

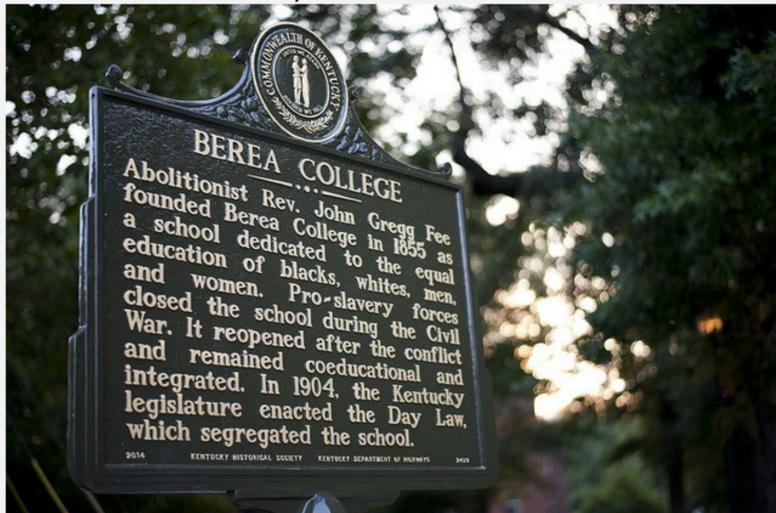
Berea Bridge: Enhancing Retention Rates for At-Risk Students

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Overview of Demographics

Berea College, the first coeducational and interracial college in the South, has a mission rooted in serving disenfranchised students. In the 21st century, this mission has been fulfilled by **only** admitting students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, primarily from first-generation homes, and providing each of them with a full tuition scholarship (currently valued at over \$157,000 over four years).

Recognizing that the college's demographics were statistically less likely to persist towards graduation, Berea Bridge was piloted in 2012 to provide additional support for select incoming students over a one month term in the summer leading up to their official first year.



Supporting Research

- Students indicate that “frontloading” institutional efforts on introducing students to college rigor and climate early has a positive impact.

(Gardner, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993)

- Students arrive at college campuses underprepared—particularly students from low-income and first-generation households and students from racial and ethnic minorities.

(Bettinger & Long, 2005; Breneman, 1998)

2015 Student Testimonial:

Bridge gave me everything that high school did not: professors who were willing to teach and respect me as an individual, assignments that would actually challenge me...to be frank, I would not have been prepared whatsoever were it not for this program.

Overview of Bridge

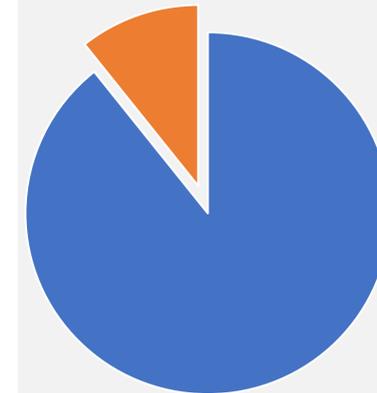
- 90 (increased from 30 in pilot year) randomly-selected incoming students
- One month in duration
- Low cost (mileage reimbursements, housing/meal plans, stipend, textbooks provided at no cost to student)
- Enrolled in classes in both humanities and quantitative/natural science disciplines.
- Regular check-ins with Bridge program staff and TAs
- Work six hours/week in on-campus labor assignment, similar to expectation during academic year
- Regular extracurricular, team-building outings, including kayaking, escape room games, and challenge courses



Results

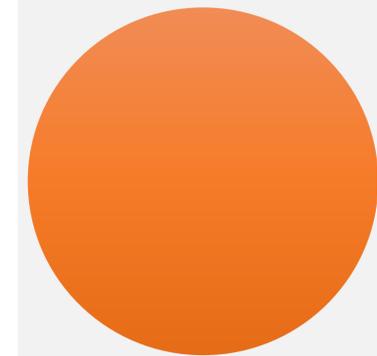
89.7%

Average first-to-second year retention rate for Bridge participants; Berea College average: 83.4%



100%

Percentage of participants who felt more prepared for college after Bridge



80%

Percentage of 2019 participants who indicated that they felt significantly more prepared to begin their first term of college after Bridge

