The transition to college can be overwhelming, even for the best high school students. But 325 incoming freshman at the University of Nevada, Reno were better prepared for the 2014-15 school year after embarking on a five-day boot camp in August that had them studying, taking classes and exams and attending lectures from morning to night. The University hopes to nearly double student participation in the program by fall 2015.

The boot camp, an intensive academic preparation program named NevadaFIT, offers a glimpse into the University’s rigorous academic expectations and college life. The optional program, which may sound grueling, is designed to help students more easily make the transition and prepare for success. The program was expanded on campus this year after the success of BioFIT, which was conducted for incoming biology majors in 2013.

“Academic boot camps dramatically increase academic performance and student success rates,” says Kevin Carman, provost and executive vice president. “It’s exciting to see students recognize and embrace the hard work needed to be successful. Students who go through boot camp are much more likely to graduate in their major. We give them tools for success.”

NevadaFIT includes eight separate boot camps spanning the breadth of the University, from atmospheric sciences to veterinary science, from engineering to neuroscience, from business to journalism. They all use the same basic program concept, although customized for each college. Each program hosts sessions on topics that reach across students’ majors, including sessions on financial planning, study skills and student conduct. All NevadaFIT participants are also paired with “pack leaders,” upperclassmen who excel in the corresponding major.

“We wanted to allow some latitude this year for the colleges to adapt the program to meet their needs,” Carman says. “Each college had their camp anchored on a course, such as Engineering 101 for the College of Engineering. It may not be 101 for other camps, such as for...
Before the 2014-15 school year kicked off, 325 incoming freshman at the University of Nevada, Reno took part in NevadaFIT, which includes eight separate academic boot camps spanning the breadth of the University. The University plans to increase the number of participants for the 2015 boot camps to 600 students and is seeking philanthropic support to offset a portion of fees for students who qualify for need-based financial aid.