

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

With nineteen degree-granting schools, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) is Indiana's most comprehensive higher education institution. Despite its record of achievement in academic programs and research, IUPUI has faced challenges serving entering students. It has been a successful upper-division campus (62% of graduates have at least 15 hours of transfer credit), but outcomes for beginning students have not always been as successful. Many risk factors jeopardize student success: nearly half of our students are part-time; 82% work 32 or more hours per week off campus; they are under-prepared—60% are admitted conditionally, not meeting stated admissions requirements; they live off campus—there is housing for only about 1% of the student population; 62% are first generation; and they do not have strong financial support—60% are financial aid eligible.

Intentional Comprehensive Approach Appropriate to Urban Universities

The decentralized structure of IUPUI, coupled with the challenges facing students, made it imperative that the campus develop a comprehensive and intensive approach to supporting entering students. In 1989, IUPUI formed the Council on Undergraduate Learning (with an appointed faculty representative from all the academic schools) and appointed a Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Learning to focus attention on undergraduate education. This continuing attention, particularly with entering students, resulted in the formation of University College in 1997. University College has an appointed faculty representing all the academic schools and provides a common gateway to the academic programs available to entering students, coordinates existing university resources, and develops new initiatives to promote academic excellence and enhance student persistence. The campus has provided approximately \$2 million in additional resources to fund teaching and learning initiatives for entering students.

Collaborative campus initiatives supporting the transition to college include Orientation—all students, including transfer students, participate in the Orientation programs (4,200 for Fall 2001); First-year advising—all entering students receive individual appointments at Orientation and a weekly meeting with the advisor through the first semester in the learning communities; Learning Communities—a First Year Seminar linked to a discipline-based course, with all sections framed by a common template of learning outcomes and pedagogical strategies and taught by an instructional team that is composed of a faculty member, an advisor, a student mentor, and a librarian—and often using Service Learning and other engaging pedagogies (97 sections offered by 16 schools serving 2,100 students in Fall 2001); and the Summer Academy—a two-week bridge immediately preceding the start of fall classes providing students with a jump start in math, writing, oral communication, and help with high school-to-college transition issues.

IUPUI through University College's work with all the degree-granting schools, has developed strong academic support programs for entering students, including Supplemental Instruction (seven courses); Structured Learning Assistance, an evolution of Supplemental Instruction with particular impact in mathematics and science courses (68 sections in Spring 2002); and Critical Inquiry, a credit-bearing course that challenges students to develop collegiate level abilities while supporting their success in a linked first year course (24 sections in 2001–2002). Given particular challenges with student learning in Mathematics, the campus opened the Mathematics Assistance Center in 2001. This program of

“high tech/high touch” support for all Mathematics students includes free tutoring, mentoring, and online tutorials and is open twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

IUPUI has developed, implemented, and begun assessment on a number of academic policies and procedures, including an attendance policy, course withdrawal policy, mandatory mentoring, required learning communities, and required academic support.

IUPUI has stressed faculty involvement with entering student initiatives in concert with advisors and other student support professionals. Chief among these is the Gateway Program, providing comprehensive faculty development and support for student learning for the 25 top-enrolling entering student courses. This program, which received honorable mention in the 2002 Hesburgh Award competition, has resulted in strongly increased faculty participation and student learning in these key classes. In addition, faculty involvement in University College (formal appointment similar to Graduate School status of senior, tenured faculty) in all of the degree-granting units recognizes and rewards individual involvement in the success of first year students. Faculty are also heavily involved in assessment, such as faculty fellowships—opportunities for engagement in the development and assessment of projects related to first year students (12 projects have been supported)—and Gateway grants of up to \$10,000 to support research and curricular efforts that enhance freshman courses. The campus has sought to be intentional and reflective in its work with entering students, as exemplified by First-Year Dialogues sponsored by the Office of Professional Development to enhance pedagogy and assessment techniques; and eight Gateway Forums and Town Halls each year for all members of the academic community to address issues related to first-year students.

Assessment of Initiatives

Within the context of a campus that has developed an extraordinary commitment to assessment under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Trudy Banta, first year initiatives are rigorously scrutinized for their effectiveness, and the results of such investigations are routinely used to enhance programs. The campus engages in systematic evaluations of campus programs and offices (<http://www.imir.iupui.edu/>); these data focus on broad indicators of program effectiveness such as student persistence and grade performance. University College, the hub for most of the first year initiatives, has a comprehensive assessment plan that includes learning outcomes for first year students as well as qualitative evaluations of the experiences of students, faculty, and staff who participate in first year programs <http://www.universitycollege.iupui.edu/UC/Assessment>

Findings from all of these assessment arenas, which illustrate effectiveness of first year programs at IUPUI, include:

- The retention rate for first-year, first-time students increased by over three percentage points between Fall 1999 and Fall 2000 cohorts (58.2% to 61.5%). Moreover, the fall-to-spring retention rate for the current year shows an additional 2% improvement (82% to 84%).
- Course completion rates in enhanced Gateway courses have risen to 84.1%, compared with 68.6% in traditional course sections.
- Students in Gateway courses also performed higher on common exams and received higher final grades.
- DFW rates in introductory mathematics courses dropped by 7.5% between Fall 2000–Fall 2001.
- Average GPA for Summer Academy participants was 2.7, compared with 2.1 for their peers.

- Critical Inquiry students earned higher grades in the discipline courses than did non-CI students with stronger academic profiles.
- IUPUI's inclusion in the Consortium of Institutions in the AAC&U's Greater Expectations project largely focused on IUPUI's dedication to student learning in first-year programs.
- Comprehensive, ongoing qualitative analyses of Learning Communities are used as formal feedback mechanisms to improve work with students.
- Conclusion of an external panel characterized our Learning Community Program as "...an impressive effort—one which we will...commend to colleagues elsewhere in the country seeking a model" (RUSS Critical Friends Report).