

Success First Program

Response to RFI: Promising and Practical Strategies to Increase Postsecondary Success

Submitted by:

Truckee Meadows Community College
7000 Dandini Blvd, RDMT 200
Reno, Nevada 89512-3999

Contact: Patty Avila-Porter
Program Director of Access, Outreach, Recruitment and Success First
7000 Dandini Blvd, RDMT 115
Reno, Nevada 89512-3999
pporter@tmcc.edu
775-673-7154

Abstract

Truckee Meadows Community College's internal research has shown that without intervention and an academically-structured program, low-income, first-generation, first-time students have been unable to complete even one semester, and are at high risk of dropping out of college. Participants in TMCC's proven student intervention program, Success First, are more likely to enroll in higher level college classes, to be enrolled full- as compared to part-time, to have a 2.0+ GPA, and to remain enrolled at TMCC after their first semester.

Description of the Strategy

The Success First program is designed to increase the college readiness, persistence, retention and graduation rates of low-income, first-time, full-time, first-generation students at TMCC. TMCC research shows that without intervention and an academically-structured program, these students have been unable to complete even one semester, and are at high risk of dropping out of college. As these students with this profile comprise 40% of TMCC's student population, it is imperative to find strategies to improve their success.

In 2008, Wells Fargo funded a collaborative project between the Washoe County School District, College Achievement Program (CAP) and TMCC called Career and College Success Leadership, or C2, which was the pilot for the Success First Program. Based on the success of the C2 program and armed with College enrollment data, TMCC wrote and won a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund a much larger program.

In 2010 the renamed Success First program served over 500 students in the year-round program and 94 students in the Summer Bridge component. In 2010 and 2011, the program was split into two components: a Summer Bridge to give students a jump start to

college, and an academic year mentoring/retention program that served both Bridge graduates and a larger student population.

The Success First initiative is an evolving program, incorporating data on student success to continuously improve the supportive services offered. With data indicating that non-Summer Bridge students did not benefit as strongly from the academic year support as Bridge students, the program was streamlined in 2012 to focus on and provide supportive services throughout the academic year only to those students who showed college commitment by completing the Summer Bridge program. The minimum Accuplacer (college placement test) score was also increased, so that the program would focus on students who required some intensive assistance, but not intensive remediation, to qualify for college level courses.

The flexible nature of the program is part of the strategy behind its success. Analyzing program and participant data has allowed to be nimble in addressing the changing needs of the incoming student population each year, and to incorporate pilot programs into the Success First model. For example, in 2012 TMCC faculty introduced a Math Academy track into the Bridge for students interested in STEM or liberal arts degrees with high math requirements. Inclusion of this track was funded through the National Institutes of Health funded Nevada IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence program.

Eligibility for the Program (for the 2013-2014 academic year)

Eligibility requirements are the following:

- Applied to TMCC and been accepted for summer/fall.
- First time attending college summer/fall.
- First generation as defined by neither parents nor guardians have earned bachelor's degree. **Some exceptions may be made.*
- Submit a FAFSA application and demonstrate financial need. **Some exceptions may be made.*
- Minimum placement of ENG 98R and MATH 95, with qualifying Accuplacer cut score.
- Participants for the summer bridge must be available Monday through Thursday 8:00am-4:30pm and commit to approximately 15-20 hours a week of study time outside of the program.

After meeting the eligibility requirements, participants sign a contract at the beginning of the program so they understand the depth of their commitment and what is expected of

them during their first academic year. The specific program components are as follows, and all students participate in both the Summer Bridge and Academic Year programs.

Summer Bridge Instruction

Up to 200 students enroll in the Summer Bridge, picking either a math or English track depending on their educational goals. Most students enroll in EPY 101, a general college readiness skills and personal development course. This innovative course is designed to help students adjust to the college environment, with tips for reading, studying, note-taking, test-taking, writing and memorizing as well as management of time and stress. Daily tutoring is available, and lunch and all textbooks are supplied. Providing lunch encourages students to stay on campus, rather than leave to pick up food, and minimizes the chance that they will not return for the afternoon session. As low-income students are a primary target of this program, providing lunch and textbooks allows them to focus on their studies rather than be concerned about funding to pay for these essentials. In line with this, each student that successfully completes the program is awarded an \$800 scholarship, so that they will not be tempted to pass on or withdraw from the program in order to get a summer job to support themselves or their families.

Summer bridge participants are required to attend the program from 8 a.m. to 3:10 p.m., Monday-Thursday during July-August (equivalent of five weeks). The daily schedule is summarized below:

Table 1. Summer Bridge Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
8:30-10:40 a.m.	Class #1: ENG 98R/ENG 101 OR READ 135/EPY 101
10:45a.m.-11:45 a.m.	Math Prep Period/Mandatory Tutoring Classes or One on One Tutoring
12:00 p.m.-12:50 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.	Class #2: ENG 98R/ENG 101 OR READ 135/EPY 101
3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	Math Prep Period/Mandatory Tutoring Classes or One on One Tutoring

Participation in the Bridge not only increases college readiness and gives students confidence that they can succeed in the college environment, it also forms a natural cohort of students who serve as a peer support during the students' time at TMCC and beyond.

Academic Year Support

Student support offered during the students' first academic year is focused on retention, and is less intensive than the ramp-up to college provided during the Summer Bridge.

Participants are be on a registration hold for academic year, and they must meet twice a semester with a Success Coach to review their academic progress before this hold is removed and they can add/drop/change their courses. They must also maintain a 2.0+ GPA and satisfactory academic progress in their courses, and participate in one financial aid workshop each semester, or they are at risk of having their special support services removed. The Success Coaches work with students to resolve any issues so that they will not be dropped from the program. These restrictions and regulations are included in the contract signed at the beginning of the program.

Results

Summer Bridge participants demonstrate higher success than individuals from similar cohorts. Graduation data for two-year colleges is reported to IPEDS for three-year periods (i.e. students have 150% of the time it takes to receive a two-year degree to finish and be counted toward the official graduation rate for the institution), and final graduation rates for the first round of Summer Bridge students will not be available until after summer 2013. However, preliminary data shows that Summer Bridge students are already graduating at a rate higher than previously reported for TMCC. **The two-year graduation rate of Summer Bridge students is 19%, which is 9% higher than comparable students who enrolled in college for the first time in 2010.** This is additionally 2% greater than the highest reported three-year graduation rate for TMCC overall (17%).

Table 2. Graduation Rates for Summer Bridge students vs. Comparable Cohorts

	Graduation Rate
Summer Bridge Two Year Graduation Rate	19%
Comparable Cohort Two Year Graduation Rate	10%
Overall TMCC Three Year Graduation Rate	17%

Summer Bridge students are on track to far surpass the highest three-year graduation rate every reported for TMCC. The retention and persistence numbers for 2011 and 2012 Summer Bridge participants (Tables 3 and 4) support our prediction that those groups will have similarly high graduation rates after two and three years, and that use of the Summer Bridge model is a promising strategy to increase the retention, persistence, and graduation of low-income, first-generation, first-time college students in Nevada.

All data is provided by TMCC's Office of Institutional Research, and additional information can be requested by contacting the Program Director at the contact information on page 1.

Table 3. Academic Progress of 2011 Summer Bridge students

ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF 2011 SUCCESS FIRST SUMMER BRIDGE STUDENTS								
Cohort	Spring 2012		Fall 2012 preliminary**					Cumulative GPA Average
	Course Retention		Enrollment		Credit load			
	% Enrollments Retained*	% Enrollments C or better	Enrolled (i.e. fall to fall persistence)	Not Enrolled	Full-time (12+ credits)	3 / 4 time (9-11.9 credits)	Part-time (< 9 credits)	
2011 Summer Bridge N=225	450/581	415/581	143/225	82/225	62/143	43/143	38/143	2.85
	77%	71%	64%	36%	43%	30%	27%	
Comparison Cohort 1 Pell Eligible N=788	1178/1615	1073/1615	367/788	421/788	154/367	93/367	120/367	2.79
	73%	66%	47%	53%	42%	25%	33%	
Comparison Cohort 2 Not Pell Eligible N=639	1168/1506	1073/1506	386/639	253/639	173/386	92/386	121/386	2.7
	78%	71%	60%	40%	45%	24%	31%	

Comparison cohort 1 is made up of students who meet all of the following criteria: enrolled Fall 2011, new student (no previous college credits), degree seeking and Pell eligible.

Comparison cohort 2 is made up of students who meet all of the following criteria: enrolled Fall 2011, new student (no previous college credits), degree seeking and **Not** Pell eligible.

NOTE: The summer bridge 2011 cohort, comparison cohort 1, and comparison cohort 2 are mutually exclusive.

*Retained = grades of A, B, C, D, pass (P), satisfactory (S), in progress (X), or audit (AD).

**Fall 2012 Census data

Table 4. Academic Progress of 2012 Summer Bridge students

Summer Bridge 2012 Course Retention and Persistence

Cohort	N	Summer '12 Course Retention Rate			Persistence to Fall '12	
		# enrollments	# retained	%	# students	%
Summer Bridge 2012	193	319	307	96%	184	95%
Control 1*	176	298	217	73%	107	61%
Control 2**	64	136	91	67%	43	67%

*Control 1 cohort is made up of students who meet all of the following criteria: enrolled summer 2012, new student (no previous college credits), and degree seeking. The summer bridge 2012 cohort and control 1 are mutually exclusive.

**Control 2 cohort is a subset of Control 1. These students meet all of the following criteria: enrolled summer 2012, new student (no previous college credits), degree seeking, and received Pell grant in summer 2012 (low income). The summer bridge 2012 cohort and control 2 are mutually exclusive.

Meta Data Tags/Keywords:

- Degree Attainment
- Developmental/Remedial Education
- Mentoring
- Persistence
- Retention
- Student Services
- Time to Degree
- Underrepresented Students