

Bridge To Excellence

Year 3 Report

November 23, 2004

Prepared by: Mike Bogue, Retention Counselor

Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Full Implementation

For Year 3 (2003), Arkansas Tech University's CSI retention program was formally given a name – Bridge to Excellence. Amy Pennington, who had overseen the two CSI retention pilot studies for Year 1 and Year 2, became Director of International and Multicultural Student Services in July 2003. At the same time, Dr. Susan Underwood, Assistant to the Vice President of Student Services, assumed the responsibilities of the Bridge to Excellence program coordinator. In addition, Mike Bogue was brought on board as a full-time Bridge to Excellence staff member with the title of Retention Counselor.

The purpose of the Bridge to Excellence (B2E) program remained the same -- help new students successfully make the transition from high school or work to college and, therefore, increase Arkansas Tech University's overall retention rate; however, the scope of the program widened. All first-time, full-time students entering Tech for the Fall 2003 semester were invited to take part in the B2E program.

Once again, the 194-question Form A of the CSI was used, but this time, the Bridge to Excellence staff administered the questionnaire to large groups of students over a two day period – August 18 and 19, 2003. Another change was that for the first time, the CSI was given online; these administrations took place on both the third and second floors of the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center.

Demographics

A total of 1,070 freshmen took the CSI. However, for purposes of the program data, a program participant was defined as a first-time, full-time student who not only took the CSI, but also followed up by meeting at least once with his or her mentor. This definition of program participant narrowed the number of actual B2E partakers to 750. Since 1,339 first-time, full-time students entered Tech for the Fall 2003 semester, this means that 589 new students did not participate.

The demographics of Year 3 B2E participants practically mirrored those of the Fall 2003 freshman class as a whole:

- 51.1% of B2E participants were female; 50.6% of all freshmen were female.
- 48.7% of B2E participants were male; 49.4% of all freshmen were male.
- 88.1% of B2E participants were white; 90.1% of all freshmen were white.
- 5.0% of B2E participants were African-American; 5.2% of all freshmen were African-American.
- 1.6% of B2E participants were Hispanic; 2.1% of all freshmen were Hispanic.
- 1.2% of B2E participants were Asian or Pacific Islander; 1.0% of all freshmen were Asian or Pacific Islander.
- 1.0% of B2E participants were American Indian or Alaskan Native; 1.1% of all freshmen were American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Because the B2E program was opened to all first-time, full-time freshmen, there were no control groups for the Year 3 full implementation.

Intervention

For the third year of the B2E program, 122 mentors took part. The definition of a mentor continued to be a faculty or staff volunteer who establishes a relationship with his or her assigned students to help them successfully make the transition from high school to college; their duties included helping these mentees to understand and evaluate their CSI results as well as giving them support and assistance as needed.

As with Year 1 and Year 2, each B2E program participant, or mentee, was assigned to a faculty or staff mentor. Each mentor was again given a CSI Student Report for his or her mentees. Based on the student's answers, these reports included three sections: Student Background Information, Motivational Assessment, and Specific Recommendations. The mentor could use this information as a springboard to determine what (if any) college-related problems the mentee might have or anticipate having. Then, the mentor could refer the mentee to any and all appropriate campus support services and schedule a follow-up meeting. (Campus support services include academic help labs, administrative departments, clubs and organizations, etc.)

General Conclusions

For Fall 2003 to Spring 2004, the retention rate for B2E participants

(n=750) was higher than that for non-participants (n=589). According to the 11th Class Day Report data for Spring 2004, a full 90.00% of B2E partakers returned for the Spring 2004 semester, while only 74.02% of non-partakers came back. This means that the retention rate for B2E participants was 15.98% higher than that for non-participants.

The retention rate from Fall 2003 to Fall 2004 likewise showed that program participants returned at a higher rate. According to the 11th Class Day Report data for Fall 2004, 76.80% of B2E participants returned for the Fall 2004 semester, as opposed to a return rate of 59.08% for non-participants. This demonstrates a retention rate 17.72% higher for program participants than 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 2003 semester, the GPA for B2E partakers was 2.872, as compared to the overall GPA of 2.321 for non-partakers. The end of the Spring 2004 semester saw similar GPA results: 2.885 for program participants, 2.371 for non-participants.

At the close of Fall 2004, the B2E Fall 2003 participants were still ahead of their non-participants. In fact, a fall-to-fall GPA comparison shows B2E participants had a cumulative GPA of 2.945, while non-participants' cumulative GPA was 2.568.

Appendix A contains the overall retention rate data for Years 1, 2, and 3, and Appendix B contains the overall GPA data for Years 1, 2, and 3.

BRIDGE TO EXCELLENCE

Retention Report

November 23, 2004

Appendix A

Retention Rates by Program Year

Semester/Year	Number of Participants	B2E Participants	Non-Participants	Percentage Difference
Fall to Spring				
Year 1 (2001)	105	89.52%	82.24%	7.28%
Year 2 (2002)	310	86.77%	80.61%	6.16%
Year 3 (2003)	750	90.00%	74.02%	15.98%
Fall to Fall				
Year 1 (2001)	105	82.90%	66.90%	16%
Year 2 (2002)	310	71.93%	63.60%	8.33%
Year 3 (2003)	750	76.80%	59.08%	17.72%

BRIDGE TO EXCELLENCE

Retention Report

March 2, 2005

Appendix B

Grade Point Average Comparison

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
End of Spring (2nd Semester)			
Year 1 (2001)	NA	NA	NA
Year 2 (2002)	2.888	2.51	0.378
Year 3 (2003)	2.885	2.371	0.514
End of Fall (3rd Semester)			
Year 1 (2001)	3.056	2.666	0.39
Year 2 (2002)	2.955	2.67	0.285
Year 3 (2003)	2.945	2.568	0.377