

## BRIDGES TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

### **Summary**

Bridges to a Brighter Future is a comprehensive college access program for Greenville County high school and college students who have potential but whose family income is below the poverty level. Most of our students are living in seriously challenging circumstances. The program's ambitious mission is to break the cycle of poverty and low-educational attainment by equipping students with the tools and support needed to graduate from high school and enroll and graduate from college. Bridges accomplishes its mission by engaging students in an intensive seven-year program beginning after ninth grade and ending at college graduation. The program includes three components: a summer program, Saturday College, and Crossing the Bridge. Students attend a four-week summer residential program on the Furman University campus for three consecutive summers during high school, participate in a year-round monthly academic support program called Saturday College, and successfully transition to college through Crossing the Bridge, a retention program designed to ensure college graduation. Bridges to a Brighter Future is a comprehensive program that transforms students' lives by building academic success, self-confidence, resiliency, leadership, and character.

Students are nominated in ninth grade by their classroom teachers, guidance counselors, and the community. To be selected, students go through an intensive selection process including an application and interview. Twenty-five students are selected each year based on their "need" for the program. The new rising tenth graders join two classes of continuing rising junior and senior-level students for a total of approximately 75 students in the high school component. Students may return for two consecutive summers if they maintain a 3.0 grade point average and remain in good standing with the Bridges program and their school. After completing the high school component, in order to successfully transition to college and graduate, students receive support through Crossing the Bridge. Currently, 43 students receive services through Crossing the Bridge for a total of 118 student participants.

Bridges to a Brighter Future began in 1997 through a gift from a Greenville philanthropist. It began solely as a four-week summer academic enrichment program. From 1997 to the present, the Bridges program model and outcomes have continued to evolve to meet the needs of its students. Through a grant in 2006, Bridges expanded from a summer program only to include a year-round tutoring program called "Saturday College" held one Saturday a month throughout the academic year. Saturday College continues to be funded annually through a Jolley Foundation grant. In 2010, through Crossing the Bridge, the program expanded to better assist students in transitioning to college, staying in college, and graduating from college.

### **Demographics**

- *Target Settings:* Urban, rural, suburban
- *Target Groups Served:* At-risk students who have thus far succeeded in school  
Student Selection Criteria: low income (eligible for free or reduced lunch), need for the program, B- average, clean disciplinary record
- *Districts Served:* Greenville County Schools

### **Research and Evaluation**

*What national or other research was considered during the development of this program/initiative?  
Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works.*

Many important supporting details pertaining to research and evaluation may be found in a separate document entitled "Bridges to a Brighter Future – Research & Evaluation."

Bridges to a Brighter Future currently implements a comprehensive evaluation process of student success, outcomes, and program impact. Our annual evaluation efforts to measure student success include compiling and maintaining data on grade point average, course load, test scores, and involvement. We also maintain notes on student challenges and family issues. To measure outcomes, we maintain data on high school graduation, college enrollment, and college graduation. To measure college graduation, we participate in the National Student Clearinghouse which provides access to college enrollment and graduation data. Program impact is measured annually through student and parent evaluations of the summer program and Saturday College program. The evaluations are self-reporting and measure overall satisfaction, programmatic satisfaction, and perceived impact on academic success, self-esteem, leadership, communication, goal setting, and conflict resolution. The significant impact of Bridges, is best described by the students themselves. See powerful testimony or program outcomes at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iAjKU1kRel&feature=relmfu>

#### Goals and Actual Outcomes:

1. 100% retention of students from year one to year three of the program. Actual: 89%
2. 100% of program participants maintain a 3.0 grade point average. Actual: GPA: 3.648
3. 100% high school graduation or GED. Actual: 100%
4. 100% college or military enrollment. Actual: 95%
5. 80% attendance rate in Saturday College. Actual: 79%
6. 100% of Bridges graduates enrolling in college will participate in the Crossing the Bridge program.\*
7. 100% of Bridges students enrolling in college will graduate from college or earn a post-secondary certification in a trade.\*

\*Crossing the Bridge began in summer 2011.

#### In the News

Bridges to a Brighter Future was selected as one of ten college access programs across the country to be studied in "A Blueprint for Success: Case Studies of Successful Pre-College Outreach Programs," sponsored by the Educational Policy Institute and TG. [http://www.educationalpolicy.org/publications/pubpdf/TG\\_CASESTUDY.pdf](http://www.educationalpolicy.org/publications/pubpdf/TG_CASESTUDY.pdf).

Bridges to a Brighter Future is similar to the Federally-Funded Upward Bound program.  
Data Location: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/ub-ubms-outcomes-2004.pdf>

As Reported by Education Week, Diplomas Count 2011: [www.edweek.org/go/dc11](http://www.edweek.org/go/dc11)

#### Resources

- *Annual Cost:* \$425,000
- *Funding Sources:* Endowment, Grants, Foundations, Donors
- *Staffing Needs:* Two full-time, one part-time staff
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs:* Social Worker, Internship Program, Tuition and textbook scholarships, Replication manual
- *Partner Organizations:* Furman University, Greenville County Schools, Peace Center, Jolley Foundation, Graham Foundation, AT&T Foundation, Fluor Foundation, Michelin, Certus Bank, Warehouse Theatre, HHMI-Bridges, Clemson Youth Learning Institute, Jacobs Engineering, Spinx Family Foundation, ScanSource, Greenville Humane Society, Triune Mercy Center, Frazee Dream Center, and private supporters and donors.

#### Contact Information

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<http://bridgestoabrighterfuture.org/index.html>



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