

Bridge To Excellence

Year 6 Report

May 24, 2007

Prepared by: Retention Services

Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Year 6 Administration

For Year 6 (Fall 2006), the Bridge to Excellence (B2E) program was open to all first-time, full-time freshmen enrolling at Arkansas Tech University's main campus, just as it had been for the previous three years. **Mike Bogue** served as B2E Program Coordinator; this is the fourth year Mr. Bogue has worked with B2E. **Dr. Jerry Forbes** continued to serve as Retention Services Director, which includes but is not limited to the B2E program.

For Year 6, 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 perceived readiness for college in terms of finances, academics, and socialization.

The CSI was administered on a daily basis from May 15, 2006, through August 31, 2006. After freshmen registered for their fall classes in the Academic Advising Center, they immediately took the CSI in the B2E Room.

Bridge to Excellence Retention Program Mission

The B2E 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,
- (4) and improving Arkansas Tech University's graduation rates.

Demographics

For Year 6, 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, 763 first-time, full-time freshmen participated in the program for Year 6. Since 1,300 first-time, full-time students entered Tech for the Fall 2006 semester, this

meant that 537 new students did not participate.

The gender and ethnicity demographics of Year 6 B2E participants practically mirrored those of the Fall 2006 freshman class as a whole:

FALL 2006	B2E FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMAN PARTICIPANTS	ALL ATU FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME FRESHMEN
Female	51.4%	50.3%
Male	48.1%	49.7%
Black/African American	6.4%	7.3%
American Indian/Alaskan	0.9%	2.1%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2.1%	1.0%
Hispanic/Latino	2.7%	2.7%
White/Caucasian	85.0%	85.0%
Other or Non-Resident Alien	2.7%	1.9%

Intervention

For Year 6 of the B2E program, 140 mentors took part – 85 faculty and 55 staff. 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 (or work) 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 faculty or staff member establishing a relationship with his or her assigned students.

As with Years 1-5, each B2E program participant was assigned to a faculty or staff mentor. However, for the first time, 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 school. Meanwhile, deciding students were assigned to staff mentors.

Each mentor was given two CSI Student Reports for 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 problems 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 help labs, administrative departments, clubs and organizations, etc.)

At mid-term, the B2E staff supplied each mentor with their 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. At the close of the semester, mentors were also supplied with each mentee's final grades.

General Conclusions

All Fall 2006 B2E participants and non-participants were main campus freshmen only.

For Fall 2006 to Spring 2007, the retention rate for these main campus B2E participants (n=763) was higher than that for main campus non-participants (n=537). According to the 11th Class Day Report data for Spring 2007, a full 88.99% of B2E partakers returned for the Spring 2007 semester, while only 72.07% of non-partakers came back. This means that the retention rate for B2E participants was 16.92% 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 2006 semester, the cumulative GPA for B2E partakers was 2.875, as compared to the overall GPA of 2.240 for non-partakers. This means B2E participants had a fall GPA 0.635 higher than non-participants.

Appendix A contains the retention rate data for Years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 of the program, while Appendix B contains the GPA data for Years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

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

Finally, Appendix d provides the freshman cohort graduation rates by B2E program year.

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Appendix A

ATU Freshman Cohort Retention Rates by B2E 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%
Year 5 (2005)	855	88.07%	72.47%	15.60%
Year 6 (2006)	763	88.99%	72.07%	16.92%
			AVERAGE :	13.15%
Fall to Fall				
Year 1 (2001)	105	82.90%	66.90%	16.00%
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)	855	74.04%	58.71%	15.33%
Year 6 (2006)	763	?	?	?
			AVERAGE:	15.38%

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

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Appendix B

ATU Freshman Cohort Grade Point Average (GPA)
Comparison by B2E Program Year *

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
AVERAGE:			0.514
End of Fall (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)	2.769	2.395	0.374
Year 5 (2005)	2.827	2.541	0.286
Year 6 (2006)	?	?	?
AVERAGE:			0.388
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)	2.910	2.594	0.316
Year 5 (2005)	2.920	2.696	0.224
Year 6 (2006)	?	?	?
AVERAGE:			0.318

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

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Appendix C

ATU Freshmen Cohort Retention Rates 2001-2006* (First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking)

Cohort Group (Total Number)	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)
2001 (1205)	67.5%	53.0%	46.8%	24.4%	10.4% **
2002 (1170)	65.9%	53.4%	46.6%	22.8%	
2003 (1339)	69.0%	56.0%	49.9%		
2004 (1296)	66.2%	51.5%			
2005 (1320)	68.6%				
2006 (1300)	NA				

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

** This percentage does not include the 33.77% of the cohort group who graduated in five years. If the five-year graduation rate of 33.77% were added to the retained but not yet graduated 10.4% of the cohort group, the actual fifth year retention rate would be 44.17%.

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Appendix D

ATU Freshmen Cohort Graduation Rates by B2E Program Year *

(First-Time, Full-Time, Degree-Seeking)

Cohort Group	B2E Participation	Graduated in 2 Years	Graduated in 3 Years	Graduated in 4 Years	Graduated in 5 Years
2001	B2E (N=105)	0.00%	0.00%	37.50%	55.77% **
	NON-B2E (N=1,100)	0.00%	1.18%	18.26%	31.70%
	ENTIRE COHORT (N=1,205)	0.00%	1.07%	19.91%	33.77%
2002	B2E (N=310)	0.00%	0.97%	25.16%	
	NON-B2E (N=860)	0.12%	0.58%	18.05%	
	ENTIRE COHORT (N=1,170)	0.12%	0.77%	18.46%	
2003	B2E (N=750)	0.00%	0.67%		
	NON-B2E (N=589)	0.17%	1.70%		
	ENTIRE COHORT (N=1,339)	0.17%	1.12%		
2004	B2E (N=796)	0.37%			
	NON-B2E (N=500)	0.21%			
	ENTIRE COHORT (N=1,296)	0.31%			

* Data from Arkansas Tech University Institutional Research.

** This B2E graduation rate is higher than the non-B2E graduation rate for the previous 8 school years.