

# Bridge To Excellence

Year 5 Report

May 15, 2006

Prepared by: Retention Services

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## Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Year 5 Changes

As with Years 3 and 4, Year 5 (Fall 2005) of the Bridge to Excellence (B2E) program was open to all first-time, full-time freshmen enrolling at Arkansas Tech University. The one change from the previous year involved staffing.

**Dr. Jerry Forbes** was hired as Director of Retention Services in August 2005 to oversee the B2E program and staff. **Mike Bogue** and **Jasmine Wilson** continued to serve as full-time Retention Counselors on the B2E staff. **Tammy Thone** worked as a Retention Counselor for B2E from July-December 2005, then transferred to Graduate Studies to serve as the College Student Personnel program. **Luke Heffley** was hired in January 2006 as a Retention Counselor to take Tammy's place.

During the latter part of the spring semester, **Jasmine Wilson** resigned her Retention Counselor position and has since been replaced with **Chassity Scott**.

For Year 5, the 100-question Form B of the CSI was used; Form B was used for the first time during Year 4.

The method of administering the CSI to freshmen remained the same as for Year 4: the CSI was administered on a weekly basis from May 15 through August 19, 2005. After freshmen registered for their fall classes, they then immediately took the CSI.

The program's mission -- to help freshmen 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 participating freshmen's GPA's, (3) amplifying Arkansas Tech University's high-touch approach, and (4) improving Arkansas Tech University's graduation rates.

## Demographics

For Year 5, 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, 851 first-time, full-time freshmen participated in the program for Year 5. Since 1,320 first-time, full-time students entered Tech for the Fall 2005 semester, this meant that 469 new students did not participate.

The gender and ethnicity demographics of Year 5 B2E participants practically mirrored those of the Fall 2005 freshman class as a whole:

| <b>FALL 2005</b>               | <b>B2E FIRST-TIME,<br/>FULL-TIME<br/>FRESHMAN<br/>PARTICIPANTS</b> | <b>ALL ATU<br/>FIRST-TIME,<br/>FULL-TIME<br/>FRESHMEN</b> |
|--------------------------------|--|---|
| Female                         | 51.0%  | 50.8%   |
| Male                           | 49.0%  | 49.2%   |
| Black/African<br>American      | 5.5%   | 5.9%  |
| American<br>Indian/Alaskan     | 0.9%   | 1.6%  |
| Asian or Pacific<br>Islander   | 2.1%   | 1.1%  |
| Hispanic/Latino                | 1.6%   | 2.4%  |
| White/Caucasian                | 86.7%  | 85.9%   |
| Other or Non-Resident<br>Alien | 3.1%   | 3.0%  |

### **Intervention**

For Year 5 of the B2E program, 130 mentors took part – eight fewer than the previous year. 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, 3, and 4, 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**

*All Fall 2005 B2E participants and non-participants were main campus freshmen only.*

For Fall 2005 to Spring 2006, the retention rate for these main campus B2E participants (n=851) was higher than that for main campus non-participants (n=469). According to the 11<sup>th</sup> Class Day Report data for Spring 2005, a full 88.01% of B2E partakers returned for the Spring 2005 semester, while only 72.70% of non-partakers came back. This means that the retention rate for B2E participants was 15.31% 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 2005 semester, the cumulative GPA for B2E partakers was 2.810, as compared to the overall GPA of 2.388 for non-partakers.

The following Appendix A contains the retention rate data for Years 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the program, while Appendix B contains the GPA data for Years 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

In addition, Appendix C shows the Arkansas Tech retention rates for freshman cohorts from 2001 on.

Finally, Appendix D provides the graduation rates to date for the 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 freshman cohorts.

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Appendix A

## Retention Rates by Program Year

| Semester/Year         | Number of Participants | B2E Participants | Non-Participants | Percentage Difference |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
|                       |                        |                  |                  |                       |
| <b>Fall to Spring</b> |                        |                  |                  |                       |
| 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%                |
| Year 5 (2005)         | 851                    | 88.01%           | 72.70%           | 15.31%                |
|                       |                        |                  |                  |                       |
| <b>Fall to Fall</b>   |                        |                  |                  |                       |
| 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)         | 796                    | 73.74%           | 54.20%           | 19.54%                |
| Year 5 (2005)         | 851                    | ?                | ?                | ?                     |

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Appendix B

### Grade Point Average (GPA) Comparison

| Semester/Year                           | B2E<br>Participants | Non-<br>Participants | Difference |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|------------|
| <b>End of Fall<br/>(1st Semester)</b>   |                     |                      |            |
| 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      |
| <b>End of Spring<br/>(2nd Semester)</b> |                     |                      |            |
| 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)                           | 2.769               | 2.395                | 0.374      |
| Year 5 (2005)                           | ?                   | ?                    | ?          |
| <b>End of Fall<br/>(3rd Semester)</b>   |                     |                      |            |
| 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)                           | ?                   | ?                    | ?          |
| Year 5 (2005)                           | ?                   | ?                    | ?          |

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Appendix C

## Retention Rates by Freshman Cohorts

### ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN COHORT RETENTION RATES \* (FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, DEGREE-SEEKING)

| <b>Cohort Group<br/>(Total Number)</b> | <b>First<br/>Year<br/>(Fall to Fall)</b> | <b>Second<br/>Year<br/>(Fall to Fall)</b> | <b>Third<br/>Year<br/>(Fall to Fall)</b> | <b>Fourth<br/>Year<br/>(Fall to Fall)</b> |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| 2001 (1205)                            | 67.5%                                    | 53.0%                                     | 46.8%                                    | <b>24.4% **</b>                           |
| 2002 (1170)                            | 65.9%                                    | 53.4%                                     | 46.6%                                    |   |
| 2003 (1339)                            | 69.0%                                    | 56.0%                                     |  |   |
| 2004 (1296)                            | 66.2%                                    |   |  |   |
| 2005 (1320)                            | N/A                                      |   |  |   |

\* Most recent data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

\*\* This percentage does not include the 21.91% of the cohort group who graduated in four years. If the four-year graduation rate of 21.91% were added to the retained but not yet graduated 24.4% of the cohort group, the actual fourth year retention rate would be 46.3%.

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Appendix D

## ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN COHORT GRADUATION RATES \* (FULL-TIME, FIRST-TIME, DEGREE-SEEKING)

| Cohort Group | Graduated in 2 Years | Graduated in 3 Years | Graduated in 4 Years | Total to Date |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| 2001         | 0.00%                | 1.16%                | 21.91% **            | 23.07%        |
| 2002         | 0.17%                | 1.11%                |                      | 1.28%         |
| 2003         | 0.37%                |                      |                      | 0.37%         |
| 2004         | 0.00%                |                      |                      | 0.00%         |

\* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

\*\* Highest four-year graduation rate since 1993, over 3 percentage points above previous year's 18.77% four-year graduation rate.