

**Competitive Preference Priority—Supporting Strategies For Which There Is Moderate
Evidence of Effectiveness**

Table 1. Strategy: Difference-Education Intervention to Improve First-Generation Students' Academic Performance			
Study: Stephens, N.M., Hamedani, M.G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation students' academic performance and all students' college transition. <i>Psychological Science</i> , 25(4), 943-953.			
WWC Rating	Domain and Outcome Measure	Population	Statistical Significance
Without Reservations	Academic Achievement—Grade Point Average (GPA)	College freshmen	$p = .006$

Beginning in the second year of the Title III grant period, Roane State Community College (RSCC) will conduct a series of panelist discussions during New Student Orientation (NSO). The discussions are intended to improve first-generation students' academic success using a difference-education intervention, in which students come to understand how differences in social-class backgrounds can affect their college experiences. Over half (53.8%) of students enrolled at Roane State Community College (RSCC) in fall 2014 indicated that *neither* of their parents had attended college on the 2014-2015 FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) has determined there is moderate evidence of effectiveness for this strategy in increasing academic achievement, particularly for first-generation students (see Table 1) (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2014). **Thus, successful implementation of this strategy will support the institution's Title III project goal to increase student success and completion.**

Roane State will implement the strategy exactly as described by Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin (2014) except for five minor modifications that are detailed in Table 2. **None of the core features of the intervention will be altered.**

Table 2. Justification for Intervention Modifications		
Stephens et al. (2014)	Roane State Community College	Justification for Modifications
Student participants were enrolled in medium-sized, highly selective four-year university. The mean age of participants was 18.05. Students were ethnically diverse (45% White).	Student participants will be enrolled at Roane State Community College. RSCC is medium-sized, open enrollment 2-year community college. The average age of participants will be approximately 22.9, based on the age of incoming first-year students in Fall 2014. Ethnicity of RSCC's student population is quite homogenous (91% White).	Institutional Characteristics
Panelists were non-paid seniors at the university.	Panelists will be recent graduates (< 3 years) from degree or certificate programs at RSCC. They will be paid stipends to compensate them for their time.	Roane State is a 2-year institution. Students who have recently graduated will be in the best position to address the questions posed during the panel discussions. Stipends are necessary because without them, it would be very difficult to recruit the number of required panelists.
Student participants were paid \$50 for attending a panel discussion and \$20 for completing the survey.	Panelists will not be paid. Lunch and refreshments will be provided with institutional funds.	Panelist discussions will be integrated into New Student Orientation sessions.
Panel discussions were held during the first month of the first semester of enrollment.	Panel discussions will be held during New Student Orientation sessions in the summer.	To increase participation rates by all students, including those typically enrolled at the institution's satellite campuses, sessions will occur during the New Student Orientations that are held prior to the first semester of enrollment.
After the panel discussions, participants completed a short survey and provided video testimonials as a manipulation check.	After the panel discussions, participants will complete a short survey. Responses will be used for program evaluation purposes.	Roane State is not engaging in a study; rather, the institution intends to increase student success. Thus, video testimonials are not necessary

		and may lead to students' reluctance to provide candid evaluations.
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In Years Two through Five of the grant, panel discussions will be held during New Student Orientation (NSO) sessions. Annually, one session will be held at each of three campuses: Roane County, Oak Ridge, and Cumberland. Roane State's NSOs are designed as multiple rotating sessions with about 20 students each, which is consistent with the number of participants who participated in panels in the study by Stephens et al. (2014). Panel discussions can be easily integrated into the schedule for selected Orientation sessions. These "special" sessions will be promoted to students as being the same as other Orientation sessions *except* they are an hour longer and lunch will be provided. As presented to students, the overall goal of the panelist discussion will be to improve students' transition to college.

During each one-hour panel discussion, two moderators will present a series of six questions to eight panelists. These questions are identical to those used by Stephens et al. (2014), and are presented in Table 3. To the extent possible, Roane State will recruit panelists who are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and generation status (i.e., first generation or continuing-generation).

Table 3. Panel Questions

1. People come to college for many different reasons. What did coming to college mean to you?
2. Students can have a wide variety of experiences when they transition to college and come from many different backgrounds. Thinking back, what was the transition to Roane State like for you?
3. Now we'd like you to share some specific challenges about coming to college. Can you provide an example of an obstacle that you faced when you came to Roane State and how you resolved it?
4. Did your decision to attend Roane State affect your relationships with your friends and family at home? If yes, how?

5. What would you advise other students to do with backgrounds similar to your own?
6. What experiences that you had prior to Roane State prepared you to excel in ways that you wouldn't have anticipated at the time?

Following each panel discussion, participating students will complete a survey that consists of the questions created by Stephens et al. (2014). Survey items are presented in Table 4. Students' responses to this survey will be analyzed, along with their retention and graduation rates, to evaluate the intervention's effectiveness. If the intervention is associated with positive student outcomes as anticipated, the institution will continue offering panel discussions upon conclusion of the grant period. **Evaluation findings regarding this intervention will be included in the evaluation report that will be submitted to the Department of Education as an appendix to the final performance report.**

Table 4. Survey Questions	
Survey Question	Item Type
What are the top three lessons you learned from the panelists today?	Open-ended
If you were going to advise future incoming students based on what you learned today, what would you say?	Open-ended
Do you think the information will be useful?	Scale: 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)
Did you enjoy hearing other Roane State students' stories?	Scale: 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)
Did you learn from this experience?	Scale: 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)
Do you feel better prepared for your transition to Roane State?	Scale: 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)
To what extent would you recommend the program to your peers?	Scale: 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)
To what extent would you recommend the program to future first-year students?	Scale: 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)