

Bridge to Excellence (B2E)

Year 10 Report

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Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Year 10 Administration

For Year 10 (Fall 2010), the Bridge to Excellence (B2E) program was open to all first-time, full-time students enrolling at Arkansas Tech University's main campus, just as it had been for the previous eight years. Mike Bogue served as B2E Program Coordinator, the eighth year Mr. Bogue has worked with B2E.

For Year 10, Retention Services used Form B of Noel-Levitz's online College Student Inventory (CSI), just as it had the previous year. The CSI is a standardized survey designed to gauge a student's self-perceived academic, financial, and social readiness for college.

The CSI was administered on a daily basis from May 17, 2010, through October 1, 2010. After freshmen registered for their fall classes in the Academic Advising Center in Rothwell Hall, they took the CSI in Room 247 of the Doc Bryan Student Services Building from May through the end of June.

Students who took the CSI in July and August took the survey in Career Services located in Doc Bryan 211. In September, students who had not taken the CSI were emailed a user name and password with which to take the CSI.

Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Mission

The B2E program's mission -- to empower freshmen to make a successful transition from high school (or work) to college -- remained the same. The program's continuing goals included:

- (1) increasing Arkansas Tech University's freshmen retention rate,
- (2) boosting freshmen participants' GPA's,
- (3) and improving Arkansas Tech University's graduation rates.

According to Arkansas Tech Institutional Research data, the Fall 2010 freshman fall-to-spring retention rate was 85.44% -- although this is a bit lower than the previous year's 86.48% fall-to-spring rate, 85.44% is Tech's second highest Arkansas Tech main campus retention rate since 1993.

In addition, Tech's main campus fall-to-fall retention rates have likewise increased. For the Fall 2009 freshman cohort, their fall-to-fall retention rate was 73.51%, almost two and a half percentage points higher

than the previous year's 71.03% rate. In fact, the Fall 2009 to Fall 2010 retention rate of 73.51% is the highest fall-to-fall return rate Tech has seen since 1993. It's also germane to note that the fall-to-fall rate has steadily risen for the past three years.

Demographics

For Year 10, B2E defined a program participant as a student who was a first-time, full-time freshman who both (1) took the CSI and (2) met at least one time with his or her assigned mentor during the fall semester. A non-participant was a student who did not meet with his or her mentor.

According to these definitions, 857 first-time, full-time freshmen participated in the program for Year 10. Since 1,422 first-time, full-time students entered Tech for the Fall 2010 semester, this meant that 565 new students chose not participate. The gender and ethnicity demographics of Year 10 B2E participants practically mirrored those of the Fall 2010 main campus freshman class as a whole:

FALL 2010	B2E FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME PARTICIPANTS	ALL ATU FIRST- TIME, FULL-TIME STUDENTS
Female	48.5%	48.0%
Male	51.4%	52.0%
Didn't Report Gender	0.1%	0.0%
Black/African American	7.3%	8.7%
American Indian/Alaskan	1.3%	1.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.9%	1.9%
Hispanic/Latino	3.4%	4.1%
White/Caucasian	83.4%	81.4%
Multi-Ethnic or Other Ethnic Origin	2.1%	1.8%
Prefer Not To Respond	0.6%	0.0%
Non-Resident Alien	0.0%	0.5%

Intervention

For Year 10 of the B2E program, 133 mentors took part – 90 faculty and 43 staff. The definition of a B2E mentor continued to be a faculty or staff volunteer who helps his or her assigned freshmen to successfully make the transition from high school (or work) to college.

In addition, as of Fall 2010, Arkansas Tech now has mentors called University Fellowship (UF) mentors; UF mentors are assigned one freshman who they both guide and supervise (the UF mentees work for the UF mentor during the semester). Each UF mentor also served as a B2E mentor, but was only assigned one first-time student (their UF mentee) as their B2E mentee. There were twenty-six (26) UF mentors doubling as B2E mentors – UF mentors were not full-time B2E mentors in that they only mentored one student, whereas the 133 full-time B2E mentors mentored an average of ten (10) mentees each.

The purpose of B2E Mentors remained the same – helping their mentees understand and evaluate their CSI results and also acting as the student’s “go to” person when a mentee had a college-related question or concern. B2E mentors offered mentees encouragement, advice, information, and feedback – in essence, the B2E mentor established a relationship with his or her assigned students and made them feel welcome at Tech.

B2E Coordinator Mike Bogue assigned each first-time, full-time, main campus freshman to a faculty or staff B2E mentor. For the fifth year in a row, all faculty mentors were assigned mentees whose majors either fell under the faculty mentor’s department or, barring that, under the faculty mentor’s academic college. Meanwhile, deciding students were primarily assigned to Student Services staff and non-Student Services staff.

Each mentor was given two CSI Student Reports for each of his or her mentees; the mentor would keep one, then give the other to the mentee during the first mentor/mentee meeting. Based on the student’s responses, the CSI Student Report included three sections:

- Student Background Information.
- Motivational Assessment.
- Specific Recommendations.

The mentor could use this information as a springboard to identify and encourage student strengths. In addition, the CSI could be used to determine what (if any) college-related challenges the student might have or anticipate having. When appropriate, the mentor could then refer the student to any

relevant campus support service(s) and schedule a follow-up meeting. (Campus support services include academic tutoring labs, administrative departments, clubs and organizations, etc.)

At mid-term, B2E Coordinator Mike Bogue supplied each mentor with his or her mentees' mid-term grades. Mentors were encouraged to use this information to follow-up with their mentees, cheering on those mentees who were doing well academically and offering assistance/advice to those mentees who were struggling academically. After the close of the semester, mentors were also supplied with each mentee's final grades.

General Conclusions

All Fall 2010 B2E participants and non-participants were main campus freshmen only. Although Arkansas Tech does have a community college campus in Ozark, Arkansas, the B2E program is not conducted at the Ozark campus.

For Fall 2010 to Spring 2011, the retention rate for main campus B2E participants (n=857) was higher than that for main campus non-participants (n=565).

According to Arkansas Tech Institutional Research data, 90.20% of Fall 2010 B2E partakers returned for the Spring 2011 semester, while only 78.23% of non-partakers came back. This means that the retention rate for B2E participants was 11.97% higher than that for non-participants.

For Fall 2009 to Fall 2010, the retention rate for these main campus B2E participants (n=1,029) was also higher than that for main campus non-participants (n=443). According to Arkansas Tech Institutional Research data, 78.23% of Fall 2009 B2E partakers returned for the Fall 2010 semester, while only 62.53% of non-partakers came back. This means that the retention rate for B2E participants was 15.70% higher than that for non-participants.

The GPA (Grade Point Average) of both groups was also impacted, with B2E participants having a higher average GPA than non-participants. At the end of the Fall 2010 semester, the cumulative GPA for B2E partakers was 2.815, as compared to the overall GPA of 2.131 for non-partakers. This means B2E participants had a fall GPA that was 0.684 higher than the fall GPA of non-participants.

Regarding the retention rates for first-time, full-time, main campus freshmen from 1993 to 2010, a definite pattern emerges in the past few

years. For example, the fall-to-spring retention rates for the past three cohorts are the highest in Arkansas Tech's history since 1993; similarly, the fall-to-fall retention rates for the 2008 and 2009 cohorts are the highest in Tech's history since 1993.

Of course, it would be irresponsible and illogical to attest Tech's recent retention growth solely to B2E. Many other factors have contributed to Tech's improved retention rates, including expert academic advising, first-rate teaching, TECH 1001, CSP 1013, etc. However, it is reasonable to assume that B2E has played a substantive role in Tech's recent retention successes.

Wyatt Watson, Director of Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research, has this to say about B2E's effectiveness:

“In any voluntary initiative to improve either retention or GPA's there will inevitably be some degree of self-selection into or out of the treatment group. This cannot be avoided, but for B2E it can be shown that a significant portion of the overall improvement in retention and GPA's does not seem to be attributed to self-selection, which would imply that a significant portion of the improvement must be attributable to the B2E process.” [emphasis mine]

In addition to improving Tech's fall-to-spring and fall-to-fall retention rates, one of B2E's goals is to improve graduation rates. However, there is no current data that indicates how we would know if six years down the road, B2E has affected graduation rates. This is an area that needs to be investigated by both the B2E Coordinator and Institutional Research.

Nevertheless, even with all the caveats above in place, have graduation rates improved since B2E was opened to all main campus first-time, full-time students in 2003?

The six-year graduation rate for Tech's 2003 main campus cohort is 40.78%, which is Tech's highest six-year graduation rate since 1996. However, the 2004 main campus cohort's six-year graduation rate is a disappointing 36.19%. This suggests that Tech needs to continue its retention efforts and realize that one lone department (Student Success) cannot by itself improve graduation rates, for it takes a campus to retain a student.

Appendices

- Appendix A contains the retention rate data for Years 1-10 of the B2E program.
- However, Appendix B contains the retention rate data for Years 3-10 of the program (B2E was opened to all freshmen in Fall 2003).
- Appendix C contains the fall semester GPA data for Years 1-10.
- Next, Appendix D shows the Arkansas Tech retention rates for freshman cohorts from 2000 to 2010.
- Then, Appendix E gives the Arkansas Tech graduation rates from 2000 to 2010.
- Finally, Appendix F gives the cohort B2E percentage participation.

BRIDGE TO EXCELLENCE YEAR 10 REPORT

Appendix A

ATU Freshman Cohort Retention Rates by B2E Program Year *

Semester/ Year	Number of B2E Program Participants	B2E Participants/ Retention Rate	Non- Participants/ Retention Rate	Percentage Difference In favor of B2E
FALL TO SPRING				
Year 1 (2001)	105	89.52%	81.91%	7.61%
Year 2 (2002)	310	86.77%	79.53%	7.24%
Year 3 (2003)	751	90.01%	74.83%	15.18%
Year 4 (2004)	811	87.92%	70.10%	17.82%
Year 5 (2005)	855	88.07%	72.47%	15.60%
Year 6 (2006)	764	88.99%	72.07%	16.92%
Year 7 (2007)	885	89.15%	76.40%	12.75%
Year 8 (2008)	890	87.64%	78.65%	8.99%
Year 9 (2009)	1029	90.48%	77.20%	13.28%
Year 10 (2010)	857	90.20%	78.23%	11.97%
	AVERAGE:	88.88%	76.14%	12.74%
FALL TO FALL				
Year 1 (2001)	105	82.86%	66.00%	16.86%
Year 2 (2002)	310	72.26%	63.60%	8.66%
Year 3 (2003)	751	76.83%	59.01%	17.83%
Year 4 (2004)	811	73.98%	53.20%	20.78%
Year 5 (2005)	855	74.04%	58.71%	15.33%
Year 6 (2006)	764	73.95%	54.85%	19.10%
Year 7 (2007)	885	73.11%	58.49%	14.72%
Year 8 (2008)	890	75.17%	60.81%	14.36%
Year 9 (2009)	1029	78.23%	62.53%	15.70%
	AVERAGE:	75.60%	59.69%	15.93%

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

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Appendix B

ATU Freshman Cohort Retention Rates by B2E Program Year

Since FULL IMPLEMENTATION (Fall 2003)*

Semester/ Year	Number of B2E Program Participants	B2E Participants/ Retention Rate	Non- Participants/ Retention Rate	Percentage Difference In favor of B2E
FALL TO SPRING				
Year 3 (2003)	751	90.01%	74.83%	15.18%
Year 4 (2004)	811	87.92%	70.10%	17.82%
Year 5 (2005)	855	88.07%	72.47%	15.60%
Year 6 (2006)	764	88.99%	72.07%	16.92%
Year 7 (2007)	885	89.15%	76.40%	12.75%
Year 8 (2008)	890	87.64%	78.65%	8.99%
Year 9 (2009)	1029	90.48%	77.20%	13.28%
Year 10 (2010)	857	90.20%	78.23%	11.97%
	AVERAGE:	89.06%	74.99%	14.06%
FALL TO FALL				
Year 3 (2003)	751	76.83%	59.01%	17.83%
Year 4 (2004)	811	73.98%	53.20%	20.78%
Year 5 (2005)	855	74.04%	58.71%	15.33%
Year 6 (2006)	764	73.95%	54.85%	19.10%
Year 7 (2007)	885	73.11%	58.49%	14.72%
Year 8 (2008)	890	75.17%	60.81%	14.36%
Year 9 (2009)	1029	78.23%	62.53%	15.70%
	AVERAGE:	75.04%	58.23%	16.83%

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research. Fall 2001 and 2002 were B2E pilot studies. B2E was opened up to all freshmen beginning in Fall 2003.

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Appendix C

ATU Freshman Cohort Grade Point Average

(GPA) Comparison by B2E Program Year *

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

Semester/Year	B2E Participants	Non-Participants	Difference
End of Fall (1st Semester)			
Year 1 (2001)	NA	NA	NA
Year 2 (2002)	2.886	2.379	0.507
Year 3 (2003)	2.872	2.321	0.551
Year 4 (2004)	2.780	2.323	0.457
Year 5 (2005)	2.810	2.388	0.422
Year 6 (2006)	2.875	2.240	0.635
Year 7 (2007)	2.746	2.181	0.565
Year 8 (2008)	2.878	2.293	0.585
Year 9 (2009)	2.919	2.269	0.650
Year 10 (2010)	2.815	2.131	0.684
AVERAGE:			0.561
End of Fall (2nd Semester)			
Year 1 (2001)	NA	NA	NA
Year 2 (2002)	2.888	2.510	0.378
Year 3 (2003)	2.885	2.371	0.514
Year 4 (2004)	2.769	2.395	0.374
Year 5 (2005)	2.827	2.541	0.286
Year 6 (2006)	2.877	2.439	0.438
AVERAGE:			0.398
End of Fall (3rd Semester)			
Year 1 (2001)	3.056	2.666	0.390
Year 2 (2002)	2.955	2.670	0.285
Year 3 (2003)	2.945	2.568	0.377
Year 4 (2004)	2.910	2.594	0.316
Year 5 (2005)	2.920	2.696	0.224
Year 6 (2006)	2.957	2.539	0.418
AVERAGE:			0.335

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Appendix D

Retention Rates 2000-2010* (First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking)

* Most recent data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research. *Data excludes cohort students who graduated within 2-6 years.*

Cohort Group (Total Number)	First Semester (Fall to Spring)	First Year (Fall to Fall)	Second Year (Fall to Fall)	Third Year (Fall to Fall)	Fourth Year (Fall to Fall)	Fifth Year (Fall to Fall)	Sixth Year (Fall to Fall)
2000 (1124)	81.23%	64.68%	52.85%	46.17%	24.73%	10.32%	6.23%
2001 (1205)	82.57%	67.47%	53.03%	46.80%	24.40%	10.37%	6.14%
2002 (1170)	81.45%	65.90%	53.42%	46.58%	22.82%	10.43%	4.53%
2003 (1339)	83.35%	69.01%	56.16%	49.96%	25.69%	10.08%	6.05%
2004 (1296)	81.25%	66.20%	51.54%	46.14%	24.77%	10.42%	5.56%
2005 (1320)	82.58%	68.64%	55.45%	48.71%	26.89%	11.44%	
2006 (1300)	82.15%	66.08%	49.85%	45.85%	25.62%		
2007 (1368)	84.65%	67.91%	52.41%	48.90%			
2008 (1260)	85.00%	71.03%	58.10%				
2009 (1472)	86.48%	73.51%					
2010 (1422)	85.44%						

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Appendix E

ATU Freshmen Cohort Graduation Rates 2000-2010 * (First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking)

* Most recent data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

Cohort Group (Total Number)	Graduated in 1 Year	Graduated in 2 Years	Graduated in 3 Years	Graduated in 4 Years	Graduated in 5 Years	Graduated in 6 Years	Eventually Graduated
2000 (1124)			0.36%	18.86%	32.03%	37.54%	43.42%
2001 (1205)			1.08%	19.92%	33.86%	38.01%	44.07%
2002 (1170)			0.60%	18.38%	31.97%	37.52%	42.48%
2003 (1339)		0.07%	0.90%	19.79%	35.47%	40.78%	43.99%
2004 (1296)		0.15%	0.69%	16.05%	31.17%	36.19%	38.04%
2005 (1320)		0.08%	0.38%	19.70%	34.77%	--	37.12%
2006 (1300)	0.08%	0.31%	1.38%	19.00%	--	--	20.77%
2007 (1368)		0.15%	0.73%	--	--	--	0.88%
2008 (1260)		0.24%	--	--	--	--	0.32%
2009 (1472)						--	0.00%
2010 (1422)						--	0.07%

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Appendix F

ATU Freshmen Cohort
Percentage Participation
in B2E 2001-2010
(Main Campus, First-Time, Full-Time,
Degree-Seeking)

Cohort Group (Total Number)	Total Number of Freshman Cohort	Total Number of B2E Participants	Percentage of Freshman Cohort B2E Participants
2001	1205	105	8.7%
2002	1170	310	26.5%
2003	1339	751	56.1%
2004	1296	811	62.5%
2005	1320	855	64.7%
2006	1300	764	58.8%
2007	1368	885	64.7%
2008	1260	890	70.6%
2009	1470	1029	70.1%
2010	1422	857	60.3%