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A Page Out of Lives on the Boundary: Our Experiences with First-Year Student Retention Programs

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Building the Bridge

Program Characteristics and Goals
Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW)

- Commuter campus with new dorms
- 180 Undergraduate and graduate degrees
- Approximately 12,000 students
- Over 50% nontraditional population
IPFW Writing Center

- “Every writer needs a reader.”
- 20 consultants—undergraduate, graduate, and faculty
- One-on-one and online consulting
- Workshops, orientations, resources
First Year Experience

• Target: first-time college students
• Principles: Connecting students immediately
• Mechanisms: learning communities and extracurricular activities
• Goals: Increased persistence, engagement, and satisfaction
Summer Bridge

• Target: At-risk high school graduates with financial need
• Principles: Preparation for college life
• Mechanisms: Environment, tutoring, college credit, support
• Goals: Admission and retention
Crossing the Bridge

Administrators’ Expectations and Implementation
First Year Experience

• Learning communities
  – Academic cohort
  – Social group

• Extracurricular activities
  – Educational
  – Social
Summer Bridge

• Academic
  – Two classes
  – Counseling
  – Tutoring
  – Mentoring

• Social
  – Out-of-class learning
  – Cultural activities
  – College housing
Bridging the Gap

Student motivation and response
Student Motivation: Involvement in FYE

• Ease transition to college life
• Take classes with and make friends
• Become acquainted with campus resources
• Succeed academically
Student Response: Writing Center Involvement

• Required to visit
• Make connections between classes
• Adjust to academic writing
• Understand instructors’ expectations
• Improve writing
Meeting Student Needs and Expectations

• Interpret instructors’ expectations
• Introduce to academic conventions
• Build confidence as student writers
• Make seeking help a comfortable experience
• Assist transition into college life
Student Motivation: Involvement in Summer Bridge?

• “I wanted to go to college, and I am the first in my family to try.”
• “My mom really wanted me to do it.”
• “My sister wanted to apply, and I just applied with her.”
• “I had some friends that were applying.”
• “I wanted to go to college so that I can make lots of money.”
Student Response: Writing Center Involvement

• “They helped me pass the writing course.”
• “I needed someone to look over my paper and tell me if it sucked.”
• “They helped me learn how to write a research paper; I’d never had to write one before.”
• “We were forced to be there.”
• “I would rather use the time to study or hang out.”
Meeting Student Needs and Expectations

- Helped them feel like they belong at the university.
- Increased student/tutor interactions
  - Dinners
- Provided the students with a safe place in academia.
  - Same tutors
- Offered encouragement.
- Shared our early college experiences