

## **BRIDGES TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE**

### **Program Description**

Bridges to a Brighter Future is a comprehensive college access and pre-college academic enrichment program for Greenville County ninth-through-twelfth-grade high school students, who have potential but whose family income is below the poverty level and many of whom are living in difficult and seriously challenging circumstances. It began in 1997 through a gift from a Greenville woman who did not want to see young people's potential uncultivated due to barriers such as family financial circumstances, lack of knowledge, exposure, or encouragement. Bridges to a Brighter Future literally changes lives and is one of the distinctive community outreach programs in Greenville County. The program model has been duplicated at Elon University and received the **Summer Excellence Award** from the National Summer Learning Association, the **Reader's Choice Award** from G-The Magazine of Greenville, and the Upstate **Diversity Leadership Award** from The Riley Institute.

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, enroll in post-secondary education, and graduate with a post-secondary degree. This comprehensive program transforms students' lives by building academic success, self-confidence, resiliency, leadership, and character. Bridges accomplishes its mission by engaging students in an intensive eight-year program that begins after ninth grade and ends after college graduation. The Bridges program includes a four-week summer residential program on the Furman University campus, a year-round monthly program called *Bridges Saturday College*, and *Crossing the Bridge*, a transition program to ensure our students retention and graduation from college.

Students are nominated in ninth grade by their classroom teachers or guidance counselors and go through an intensive selection process including an application and interview. Twenty-five to thirty 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. 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. Students continue in the program through college graduation if they maintain a 2.0 grade point average in 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.
- *Schools/Districts Served:* Greenville County Schools

### **Research and Evaluation**

*The development of program/initiative is based on/grounded in what research? Describe the evidence that shows the program/initiative works. Description of data collection and analysis should be included.*

Many important supporting details pertaining to research and evaluation may be found in a separate document entitled "Bridges to a Brighter Future – Research & Evaluation". See also Parent and Student Evaluations from Summer 2010.

Based on the below stated goals, we collect the following data to evaluate effectiveness.

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: 3.689
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. (Crossing the Bridge is beginning for the first time this summer 2011.)
7. 100% of Bridges students enrolling in college will graduate from college or earn a post-secondary certification in a trade. (Crossing the Bridge is beginning for the first time this summer 2011.)

In addition to the above data collection and measurement outlined above for each goal, we survey student and parent satisfaction once a year after Saturday College, the summer program, and Crossing the Bridge. We use the survey feedback to make changes in the programs to ensure the specific needs of the students are met and the program is effective. In order for our stated goals to be achieved, the students must be learning and growing from the experiences and opportunities we provide. By surveying, we are ensuring we are doing all we can to keep them engaged and connected to Bridges to a Brighter Future.

#### **Related Statistics:**

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

#### **Upward Bound Data:**

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>

#### **Program Resources**

- *Annual Cost*: \$425,000
- *Funding Sources*: Endowment, Grants, Foundations, Donors
- *Staffing Needs*: Two full-time, one part-time staff
- *Infrastructure/Equipment Needs*: Funding to create a program model replication manual.  
Equipment Needs: TI-84 calculators for students, laptop computers for students, quality digital camera for taking pictures.
- *Partner Organizations*: Furman University, Greenville County Schools, Junior League of Greenville, Furman Class of 2009, Clemson Youth Learning Institute, Jacobs Engineering, Diligent Hands Gracious Hearts, Central Community Ministries, Greenville County Museum of Art, The Warehouse Theatre

#### **Contact Information**

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