

Bridge To Excellence

Year 4 Report

April 19, 2005

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Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Year 4 Changes

As with Year 3 (Fall 2003), Year 4 (Fall 2004) of the Bridge to Excellence (B2E) program was open to all first-time, full-time freshmen enrolling at Arkansas Tech University. However,

- the **structure of the B2E staff**,
- the **form of Noel-Levitz's College Student Inventory (CSI)**,
- and the **manner of CSI administration** were changed.

Dr. Susan Underwood, who during Year 3 had been the Assistant to the Vice President of Student Services, left the program to become a full-time faculty member in Graduate Studies; her current title is Program Director, College Student Personnel. In addition, on July 1, 2004, **Jasmine Wilson** was brought on board as a full-time Retention Counselor (Jasmine also has the title of Affirmative Action Officer). Meanwhile, **Mike Bogue** remained on the B2E staff as a Retention Counselor. **Dr. Gary Biller**, Vice President of Student Services, is the acting Director of Bridge to Excellence.

The form of the CSI used was also changed for Year 4. During Year 3, the 194-question online **Form A** had been used. For Year 4, the shorter 100-question online **Form B** of the CSI was employed. This took students less time to take but provided basically the same information as Form A.

In addition, the manner of administering the CSI underwent alterations. For Year 3, the B2E staff administered the questionnaire to large groups of students over a two day period – August 18 and 19, 2003. However, for Year 4, the CSI was administered on a weekly basis from May 16 through August 13, 2004. After freshmen registered for their fall classes, they then immediately took the CSI. This summer-long administration assured that a greater number of freshmen would take the online survey, and it proved to be a smoother process than giving the CSI to over a thousand students in two days.

Of course, the purpose of the B2E program remained the same -- help freshmen make a successful transition from high school (or work) to college.

The program's continuing goals included (1) increasing Arkansas Tech University's freshmen retention rate, (2) boosting participating freshmen's GPA's, and (3) amplifying Arkansas Tech University's high-touch approach.

Demographics

For Year 4, B2E defined a program participant as one 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. According to this definition, 796 first-time, full-time freshmen participated in the program for Year 4. Since 1,296 first-time, full-time students entered Tech for the Fall 2004 semester, this meant that 500 new students did not participate.

The gender and ethnicity demographics of Year 4 B2E participants practically mirrored those of the Fall 2004 freshman class as a whole:

FALL 2004	B2E FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMAN PARTICIPANTS	ALL ATU FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN
Female	53.5%	52.7%
Male	46.5%	47.3%
Black/African American	4.4%	5.8%
American Indian/Alaskan	1.7%	1.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.1%	1.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1.5%	2.2%
White/Caucasian	88.6%	87.1%
Other or Non-Resident Alien	1.6%	2.0%

Intervention

For Year 4 of the B2E program, 138 mentors took part. The definition of a mentor continued to be a faculty or staff volunteer who helps his or her assigned freshmen to successfully make the transition from high school to college. Mentors helped their mentees understand and evaluate their CSI results and acted as the campus contact person when a mentee had a question or concern. The core of the program remained the same – a mentor establishing a relationship with his or her mentees.

As with Years 1, 2, and 3, each B2E program participant 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 responses, these reports included three sections:

- Student Background Information.
- Motivational Assessment.
- 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 2004 to Spring 2005, the retention rate for B2E participants (n=796) was higher than that for non-participants (n=500). According to the 11th Class Day Report data for Spring 2005, a full 87.81% of B2E partakers returned for the Spring 2005 semester, while only 70.80% of non-partakers came back. This means that the retention rate for B2E participants was 17.01% 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 2004 semester, the cumulative GPA for B2E partakers was 2.780, as compared to the overall GPA of 2.323 for non-partakers.

The following Appendix A contains the retention rate data for Years 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the program, and Appendix B contains the GPA data for Years 1, 2, 3, and 4.

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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%
Year 4 (2004)	796	87.81%	70.80%	17.01%
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%
Year 4 (2004)	?	?	?	?

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Appendix B

Grade Point Average (GPA) 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
Year 4 (2004)	2.780	2.323	0.457
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
Year 4 (2004)	?	?	?
End of Fall (3rd Semester)			
Year 1 (2001)	3.056	2.666	0.390
Year 2 (2002)	2.955	2.67	0.285
Year 3 (2003)	2.945	2.568	0.377
Year 4 (2004)	?	?	?