

College of Education

2007 Chrysalis Summer Bridge Program

Research Highlights



Chicago Teacher Education Pipeline Programs & Partnerships
College of Education, Illinois State University

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Program Description

The 2007 *Chrysalis Summer Bridge (CSB) Program* was designed to serve those students from schools that partner with the Chicago Teacher Education Pipeline Programs and Partnerships and that enroll at Illinois State University. The CSB program began in late July and ran through the 3 weeks prior to beginning of Fall classes. Program participants moved into a temporary residence hall as a cohort and remained there for the duration of the program.

Academic support such as reading in the content areas, mathematics, and writing served as focal points during the program. University faculty created and implemented courses in these academic areas. Students were expected to attend classes and do homework in a way that closely mimicked a college routine. The purpose of these courses was twofold; to better prepare students to face the academic rigors of college courses, and to introduce them to the routine of college coursework in an environment where they could be supervised and supported.

Additional services provided through seminars and workshops were also included. These supplemental supports included workshops on time management, study skills and strategies, money management and expectations for college work.

Helping students to develop and foster relationships on campus was another important goal of *Chrysalis*. This was accomplished by introducing students to and assigning Golden Apple and/or Student Support Service mentors. Each mentor was responsible for between two or three *Chrysalis* students and provided supplemental information through daily tutorials, auxiliary guidance and counseling as related to adjusting to college life, and planned programming for weekend activities.

The first part of the current report includes feedback provided by all parties involved in the program, namely program participants, student mentors, program supervisor, and program faculty members. Data were gathered via in-person interviews and open-ended surveys. The objective was to gain a well-rounded understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the program in its debut year and formulate suggestions for improvement in future offerings.

The second part of the report presents data gathered via program participant surveys. These data are an attempt to quantify the extent to which the CSB program was able to achieve its main objectives; academic preparation and social adaptation.

CSB Program: Formative Feedback

Academic Preparation

This section of the report focuses on the program's ability to affect its participants' academic preparation and is divided into three main subsections: (1) Successes, (2) Challenges, and (3) General Comments/Suggestions. Within each of these subsections, the viewpoint of the different stakeholder groups is summarized. Stakeholder groups represented in this report are (a) program participants, (b) student mentors, (c) program supervisor, and (d) program faculty.

Successes

Program Participants

- Courses were a good way to “**refresh memory**” for material they had already learned in high school but had not engaged in for some time.
- Being able to interact with college professors, experience a college course routine, and get a glimpse of the material was helpful because it helped them to **create an expectation** of what was to come when the academic year began. Before the program, they were not sure what to expect.
- The **mathematics course** was seen as helpful by virtually all participants because it provided them with a different way to approach math problems and it was also perceived as a “fun” course.
- The **reading course** received less widespread endorsement but was still perceived as helpful by some students. Some students indicated that their **paper writing abilities** have been improved and that they are now able to produce papers with much more ease and efficiency.
- The amount of **time spent in the courses** was seen as adequate by most participants.
- Participants indicated that they learned how to **work independently** since professors were not there to tell them what to do and when to do it.

Student Mentors

- Student mentors generally agreed that the program was helpful to participants' academic preparation because it allowed them to be **exposed to the college curriculum** and realize how it was going to be different from high school.
- Echoing the students, mentors perceived the **math course** to be very useful.
- Student mentors believed that the program's overall goal was achieved as they perceived participants' **improvements in academic performance** over the course of the program.

“They were able to experience rather rigorous courses and they all exceeded my expectation. In the beginning of the program I was a little worried about some of the students but after working with each and every one of them and helping them with their work over the three weeks we were at ISU, I realized how much they were learning” – Student Mentor

Program Supervisor

- *“This program provided university level courses to students that come from high schools that do not always provide that type of rigor. In speaking with the students, they commented on the challenging work and how they believed it was more difficult. Also, some students said they learned better with the professors because they taught certain material in math or English in a more effective manner”*

Program Faculty

- The **early meeting** in May between program faculty was perceived as helpful.
- **English course:** the alignment between the reading and writing portions worked well. Collaboration was very important for the course to flow well.
- There was an efficient use of the **Blackboard course** interface.

- Program faculty found students to be **motivated and eager to learn**.
- **Diagnosis of students' individual skill levels** was very important at the onset of the program.
- **Math course:** all students demonstrated significant improvement in their understanding over the period of the course.
- **English course:** improvement in writing and grammar skills was seen from draft to draft as well as from paper to paper

Challenges

Program Participants

- There was considerable **variability in the level of individual academic skills**. For instance, some participants had more ease with math, while others found the English class to be easier, and yet others found both courses to be lacking in challenge.
- Such variability led to some students feeling **bored and unchallenged** by the material, while others were slightly **overwhelmed** with the material.
- Several students mentioned that the **English sessions were too long** and that they would have preferred them to be broken up into shorter segments and spread out in different days.

Student Mentors

- Student mentors perceived that the math course was much more enjoyed by the participants than the English course (because of less active assignments).

Program Supervisor

- *"Some Bridge Programs, based on the incoming students, place them in different levels of math, reading and writing, and perhaps as this program continues to grow that factor might be considered. There were some students that found math or writing not as challenging"*

Program Faculty

- One faculty member commented on being **surprised by the lack of grammar and writing skills** presented by participants at the onset of the program.
- One faculty member assessed that **most students are still in need** of support in formal writing and analytical reading.
- English course professors expressed a wish to have a **stronger collaboration** with the math course faculty to create a sense of a team.
- The **role of the student mentors** was not clear to the program faculty.
- Program faculty felt they did not have enough **contact and coordination** with the student mentors.
- It was challenging to meet the needs of the **diverse skill levels** as well as **diverse interests** of the group.

General Comments and Suggestions for Future Implementation:

- Re-assess the length of the English course segments, perhaps breaking up some sessions
- Find a way and/or be prepared to engage students with differing levels of ability
- Create different difficulty levels for each course (e.g., Remedial, Review, Advanced)
- Encourage stronger collaboration among faculty members involved in the program
- Encourage stronger collaboration between program faculty and student mentors
- Clarify roles of student mentors with program faculty
- Promote meetings between program faculty and student mentors prior to and during the program
- Stress how much academic independence participants will face in college

Social Preparation

This section of the report focuses on the program's ability to affect its participants' social transition to college and, like the previous section, is divided into three main subsections: (1) Successes, (2) Challenges, and (3) General Comments/Suggestions. Within each of these subsections, the viewpoints of (a) program participants, (b) student mentors, and (c) program supervisor are summarized.

Successes

Program Participants

- Participants indicated forming very strong bonds among themselves, which eased their transition to college life.
- Participants formed relationships with some student mentors that extended through the academic year. Some relationships morphed from mentor-mentee relationships to friendships.
- Some participants joined the student organization ALAS (Association of Latin American Students) and/or other student clubs.
- Participants indicated that the relationships formed during the Bridge Program were important, particularly in the beginning of the academic year. As the first semester progressed, they began branching out to new friendship circles.
- Participants asserted that participating in the Bridge Program allowed them to be "ready to go" when the academic year began because they were over feeling homesick and had established a social network that could support them.
- College skills workshops were evaluated as moderately helpful but necessary.
- Participants were able to get a glimpse of the town around the university (went to the mall, grocery stores, movies, etc).

Student Mentors

- Participants formed close friendships among themselves, which translated into an important **support system**
- Mentors believed that an **early introduction to campus** allowed program participants to learn their way around and have access to resources, which ultimately allowed them to **focus on school** when the academic year started.
- Through the Bridge Program, mentors perceived that participants were better able to **embrace the culture of the university**.

Program Supervisor

- *"The Bridge Program gave the students who are the first or second family member to attend college first-hand experience of college life. They were able to live independently and in a different environment. Some of our students come from dangerous neighborhoods and they need to leave and experience another living environment"*
- *"In my conversations with the Bridge students, many expressed they were very excited to have the opportunity to be on their own and begin experiencing being an adult. They also shared that they were very excited to meet different people"*

Challenges

Program Participants

- To some, the Bridge Program created a situation where it seemed like participants were **forced to become friends**
- Some suggested the program **cohort was too small**, which, at times, made the group interactions a little tense (“too much drama”).
- Due to the nature of the summer months at Illinois State University, it was a **struggle to find things to do** around campus.
- Some participants expressed an interest in **getting to know Bloomington** (as opposed to just Normal) a little better
- There was a large **focus on the large grocery stores and shopping mall** for the group’s outings
- Some asserted they would have liked to have been taught how to use the **local bus system** (although some expressed that they had learned how to do so)

Student Mentors

- Mentors echoed participants’ feelings that there were **few opportunities for activities** because of the slow period of the summer months.
- Mentors expressed concern over the **lack of funds** to engage in extracurricular as well as planned activities

“There was a lot of expectation on the students and mentors alike to come up with money. This may not seem like a problem that the program board should have to deal with but when our meal funds were cut off a week before the program ended, it became a problem. Students were expected to pay for all of the mandatory planned activities. As a college student myself, I can say that money is sometimes hard to come by and to expect these students to just spend \$20 to \$30 a week seems a little steep” – Student Mentor

Program Supervisor

- The program supervisor also suggested that some of the student activities be covered financially by the program.

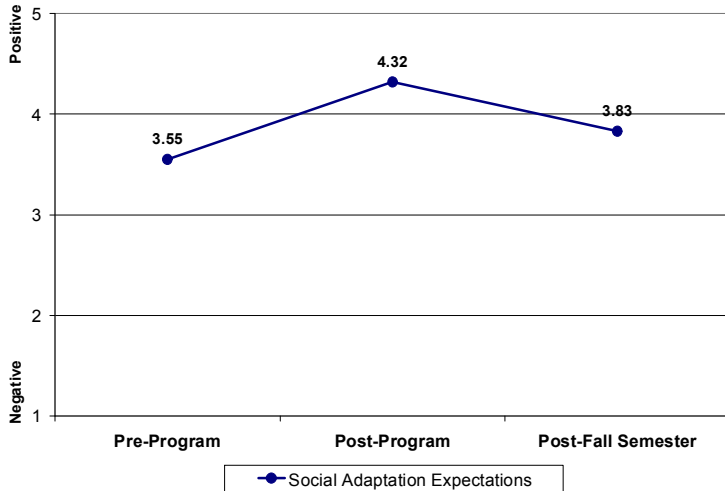
General Comments and Suggestions for Future Implementation:

- Expand the number of program participants.
- Create opportunities for program participants to interact with other students that are not part of the program.
- Include a variety of free or inexpensive activities such as going to parks around the Bloomington-Normal community, taking a day to learn how to ride the bus to several parts of the twin cities, and spending some time in Bloomington.
- Involve student mentors in the activity planning process prior to the program
- Address the financial difficulties of the students while they are on campus for the program.

CSB Program: Summative Research

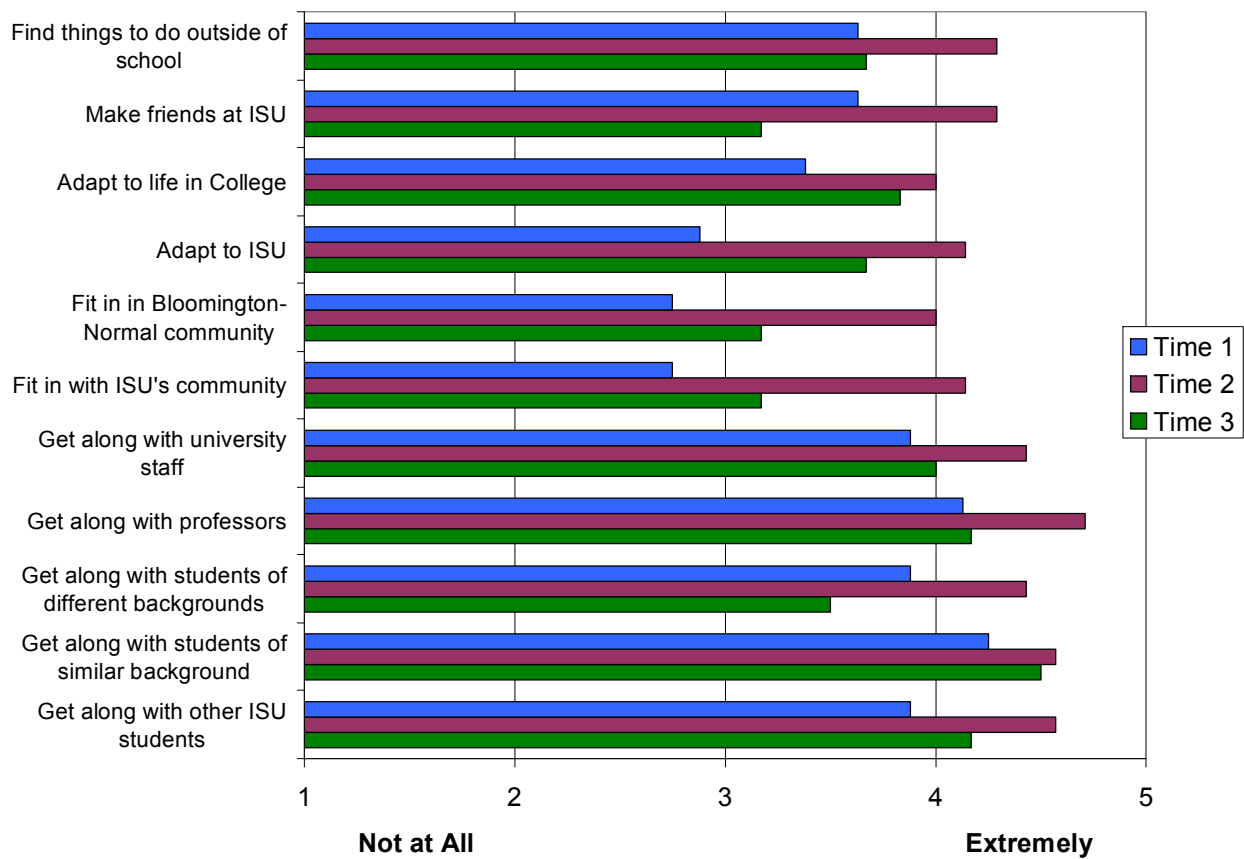
- PARTICIPANTS** 9 participants. Seven women (78%), 8 Latino/as (89%), 1 African-American (11%). Two participants had parents who had not completed high school (22%), five whose parents' highest education was high school (56%), one (11%) had parents who completed some college, and one did not provide this information.
- PROCEDURE** Program participants have been asked to complete a survey at four different points in time: pre-program (*Time 1*), post-program (*Time 2*), at the end of their first academic semester (*Time 3*), at the end of the second academic semester/first academic year (*Time 4*). At this point, at the beginning of the second semester, data have only been collected for *Time 1*, *Time 2*, and *Time 3*.
- MEASURES** The survey instruments were designed to measure the major dependent variables that the program was intended to affect:
- Social Adaptation*: beliefs about the ease (or difficulty) of their social adaptation to college life and Illinois State University.
- Academic Preparation*: participants' confidence in their academic preparation.
- Academic & Personal Support*: knowledge of whom to turn to when in need in these areas.
- General Expectations about College*: how difficult/challenging they expect college to be.
- General Satisfaction with ISU*
- RESULTS** The results presented in this report focus on the first two dependent variables mentioned above: Social Adaptation and Academic Preparation.

Social Adaptation

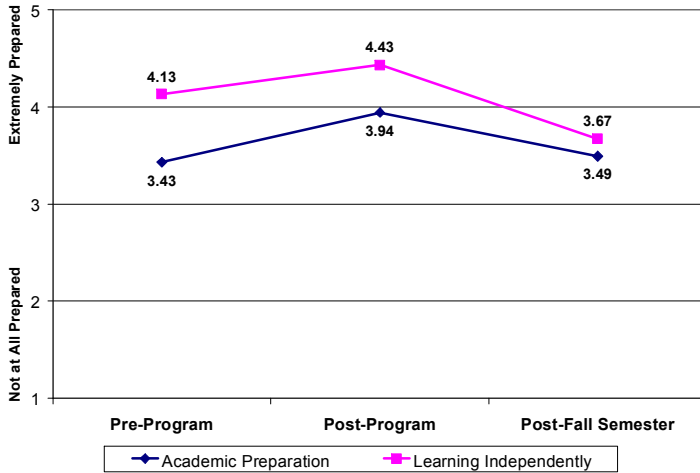


- During the program, there was a clear increase in participants' confidence in their ability to socially adapt to college and Illinois State University.
- Perceptions of social adaptation decreased over the course of the first semester, yet remained higher than pre-program levels.

Social Adaptation Items:

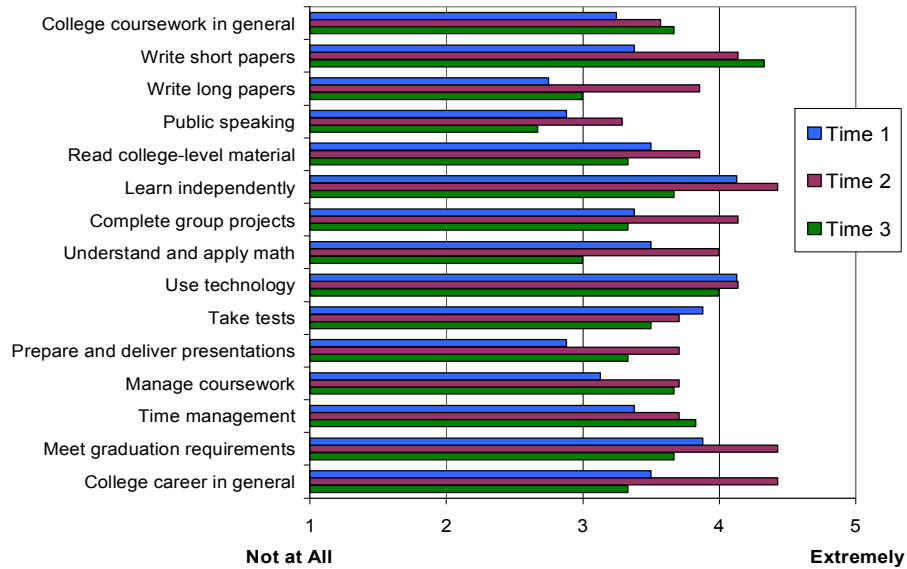


Academic Preparation

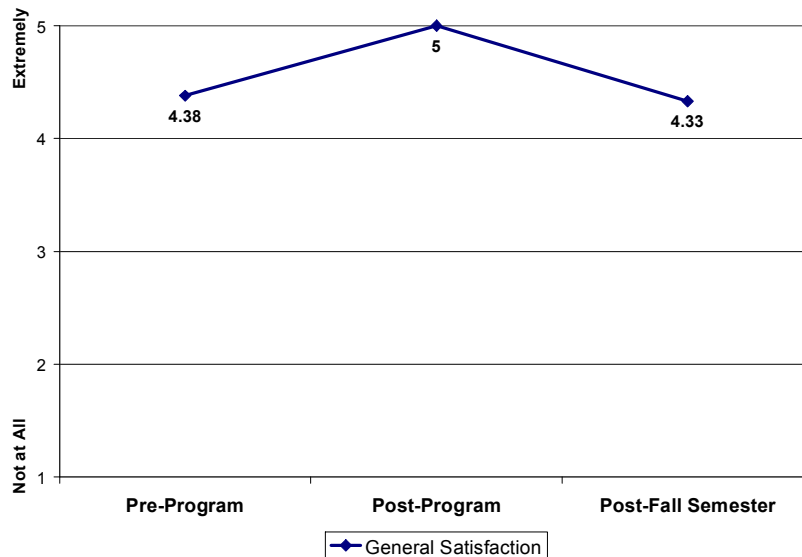


- During the program, there was an increase in participants' confidence in their academic preparation.
- Participants' beliefs in their ability to learn independently also increased throughout the length of the program.
- Perceptions of academic preparation decreased over the course of the first semester.

Academic preparation items:



General Satisfaction with Illinois State University



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