

Program Review and Assessment Committee Grant Application

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Project Title

Assessment of First Year Residential Student Learning and Success

Project Dates

August 2008-May 2009

IRB

IRB has been consulted. Project directors will notify PRAC of final approval.

Assessment of First Year Residential Student Learning and Success

Abstract

This project will evaluate the learning of first-year residential students living on campus. Currently residents of Ball Residence Hall receive support for learning via programs and academic resources from a structured first-year residential program. This project will research the effectiveness of a structured first-year residential program on student success and learning using a national assessment instrument. It is hoped that this program will ultimately benefit all first-year students living on the IUPUI campus.

Purpose of project

This project will determine the effects a first-year residential living learning community program has on student learning and success. Currently 64% of all on-campus residents are first-year students. Fifty-three percent of the residents in the Campus Apartments on the Riverwalk are first-year students, as compared to Ball Residence Hall which houses 93% first-year residents (with 7% as student staff). In 2003, the Campus Apartments on the Riverwalk opened creating an additional 737 beds, thus increasing the on-campus housing capacity to roughly 1,000 beds. With the onset of this additional housing, the decision was made to designate Ball Residence Hall as a freshman-only area, hence creating the Living Your Freshman Experience (LYFE) Program. The LYFE program is designed to positively impact student success by providing programs and services intentionally designed to meet the unique needs of first-year residential students.

In fall 2007, the LYFE program received a much needed boost with the addition of two full-time staff members including a coordinator, and an academic advisor with a joint appointment between University College and Housing and Residence Life. In addition, positions were created for four student LYFE Leaders who serve as academic mentors in the residence halls and assist with programs. This

project will measure the impact of the LYFE program in Ball Residence Hall on first-year students' development throughout their first year. The results will inform the development of a strong strategic plan and will determine next steps with the program in developing additional academic support measures.

Intended Outcomes

The results of this project will provide a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the LYFE Program on first-year residential learning. Of particular interest is the determination of whether or not first-year residential students benefit more with a structured program such as LYFE, or if first-year residential students develop at the same rate regardless of a structured program. Not only will the assessment monitor learning of first-year residential students, but it will provide a sound platform to plan and design the programs to maximize learning opportunities. It will enable the directors to observe problem areas, areas in which students demonstrate lower scores. Possessing this knowledge would allow targeted programming and support services towards that area. Additionally, the results can provide an insight to determining student success and retention rates.

Assessment Methods

The assessment tool that will be utilized is the College Success Factors Index (CSFI). The online version will be used, and it provides students with a summary of their results upon completion of the assessment. First-year residential students will be instructed to complete the assessment at the beginning of their fall semester and again at the conclusion of their spring semester. Using a pre-test/ post-test design, the data will be used to determine the level of influence that a structured first year residential program has on students' learning and success. The control group will consist of first-year residents living in the Campus Apartments with the experimental group as the residents in Ball Residence Hall, who are automatically part of the LYFE Program.

Thomson/Wadsworth details the CSFI on their website:

This instrument presents a series of statements which measures a student's ability to be successful in college over the long term. The statements refer to a student's present life style, his/her current work habits in high school or college, his/her family and his/her beliefs about college. College Success depends upon basic academic values and characteristics. How a student manages his/her time, balance his/her life, and expects to perform, affects ones chances of success. The College Success Factors Index will determine how students compare with other students in areas proven to be determinants of college success. The CSFI is an instrument containing 80 self-scoring statements designed to determine the readiness of college students to successfully complete their early years in higher education.

Many factors make for academic success in universities and colleges throughout the country. Most notably, grade point average in high school and aptitude scores, such as SAT or ACT scores seem to be the best predictors of success in colleges and universities. However, additional factors which are often unmeasured have a very important place in the retention of students and their continuing success in higher education. For example, how a student uses his/her time, or approaches the tasks assigned, may be more critical to success than aptitude and previous academic records.

The index is designed to show not only overall scores, but it also designed to demonstrate a breakdown of these eight important criteria and the individual's potential for college and university success. These personality constructs are considered conditions related to success.

They are: responsibility vs. control, competition, task precision, expectations, wellness, time

management, college involvement, and family involvement <http://www.csfi-wadsworth.com/ad_rationale.htm>.

Data Analysis

Students will receive their results immediately upon completion of the instrument. The project directors will then be able to see results for individuals as well as aggregate scores. This will be used to determine where some residents are weak in their development and to assist with planning the programs. It also will assist with identifying those students who may struggle with certain areas and to help support them through their development. The CSFI website provides more insight into how results may be utilized:

The CSFI is intended to have practical predictive value for anyone working with college bound and first-year students. As a diagnostic instrument, the College Success Factors Index allows us to look at scores in reference to a criterion success line, which we call the "watchline." For example, during the freshman year in college, low scores may be examined and students given learning opportunities to improve their score through a first-year seminar or through one on one advising. This will allow students to increase their competencies necessary for success and to become aware of attitudinal problems that might stand in their way. A student may have an overall CSFI score high enough for university work, but we may find that the score for individual factors are below the "watchline." Customized interventions may be employed during the first year of college so he is able to better persist as he progresses with his other courses in college <http://www.csfi-wadsworth.com/ad_rationale.htm>.

Methods of Evaluation and Dissemination of Results

A final written report will be submitted to PRAC at the end of the spring 2009 semester detailing

the use of the funds towards the assessment. Results of the pre and post tests will assist in determining if the first year residential program should be expanded to include all first year residential students including those living in the Campus Apartments. Additionally, findings will be shared with colleagues in the Division of Student Life, University College, and through the Council on Retention and Graduation. Having this data and experience working with the assessment will allow project directors to present at national conferences and share the findings with other colleagues.

Use of Findings for Program Improvement

With the recent changes to the structure of the LYFE program, it is imperative to evaluate its impact on first-year residential students and use these results to determine if additional resources are needed for first-year residents not currently in the LYFE program. Looking to the future of on-campus housing, it is important to assess the needs of an inclusive first-year residential program. The goal is to identify the program's needs, determine what areas can be strengthened, and decide what more can be provided to students to ensure their academic success. The findings from this assessment will prove invaluable in developing the strategic plan for first-year residential programs in Housing and Residence Life to improve student success and learning.

Budget

In order to perform this assessment, residents need access to the online survey. Access to the online survey allows them to take the test on two separate occasions and costs roughly \$11.00 per student. It will cost about \$7,150 for 650 to gain access to the online tool. The PRAC Grant of \$2,500 would cover a portion of the costs of performing this assessment. Therefore, the total proposed cost is \$2,500.

References

College Success Factors Index. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning. October 16, 2007 http://www.csfi-wadsworth.com/ad_rationale.htm