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

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Our Experiences with First-Year
Student Retention Programs**

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne

**Colin Brown, Mary Arnold Schwartz, and
Stephanie Sample**



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

