BRIDGE International Cultural Partnership Program

A Case Study

► **Process Improved:** Further integration of BRIDGE (Building Relationships in Diverse Global Environments) office services with the campus strategic plan. By improving the first year experience of international students and expanding experiences to encounter other cultures for domestic students, BRIDGE fosters growth in multicultural awareness and appreciation of international education. (Strategic Priority; Advance Learning and Accelerate Internationalization; Plan 2008 Campus Plan Goals 3, 5, and 6)

► **Unit(s):** International Student Services, Office of the Dean of Students

► **Customers of the Process and Their Needs:** BRIDGE specifically serves international students who are first year students or are relatively new to the University. By taking steps to “bridge” cultural differences, however, the entire campus is benefited. In the recruiting process for the American partners, students of color are specifically targeted.

► **Problem/Opportunity Statement:**

- To address the problems often faced by new international students such as language barriers, culture shock, loneliness, and college stress.
- To help new international students become oriented to the University, the community, and to the American culture.
- To provide opportunities for American/domestic students and first year international students to interact and educate each other about themselves, their cultures, perspectives, and life experiences by offering a peer partner program.
- To expose American/domestic students to diverse perspectives and foreign cultures enhancing their global competency skills.
- To create a meaningful forum for American/domestic students to connect with diverse global citizens.
- To promote international education to domestic students.

► **Changes Made:** From the evaluations, there were some constructive new changes.

- Increased the number of participants from 50 to 100 participants.
- Changed the concept of BRIDGE from a Mentor/Mentee relationship to a Partnership.
- Created a newsletter “Suspension Wire”.
- Created the “Tribe” subgroups and the “Tribal Quest” competition to facilitate networking with other partners, encourage teamwork, and increase the attendance at group events.
- Developed template for coordination of semester program.
► **Results:** From evaluations taken in Fall 2002, Spring 2003, and Fall 2003

- 20% of American partners are Students of Color.
- 87% of the American partners who responded to the surveys agreed or strongly agreed that “My BRIDGE intercultural experience helped me to understand a new culture and enhanced my cross-cultural skills and perspectives.
- 85% of the international partners who responded either agreed or strongly agreed that the “The BRIDGE program helped me to understand American culture and engage in activities unique to this country.”
- 75% of the American partners who responded planned to continue meeting with their international partners even after completing their experiences in BRIDGE. Of those who did not, the majority indicated that the reason was because of studying abroad the next semester or because of graduation.
- 90% of the international partners who responded planned to continue meeting with their American partner even after completing their experiences with BRIDGE.

► **Lessons Learned:** The relationship created was a two-way cultural exchange which was more of a “partnership” rather than a mentor/mentee relationship.

► **Next Steps:**

- Develop more effective evaluation tools.
- Increase participants’ response rate at the evaluation phase.
- Explore the idea of receiving service learning credit for BRIDGE.

► **Contact:**

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