

First-Year International Student Transitions: Educating for a Global Future

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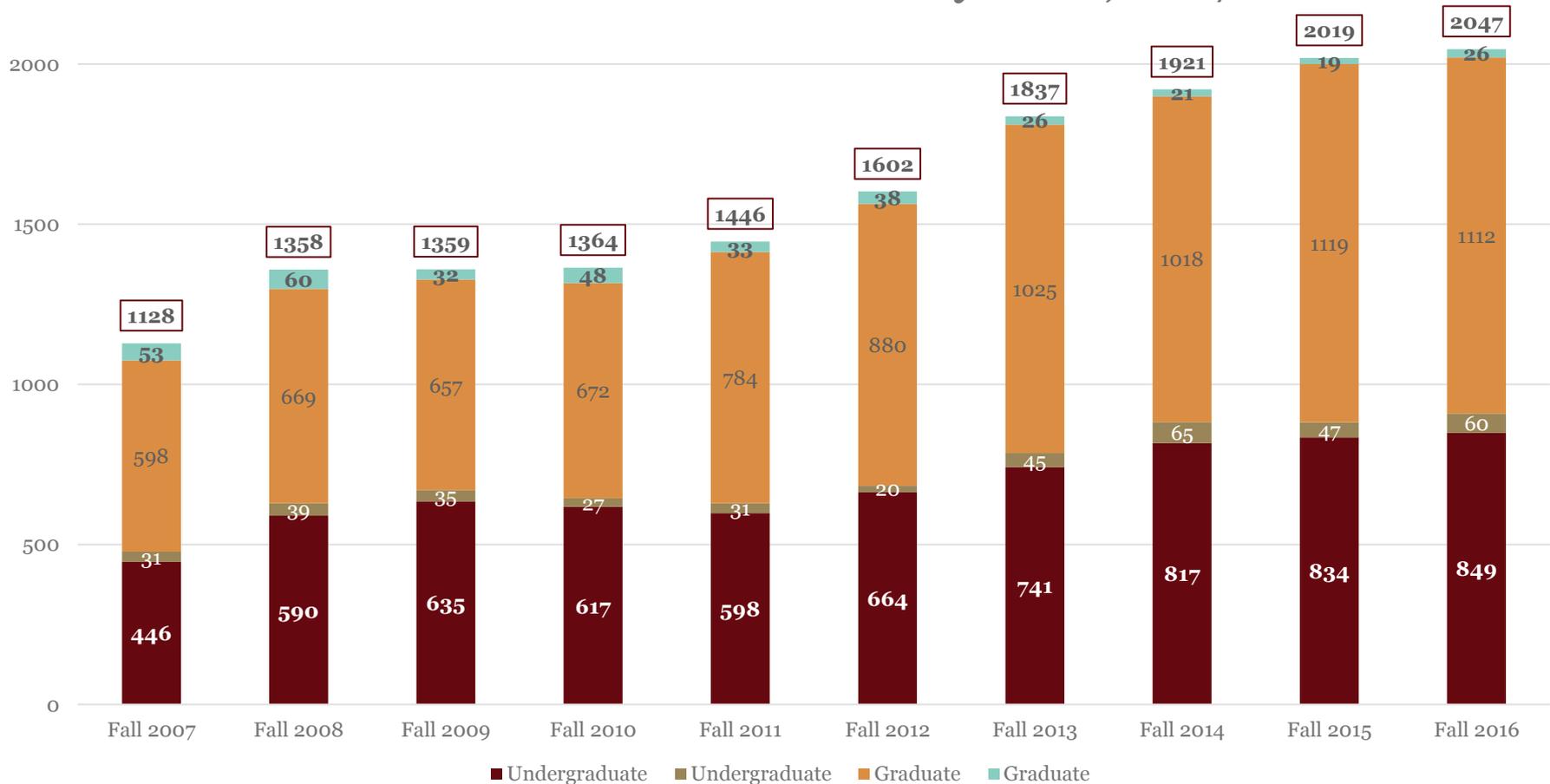
Context for today's presentation

- The past decade: fastest rate of growth of international students in the United States since the 1970's – reaching nearly one million in 2014 (Institute for International Education, Open Doors data, 2015).



A similar experience at IUPUI

IUPUI International Enrollment by Level, 2007-2016



Context, cont.

- Nearly 50% of institutions offer “pathway programs” to incoming international students to address specific preparation needs, e.g. English language proficiency
- IUPUI does not have a formal pathway program, but TOEFL/IELTS test score requirements are relatively flexible
- Placement of students into English for Academic Purposes courses effectively creates a pathway program-type environment.

The challenge of integration

- Students arrive with different language, social and cultural backgrounds
- Rapid international enrollment growth has sparked extensive discussions about optimal strategies for integrating international students into the first-year experience and ensuring their successful adjustment

The challenge of integration, cont.

- ACE Publication: *Strengthening a Critical Resource*, Andrade and Evans, eds (2009)
a collection of articles by scholars and practitioners, offering a variety of solutions for transition support.
- *International Student Engagement: Strategies for Creating Inclusive, Connected and Purposeful Campus Environments*, Glass, Wongtrirat, and Buus (2014) - book outlining approaches to engaging international students via high-impact practices across a variety of institutional types

Best Practice Interview Excerpt

IE: How can higher education institutions improve international students' experiences on their campuses?

GLASS: I have just one suggestion, actually: Embrace assessment. This one suggestion, if done well, generates creative solutions to difficult problems. I could provide a list of “smart practices,” but my experience tells me that no strategy unequivocally improves the international student experience. However, I can point to countless examples where dedicated professionals have developed creative solutions once a good assessment process is in place.

NAFSA *International Educator* Insights Interview with Chris Glass, Sept/Oct 2016.



IUPUI Summer Bridge

- Currently serves 1,000 incoming freshmen
- Two week program before fall semester
- Focus on successful transition
- Social and academic integration
- Serves students from all majors

Program Structure

- Students divided into groups/sections of ~25
- Based on major, exploratory status, scholarship program, or common interest/theme (e.g., entrepreneurship, social justice)
- Paired with instructional team—instructor, advisor, and mentor
- Groups stay intact as first-year seminar classes in the fall semester

Community Building



Networks and Resources



Skills for Success

- Study skills and time management
- Financial literacy
- Diversity and inclusion, campus culture
- Critical reading
- Public speaking
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Academic and career exploration and planning
- Cultivation of growth mindset and resiliency
- Research and information literacy

International Participation

International students recruited on a voluntary basis beginning in 2008; participation was mandated for international freshmen beginning in 2012.

Between 40 and 70 international students attend each year.

Participation, cont.

- 2-3 sections designed just for international students with customized support
- 1 hybrid section (international + domestic students) for engineering majors
- Scattered participation in predominantly domestic, major-based sections

Questions Emerge

Following a 2014 program review, we were charged with examining international students' experiences in Summer Bridge more closely

- Is the experience valuable? Are we meeting their needs?
- Sections with international focus vs. mainstreaming

Purpose of Investigation

- Identify the needs of first-year international students to ensure successful transitions.
- Determine if a Summer Bridge Program created safe environments and ensured positive cross-cultural interactions so international students can make successful transitions.
- Examine whether an integrated or community specific summer bridge program would best meet the academic and daily life adjustment needs of international students on a large urban campus.

* An integrated/mixed section was defined as containing approximately 50% domestic students and 50% international students.

Research Questions

- Do integrated or international community-specific summer bridge programs best meet the academic and daily life adjustment needs of international students on a large urban campus?
- Do international students who participate in summer bridge have significantly better academic success outcomes compared to international students who do not participate?
- What are the key needs of international students early on in their transitions?
- What factors predict success of International students?

International Students and the IUPUI Summer Bridge Program: Safe Environments and Cross-Cultural Interactions

- Investigation conducted to examine whether an integrated or International community specific Summer Bridge program would best meet the academic and social integration of International students at IUPUI.
 - Focus group interviews were conducted with members of the instructional teams with experience teaching integrated and/or all international sections (8 faculty members, 4 advisors, and 4 peer mentors).
 - An online questionnaire was designed to assess students' experiences in integrated compared to all International Summer Bridge sections. 33 students responded. The response rate was approximately 20%.

Full details can be found: <http://irds.iupui.edu/>

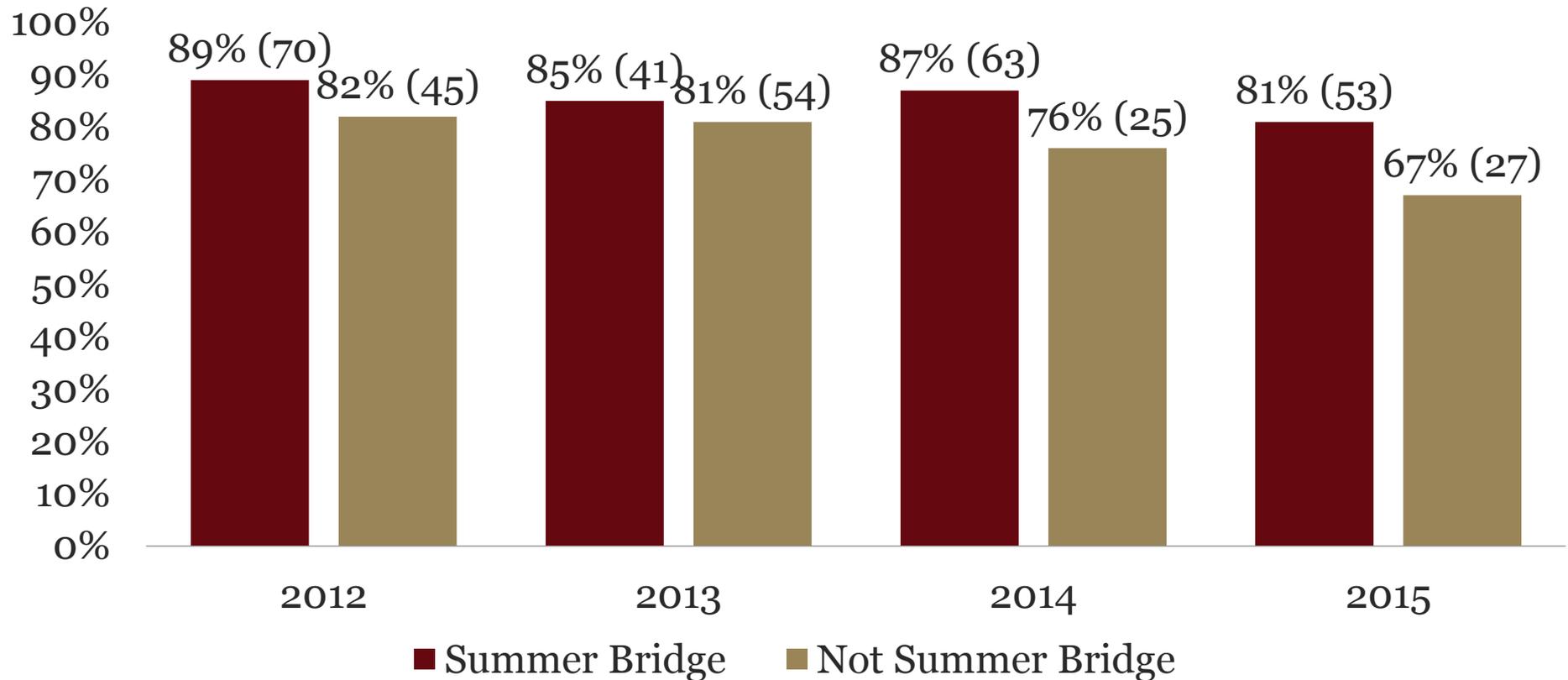
- <http://irds.iupui.edu/Portals/SDAE/Files/Documents/SBP%20International%20Student%20Study%20Summary%20Report%20Final.pdf>

All International Students and Summer Bridge Participation

	2014 Summer Bridge Participants N= 66	2014 Summer Bridge Nonparticipants N=39	2015 Summer Bridge Participants N= 56	2015 Summer Bridge Nonparticipants N=49
One-Year Retention Rate (any IU)	89%	82%	80%	71%
One-Year Retention Rate (IUPUI IN)	88%	82%	75%	71%
Fall-Spring Retention (Any IU)	97%	85%	88%	78%
Fall-Spring Retention (IUPUI IN)	97%	85%	88%	78%
First Fall Semester GPA	3.14	2.86	3.01	2.85
First Fall DFW Rate	12.50	20.57	14.64	18.10
First Fall English GPA	3.34	2.85	3.07	2.85
First-Year GPA	3.00	2.79	2.99	2.75
First-Year GPA Below 2.00	14%	13%	18%	12%
Comparison Measures				
Avg. EAP Placement Level	9.94	8.63	8.72	7.41
Age	19.00	19.31	18.84	18.88
% Female	32%	28%	43%	33%
% Campus Housing	27%	13%	25%	8%
% Paid Non-Resident Tuition	97%	69%	95%	55%

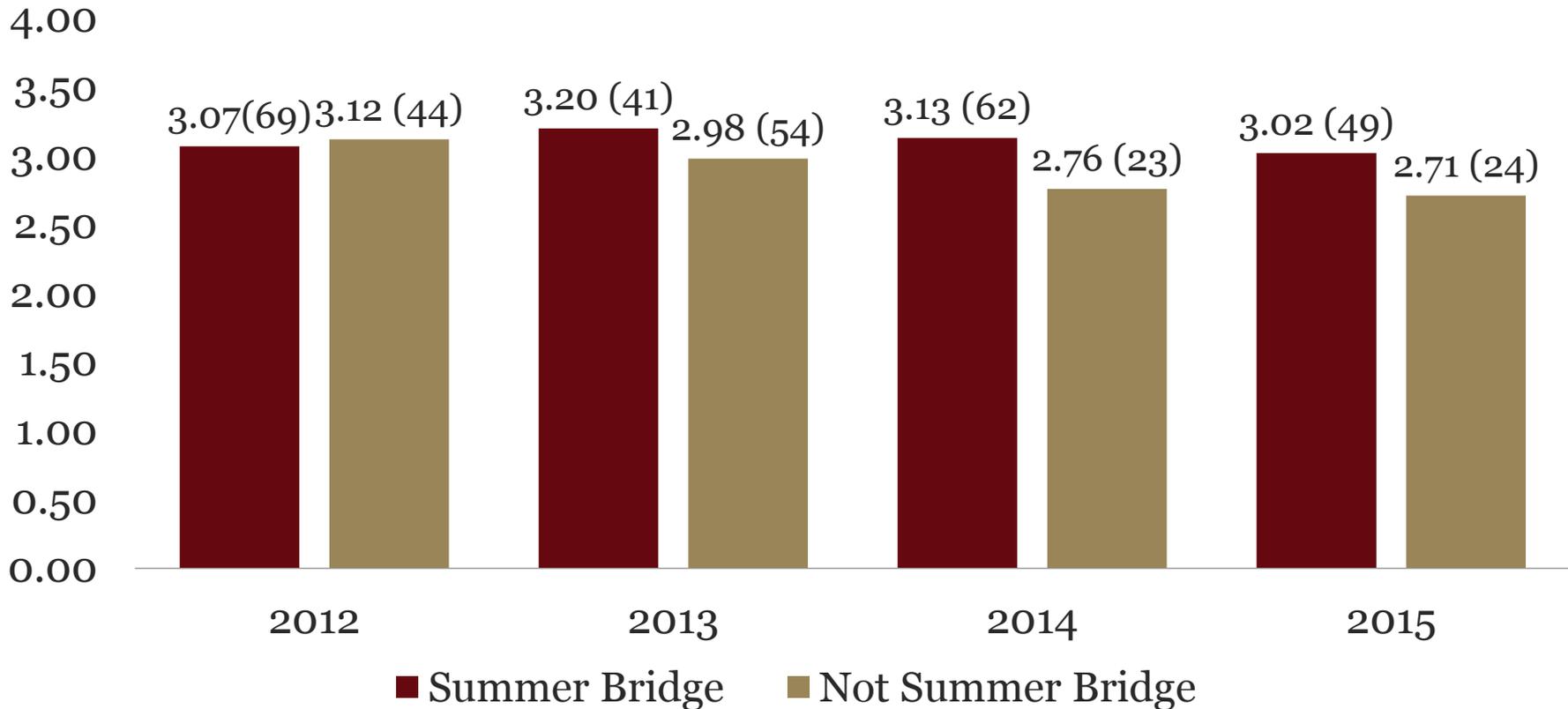
International Students and Summer Bridge Participation

**First-Time, Full-Time International Students
Non-Resident Tuition
One-Year Retention IUPUI IN**



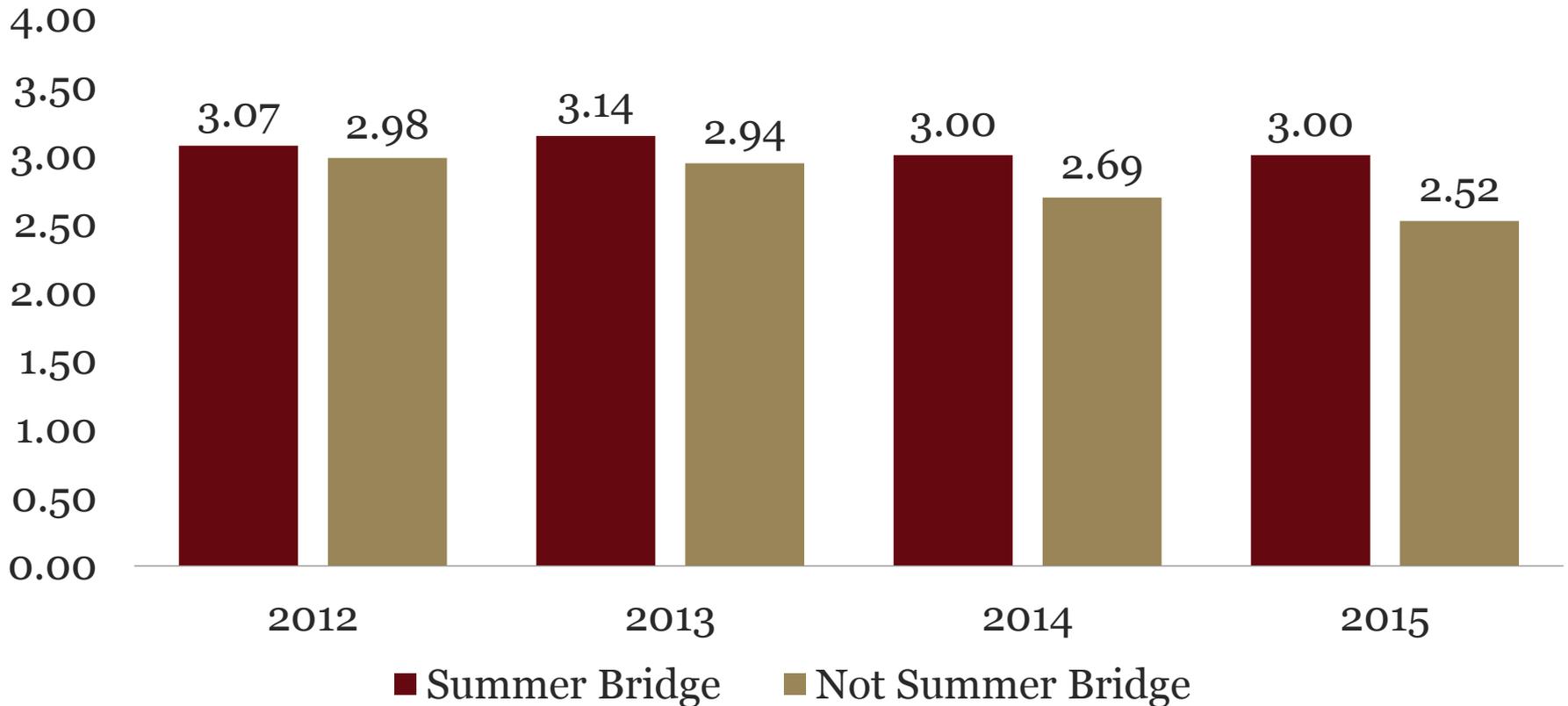
International Students and Summer Bridge Participation

First-Time, Full-Time International Students
Non-Resident Tuition
First Fall Cumulative GPA



International Students and Summer Bridge Participation

First-Time, Full-Time International Students
Non-Resident Tuition
First-Year Cumulative GPA



Focus Group Key Findings

- Many International students arrive one or two days before the start of Summer Bridge.
- Arrival complicates personal logistics for the students and planning the curriculum for instructional team members.
- Interactions between International and domestic students during Summer Bridge are highly beneficial.
- International students have varying degrees of English language proficiency that require adjustments to the Summer Bridge curriculum.
- International students with high English proficiency are best equipped to interact and keep up with domestic students, particularly in integrated sections.



Focus Group Results

“International students might only be here one day, two days before Bridge starts – and while it’s gotten better over time, they have so many issues. Our students can’t even pay attention because they’re so nervous about all the other issues that are upon them: getting a car, getting a driver’s license... all these types of issues” (Faculty Member)

“The international student groups that I have been with have been paired with American groups and they love it. I remember one group saying, ‘When are we going to do something again with the American students?’ I also think that for the non-international students it is a great opportunity to meet international students.” Advisor

“International Students want to know: Do I have housing? How do I buy a bike? How do I get a cell phone? How does this wifi work?” (Peer Mentor)

International Students Questionnaire Major Findings

- International students report having very positive experiences with Summer Bridge.
- Students in the International only section were more likely report that the program helped them adjust to college and less likely to establish close friendships with American students compared to the Integrated (Mixed) section students.

Major Findings Continued

- International students that had some time to get to know American students felt that it was fun and beneficial.
 - “Yes I got the opportunity to know some American students during Summer Bridge experience and it was fun getting to know more about them.”
- Students in International Only Summer Bridge sections mostly felt that interactions with Americans met their expectations but also felt they would benefit and enjoy more time with them.
 - “I wish we had more time with the sister section and talk more about OUR expectations rather than focusing only on the American culture.”

Major Findings Continued

- All of the respondents mentioned that they **did not feel isolated** or have **any difficulty relating to some of the other students** in Summer Bridge.
- Among the students who were in an International Only section and had decisive thoughts, 6 did not think international and domestic students should be in the same bridge section, while 10 thought they should be mixed together.
- The primary reason for those who did not desire an integrated **section was that they** wanted a more comfortable space to improve their English skills and other **American college adjustment skills.**
- When asked about suggestions to improve the Summer Bridge experiences, the top two responses were that they wanted **more activities** or they felt it could be a **shorter program.**

Implications and Conclusions

- International students who participate in Summer Bridge have higher levels of academic success compared to nonparticipants.
- Summer Bridge instructional team members advocate for an Integrated or an International students only section that is linked with an American students only section (sister section).
- English language proficiency is an important factor in understanding if International students will be more comfortable in an International vs. an Integrated section. International students with high English proficiency are best equipped (or most likely) to benefit from interactions with domestic students in integrated sections.

Implications and Conclusions

- Providing opportunities for quality interactions between International and American students is crucial to ensure successful transitions for International students and for increasing the likelihood of learning about diverse cultures among all IUPUI students.
- International students have unique, basic needs (e.g., housing, transportation, navigating the U.S. and IUPUI environment) that must be addressed early in their transitions to IUPUI to make certain that they will be academically and socially successful.

Data-driven changes

Several changes for 2016 program based on findings:

- Additional, non major-specific hybrid options created
- International sections maintained
- Section choice based on English proficiency as well as preference
- Enhanced “Sister Section” program to provide more opportunities for social integration

References

- Andrade, M.S. and Evans, N.W., eds. (2009). *International Students: Strengthening a Critical Resource*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
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