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College Retention Initiatives at a High School Level: When Undergraduate Students Lead Summer Writing Camps

My presentation will outline the process for creating a summer writing camp for rural high school students. The process is a complex one, and little complete literature exists to facilitate this outreach. Challenges increase when the outreach program is initiated by undergrad students. Universities are constantly looking for retention initiatives. But if one of the difficulties new students face is their previous writing experience not having sufficiently prepared them for college writing, why focus only on the students after they arrive on campus? And, could we show undergrad students the value of their own education by offering them the chance to share it with others? My study considers the option of drawing upon writers from within MSU's new Writing major to accomplish this task. My research studied the options available to students who seek to create such an outreach program, looking in detail at alternatives, funding and low-income sponsorship possibilities, and potential challenges. Based on my findings, I created a guidebook, in hopes that, having such a resource available, other students will take up this initiative and create their own summer writing camps, making connections with those who might otherwise not have a fun, safe, and personal connection to college writing.