



Best Practices in Immigrant Education

Name of Community College: Miami Dade College

Title of Program: Honors Bridge

Type of Program: EAP (English for Academic Purposes)

Primary Division(s) or Department(s) involved: Department of ESL & Foreign Languages

1. Need for Program

The Honors Bridge Cohort provides an opportunity for highly motivated and academically strong ESL students with an opportunity to prepare for application to Miami Dade College's prestigious Honors College. The program is offered in the spring semester and has been in place since 2004.

2. Brief Description of Program

The Honors Bridge program is a special option for students in the terminal level (Level 6) of the English for Academic Purposes program at the North Campus of Miami Dade College. As mentioned above, it was created in order to provide highly motivated and academically strong students with both a challenging curriculum and an opportunity to prepare for application to the prestigious Honors College of Miami Dade College.

3. Specific Population Served

As mentioned above, the Honors Bridge is designed to serve highly motivated and academically strong students in the last level of the EAP program. They need to meet the following entrance requirements: have a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale, provide 2 letters of recommendation, and submit an essay explaining why they would like to participate in the Honors Bridge cohort. About 33 % of the students in the Honors Bridge cohort have the intention of applying to the Honors College of Miami Dade College.

4. Goals and Objectives

The major goal of the English for Academic Purposes program at Miami Dade College is to provide English language instruction that will prepare students to be successful in college credit programs. The six-level program moves students from beginning through advanced study of the English language where the skills of reading, writing, listening/speaking, and understanding and using grammar are taught in separate courses. Writing and speech labs supplement coursework at each of the six levels.

The Honors Bridge program curriculum goes beyond the competencies that are required of standard Level 6 classes in the EAP program. The major differences are the following:

- There is a required service learning component in which students must do a minimum of twenty hours of service. Projects typically involve students and their professors, which helps to promote a positive student/faculty relationship. Past projects have included work with Habitat for Humanity, Hands-On Miami, Project SHINE, and Ronald McDonald House.
- Students must write a research paper in their writing course and make formal speeches in their speaking/listening course.
- Students spend time with current Honors College students who mentor them.

5. Outcomes

The Honors Bridge program has had a positive impact on retention. Activities like spending time with Honors College mentors and participating in service learning with their instructors make the students feel connected to the college, a major factor in retention. Also, ESL students may feel that certain opportunities are beyond their reach because of their status as second language learners. The Honors Bridge program provides academically strong ESL students with the preparation to apply to the prestigious Honors College and, more importantly, to be successful once there. Indeed, every Honors Bridge student accepted into the Honors College has completed the rigorous program and gone on to four-year institutions to finish a bachelor's degree.

Some of the other benefits of participation in the Honors Bridge include the following:

- Fulfill the service learning requirement necessary to apply to the Honors College. As a result of their service learning experience, some students are offered internships or jobs with a community service agency.
- Learn how to write a research paper using MLA/APA. The standard Level 6 writing course does not include the research paper; as a result, the Honors Bridge students have a head start on the work that will be required of them in ENC 1102.
- Receive tutoring from Honors College students, who also mentor them in the academic as well as non-academic aspects of the Honors College.
- Practice the interview process in their speech class in order to prepare for the oral interview for the Honors College.
- Develop study groups and lifelong friendships.

6. Collaboration

The Honors Bridge cohort works closely with the Center for Community Involvement in order to arrange for the service learning component of the program.

7. Success Factors

The driving factor behind the success of this program has been the willingness of the faculty to work as a team in all phases of the program, from planning the curriculum to participating with the students in a service learning activity.

8. Challenges Faced and Overcome

The Honors Bridge program is in reality a learning community and, as is often the case with learning communities, it requires some special attention in scheduling. For example, in order to provide an opportunity for students to participate together in their service learning project, classes generally meet three days a week rather than five, which ensures that students will have time to do their service learning. This is an important factor for Miami Dade College students since most of them work when they are not in class. Over the years, the various chairpersons of the department have facilitated the scheduling of the Honors Bridge classes.

9. Funding and Sustainability

The Honors Bridge program does not require any special funding. It is part of the Department of ESL & Foreign Languages.

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