

Bridging College Readiness Gaps through Summer Bridge Programs

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ABSTRACT

Summer bridge programs can provide an effective method to reduce the college readiness gap between incoming students from underserved communities and those of more privileged schooling opportunities. Reducing this readiness gap can assist "at risk" students in enhancing their success, improving their retention, and increasing completion rates. This presentation will review the literature related to summer bridge programs, including (a) various program models, (b) factors impacting programs efficacy, and (c) challenges to developing successful programs.

The participants will:

- Increase their knowledge of summer bridge program models.
- Enhance their understanding of the issues involved in conducting an evaluation of summer bridge programs.
- Gain an awareness of the financial and operational challenges related to implementing and sustaining summer bridge programs.
- Discover strategies for engaging high school counselors in the summer bridge program recruiting process.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

- Introductions
- Summer Bridge Program Models
- Evaluation Issues
- Sustainability
- Bridging the Gap through School Counselors

Presentation Materials: <http://www.tarleton.edu/~djones/sit>

SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM MODELS

University summer bridge programs come with a variety of foci.¹

This simple matrix encapsulates the essence of such foci.

Focus	Access to SI	Effective Academic Skills	College Life	Remediation
Int'l Stdts	SMC	SMC	SMC	
First Gen	AR State		AZ State	
HS to College	IPFW	IPFW	IPFW	
At Risk	IPFW	IPFW	IPFW	
Race	AACC	AACC		AACC
Gender	NC State	NC State	NC State	
		RC		
Major Based	UMN	UMN	UMN	UMN
	OSU	OSU	OSU	OSU
	TN LS	TN LS	TN LS	TN LS
		UM	UM	
STEM	UMD LA	UMD LS	UMD LS	UMD LS
		RC		
Transition			A&M	

¹ See for example, "Summer Bridge Programs: Providing a Jump Start toward Student Success," Dennis G. Jones, and Dean A. Minix. Proceedings of the Southwest Teaching and Learning Conference, San Antonio, TX, March 27-28, 2009. Also see, "Using Summer Bridge Programs to Enhance College Readiness, Improve Student Retention, and Increase Completion Rates, 2009 Annual Meeting of the Commission on Colleges, Atlanta, GA, December 2009, with Drs. Dennis Jones, Ann Albrecht, and David Weissenburger."

Legend

SMC	Santa Monica, CA
AR State	Arizona State University
IPFW	Indiana U Purdue U at Ft. Wayne
AACC	Anne Arundel Community College
NC State	North Carolina State University
UMN	University of Minnesota
OSU	Ohio State University
TN LS	Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance
UMD LS	Univ. Maryland Louis Stokes Alliance
RC	Radford College
A&M	Texas A&M

These programs and categories do not capture the full variety and richness of such summer bridge programs, however.

Typically, such summer programs focus on under-prepared students. At Vincennes University, for example, students enroll in a summer program to learn study skills, campus orientation, time management skills and other socially oriented dimensions of college and university life. At Northwestern University, “a partnership between the Chicago Public Schools and Northwestern University, a select group of high school juniors from CPS are admitted to the College Bridge Program each summer. Each participant may enroll in one undergraduate course, for which he or she receives college credit. Tuition and textbooks are free, and students may choose from a wide variety of classes. By taking college-level courses with Northwestern undergraduates, participants in the College Bridge Program have the opportunity to experience academic and social life on campus.”²

Some programs have their origins in the Southern Association’s QEP, Quality Enhancement Plan, process. The University of Houston-Downtown’s Freshman Summer Success Program, FSSP, is such an example. “The FSSP is an expanded orientation program for incoming freshmen that fully engages students in the critical transition from high school to college. This year’s theme was Health Care Reform: The Promise of Affordable Access to Medical Care for All. Summer Success Program focused not only on

² http://www.scs.northwestern.edu/summernu/programs/college_bridge.cfm

our national health care crisis but investigated the issue of accessibility and affordability from a broader perspective as the global community responds to this plight challenging our planet's sustainability. The recent tragedy in Haiti has focused worldwide attention on the countless injured individuals whose survival was compromised by inaccessibility to medical care. Yet despite a tragedy of this magnitude, each day, poverty continues to claim an even greater number of victims who lack the finances to seek basic medical assistance.”³

Yet another model is that of the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Their Comprehensive Studies Program, CSP, is in fact, a learning community for students with outstanding potential.⁴ “Since 1975, the CSP Bridge Program has offered intensive academic preparation, highly individualized academic advising and the personal attention of faculty in an intensive, yet nurturing environment during the summer. Bridge Program students have an opportunity to strengthen their academic skills, develop a peer support network and to familiarize themselves with the campus and its resources. Bridge Program students are typically enrolled in an English course, mathematics course, a freshman seminar and receive essential instruction about the UM computing environment. These courses are credit bearing, academically rigorous courses and become part of the student's official University of Michigan transcript. Also, Bridge Program students are assigned an academic advisor who will serve as their permanent advisor providing guidance on course selection, career planning, and progress towards fulfilling degree requirements.”⁵

Programs may also focus on minority scholars. For example, the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation at the University of Maryland System is one such federally funded example that is aimed at STEM students. “The Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) Program (www.nsf.gov) is aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of students successfully completing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) baccalaureate degree programs, and increasing the number of students interested in, academically qualified for and matriculating into programs of graduate study. LSAMP supports sustained and comprehensive approaches that facilitate

³ <http://www.uhd.edu/academic/colleges/university/sbp/FSSP10/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/csp/about>

⁵ <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/csp/summerbridge>

achievement of the long-term goal of increasing the number of students who earn doctorates in STEM fields, particularly those from populations underrepresented in these fields.”⁶ Radford University, as well takes a similar focus, but sharpens it even more by admitting only female students. “Radford University's College of Science and Technology invited rising sophomore, junior and senior high school women interested in mathematics, information technology and science to participate in RU's Summer Bridge Program 2010. The program's goal was to introduce female high school students to future educational and professional opportunities available to them in the mathematics, science and information technology fields.”⁷

The message to be taken away is simple. Summer bridge programs are robust not only perhaps in number and variety, but given your institution’s inventiveness, you are unlimited in who and what you wish to bridge. For example, transfer students are many times an under-identified, but highly significant group of “new students” to your campus. Texas A&M University has indeed recognized this group of students, and has paid particular attention to them. A&M offers a summer “T camp” opportunity for transferring students to the College Station campus. From the T Camp web page,

A Brief History of T-Camp

Transfer Camp, or T-Camp, began in 1987 and was sponsored by the Student "Y" Association. The founding director staff (David Mendoza, Tom Lenahan, Tim Keen, Tori Keen, Jeff Lewis, Kelli McLemore) and got the idea from transfer students themselves. Transfer students asked many times why there wasn’t something like Fish Camp for transfer students. That’s where the idea originated. The concept of T-camp was presented to the Student YMCA and after being approved by the university choosing a staff and beginning work in March of 1987. The first T-Camp consisted of 6 directors, 8 chairpersons, and about 50 counselors. There were about 200 campers at the first T-Camp that was held at a Salvation Army camp called Camp Hoblitzelle in Midlothian, Texas. On the first day of the first T-Camp, campers were split up into four separate

⁶ <http://www.lsamp.umd.edu/about.html>

⁷ <https://php.radford.edu/~bridge/2010/>

camps, named after campus sports facilities: Camp Cain, Camp Kyle, Camp Olsen, and Camp Simpson. The Theme for the first T-Camp was “Teeing off for Aggieland.” The T-Camp 1987 Directors recognized that transfer students had been to other institutions of higher learning and understood how to calculate grade point ratios, how to study, coping with leaving home, and how to balance time. What Transfer Camp offered was a chance to learn about Texas A&M, getting involved in Aggie traditions, getting involved in organizations, and the general social life surrounding Aggie Life. Transfer Camp also offered what the summer conferences lacked, mainly learning about A&M traditions and Aggie Life.”⁸

⁸ <http://t-camp.tamu.edu/about>

EVALUATION

1. Evaluation starts with a question and then seeks to answer that question.
 - The question may be simple (Is retention improved?) or complex to evaluate (Did participants' leadership skills, understanding of diverse cultures, and/or study skills improve?)
2. The evaluation process requires the development of methodology for gathering data to answer the question.
 - The methodology will require measurable performance indicators (retention rates, placement in courses beyond developmental level, participation rates in select activities, etc.)
 - The data will be specific to the program and its intended outcomes (just collect data that focuses on the purpose of the program and relates directly to the question being asked)
3. The data are then collected, analyzed and interpreted to arrive at the answer to the question.
 - Statistics are used to analyze the data
 - Interpretation suggests whether the answer to the question is favorable or not
4. Finally, decisions about the program are made based on the evaluation findings.
 - Mechanisms need to be in place to ensure the data are used for improvement, maintenance, or other actions that may be taken (i.e., close the loop)

Each bridge program is unique and designed to serve a specific population with specific needs. Therefore, the outcomes, type and method of evaluation may differ from one program to the next. An excellent example of using multiple assessment methods to answer several evaluation questions is found in a paper by Evenbeck, Hansen, and Williams (2008).

A random sample of published examples of bridge program evaluations include:

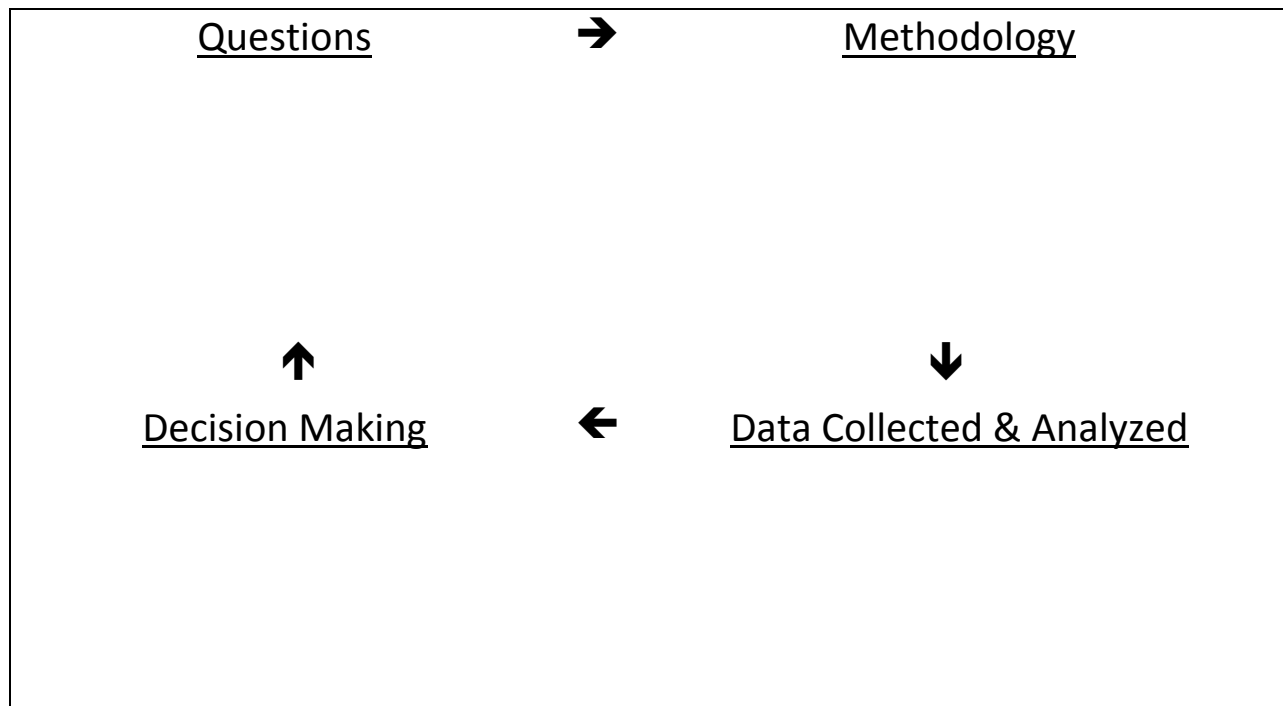
- Retention and academic performance of at-risk students – Guthrie (1992).
- Use of library by at-risk students – Hassig (2004).

- Retention, academic performance, and degree completion of at-risk students – Evans (1999).
- Academic performance and retention – Chism (2008).
- Retention – Brown (2000), Buck (1985), and Garcia (1991).
- Academic performance, suspension, and drop-out rates – Harlow and Baenen (2001)
- Attitude, adjustment, and academic performance – Ackermann (1991).
- Change in locus-of-control and academic performance – Fitts (1989)

A recommended website containing internet resources for higher education outcomes assessment is published by North Carolina State University at:

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/assmt/resource.htm>

EVALUATING SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS



FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES RELATED TO IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAMS

	Financial	Operational
Implementing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-Up Costs Seed Money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University Support Recruiting Students
Sustaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost Structure (Credit v Noncredit or hybrid) Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating Effectiveness Staffing

BRIDGING THE GAP THROUGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

<u>Summer Bridge Staff</u>		<u>School Counselors</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing information to school counselors• Meeting with school counselors in the school• Inviting school counselors to campus• Facilitating communication through existing relationships (e.g., Recruiters, TRIO programs)• Participating in school activities (e.g., Career Days)• Inviting school counselors to participate summer closing ceremonies• Inviting school counselors to participate as summer program staff	→ Students ←	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing information to students• Identifying students for the program• Visiting college campuses• Hosting college night and inviting local inviting bridge staff from local colleges• Teaching/volunteering in transition programs• Conducting financial workshops in computer lab and inviting bridge staff to discuss summer aid programs• Providing letters of reference and assisting students in completing summer bridge application.

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