

### **Five Fundamental Questions**

1. What are the primary services or outcomes provided by the support service area and what is the impact of those services and outcomes on students and other key stakeholders?

The primary service of the Supplemental Instruction program is to provide an additional support, in the form of peer-led study groups, for students in traditionally difficult courses with high non success rates. The impact of the SI program is that students who attend SI succeed at higher rates than students who do not attend SI sessions. Students also receive course grades as much as one letter grade higher (half a letter grade higher on average). SI is offered at no charge to the student as are most other student services. Other key stakeholders include the faculty supported by SI, since their student retention rates are higher. What this means for the college? When students attend SI, they have a higher likelihood of succeeding in gateway courses.

The primary service of the College Bridge program is to provide educational assistance to the students who do not score high enough on the college placement assessments to place into college level courses. For the students who score just below the cut off test scores for a particular developmental course, the bridge program provides instruction to assist students in refreshing their knowledge to place into the next higher course. For the students who are not close to the next higher level, the bridge class serves as a review to help the student to understand the material better, and earn a higher grade in the developmental course where he was placed on the college placement assessment. Students who register and complete bridge classes, are better prepared to be successful in the current or next level class. The Bridge Program supports the goals of the Student Success Initiative to get students into college level classes sooner.

2. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats present that enhance or hinder the unit's ability to provide those services and meet expected outcomes during the next five years?

The SWOT provided a plethora of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to work on with regards to both the Supplemental Instruction and Bridge Programs. Our focus will be determined on the basis of a review by staff and an internal college committee. Modifications and adjustments can be made based on program goal attainment, after reviewing the goals each year.

- I. Strengths: There were two areas that were determined to be the most important in the strengths.
  - a. Academic Student Benefits
    - i. For Supplemental Instruction, one of the most pronounced academic benefits was how the SI program engaged students who participate.
    - ii. For the College Bridge program, one of the academic benefits that stands out is an increase in study skills for students.
  - b. Developing relationships: Both programs were noted as increasing student relationships.
- II. Weaknesses: Two major weaknesses were identified.
  - a. Student Engagement
    - i. For Supplemental Instruction, not enough students elect to attend the SI sessions.
    - ii. For the Bridge program, there needs to be greater participation in the selection of the bridge students by advisors and counselors.
- III. Opportunities: Three areas stood out in the opportunities.
  - a. Outreach enhancements: Both programs have opportunities growth through outreach especially in the area of working with advisors and counselors.
  - b. Collaboration: Both programs have opportunities to increase collaboration with the departments and student life (TOP).
  - c. Grant money: Both programs have tremendous opportunities for grant money, particularly SI.
- IV. Threats: There were three main areas in the threats category.
  - a. Space: Arranging rooms for SI and Bridge each semester is difficult given the tremendous growth of the college over the past few years.

- b. Lack of awareness of the programs: Both SI and Bridge are fairly new programs that many people do not know about.
- c. Funding: Both programs require funding in order to be successful.

3. Using the answers to the first two questions, what improvements to primary services and/or intended outcomes will occur during the next five years?

#### SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION

There is a new five year plan for the SI program. The plan focuses SI on gateway courses that will support the goals of the SSI. The gateway courses supported by SI are developmental Math, Math, English, History and Government. These are the courses with the highest enrollments and the highest attrition rates. By supporting these classes, SI will help to increase the success rates of students, supporting the goals of the Student Success Initiative.

How will this plan affect the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified in question 2? This new plan will help improve the strengths of SI by engaging more students since there will be more sections. It will also help address the threat of a lack of awareness, since SI will be in more and more classes each year.

How will the other areas be improved? The SI staff will be inviting select faculty members to attend the SI training sessions at the beginning of the semester in order to improve faculty-student relationships. We will encourage the faculty to make announcements during class about the success of SI and how students will benefit from participation. Once faculty participate in training, and see the results in their own classrooms, this will increase collaboration with the departments. Additionally, the SI staff has already begun working with the counselors, advisors, college connection, as well as various other programs to increase outreach to the students.

#### COLLEGE BRIDGE

For the Bridge program, a steering committee comprised of faculty, advisors, counselors, and recruiters will help to improve our program. Working with the counselors and advisors on the steering committee will help with outreach, lack of awareness of the program and selection of students. Additionally, a counselor at the larger campuses will become a specialist in the Bridge Program and will provide campus support for the other counselors and advisors to assist with both outreach and advising of students into the bridge classes.

Once the students are in the Bridge classes, the work with the faculty on the steering committee will help with collaboration with and between the departments. Additionally, the Bridge faculty will attend a professional development training that includes how to increase the knowledge of study skills in the classroom while teaching the content. The bridge tutors will also receive specialized training in the teaching of study skills and cooperative learning to use while students are learning the content area.

Finally, the opportunity of grant funding and the threat of the need for more funds need to be addressed. With the current trends in the economy and the cuts in state funding, more economical ways of helping students need to be found. Currently, ACC has received a grant for 2011 which will include Supplemental Instruction in several first semester courses. Additionally, the Bridge program is in its third and final year of a grant from THECB. Grants will continue to be sought out to support both programs, and additional college funds will be requested in the budget process. Both programs support the goals of the Student Success Initiative in a cost effective fashion.

4. How will the unit measure the extent to which planned improvements have resulted in better service or intended outcomes for students or other key stakeholders?

To determine if the improvements have resulted in the intended outcomes, the grades of the students who attend SI will be compared to the students who have not attended SI. Similarly, the grades of the students who attend Bridge will be compared to other students placed into the developmental course sequence. The students in Bridge or SI should receive higher grades and higher completion rates than the other students. Currently, the results of SI show higher completion rates or 69% for the students who attend SI compared with 54% for the students in the same classes who did not attend SI. If we can maintain these high percentages, but help more students, this will support the goals of the SSI.

Additionally, for the goal of outreach and attendance, we will look at the increases in attendance in SI sessions and the increased numbers in Bridge class enrollment. If the numbers have increased, then we will know that the outreach worked. Since Fall 2011 will be the start of the new focus in SI, baseline data will be taken in FY12. Subsequent years will be compared in order to determine success. For the Bridge program, recent growth rates have shown a 20% increase in the number of students enrolled in bridge classes. This number was obtained by increasing the number of sections of bridge classes offered. Without increasing the number of sections of bridge each year, the increases in the number of students will be less. A goal of 15% more students this year will mean that the outreach and counseling enhancements will have been successful. When this goal is reached, we will need to reassess the Bridge program to find more ways to increase participation by students.

5. How will the planned improvements align with and contribute to the Mission and Intended Outcomes of Austin Community College?

The Bridge program is an instructional program intended to help underprepared students. The SI program assists students in the difficult courses who desire extra assistance. The planned improvements in the Bridge program and the SI Program will help support part [d] of the college mission “Special instructional programs and tutorial service to assist underprepared students and others who wish special assistance to achieve their educational goals.” With the proposed enhancements, more students will be helped, and students will be better prepared to succeed in their final college goals.

The intended outcomes of the Bridge program will support the intended outcomes of the college, specifically [5c and f]. “Student performance that meets or exceeds established goals based on State and/or national benchmarks in the following areas: [c] College retention and program completion of students, including developmental students; [f] Successful transition from developmental to college-level courses”. More students will be retained, and will move into college level courses. While the enhancements to the SI program meet the above intended outcomes, the SI program also supports the intended outcome of the college [2], helping the students to become active learners.