page 18, ISBN Number 978-0-9871834-1-5.