

Research Highlights and Conclusions

- International students report having very positive experiences with Summer Bridge. Students in the International only section were more likely report that the program helped them adjust to college and less likely to establish close friendships with American students compared to the Integrated (Mixed) section students. International students who participate in Summer Bridge have higher levels of academic success compared to nonparticipants.
- Summer Bridge instructional team members advocate for an Integrated or an International students only section that is linked with an American students only section (sister section).
- English language proficiency is an important factor in understanding if International students will be more comfortable in an International vs. an Integrated section. International students with high English proficiency are best equipped (or most likely) to benefit from interactions with domestic students in mixed sections.
- Providing opportunities for quality interactions between International and American students is crucial to ensure successful transitions for International students and for increasing the likelihood of learning about diverse cultures among all IUPUI students.
- International students have unique, basic needs (e.g., housing, transportation, navigating the U.S. and IUPUI environment) that must be addressed early in their transitions to IUPUI to make certain that they will be academically and socially successful.

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The purpose of this study was to examine international student experiences in the Summer Bridge program and to determine if participants should be in integrated sections or specifically designed international only sections. Summer Bridge participants are incoming students who spend two weeks prior to the beginning of fall classes engaging in networking with other students, faculty, and staff. Participants also receive support in math, writing, and time management. The primary goal of the program is to facilitate the successful transition of incoming students to IUPUI. For international students, the program is designed to help them achieve a deeper understanding of what it means to study in the United States, while bolstering their skills to navigate challenges.

Developing the academic and personal skills required for success in college can be challenging for all students. However, international students may face even greater barriers to acquiring these skills due to their cultural and language differences that are not experienced by domestic students. Despite the growing presence of international student enrollment on college campuses throughout the U.S., this population seems to have some difficulty transitioning into U.S. higher education. In addition to understanding the international student participants' experiences, this summary report provides an assessment of the perspectives of the Summer Bridge Program advisors, faculty members, and peer mentors who worked with this population.

Mixed-Method Investigation

To help understand the international student experience, students who participated in an Integrated or an International Only section in 2013, 2014, or 2015 were administered a survey instrument. Additionally, focus groups were facilitated with Summer Bridge advisors, faculty, and peer mentors who participated in an Integrated (mixed) or International Only section in 2013, 2014, or 2015. An Integrated/Mixed section was defined as containing approximately 50% domestic students and 50% international students. Domestic students are U.S. citizens or permanent residents; international students hold a nonimmigrant status but are primarily F-1 or J-1 student visa holders. A small number of domestic students (<5%) who self-identified as international were permitted to join the International section. A series of quantitative analyses were also conducted to understand the effects of Summer Bridge participation on academic success outcomes.

Quantitative Analyses of Academic Success for Summer Bridge Participants

A series of analyses were conducted to examine the effects of Summer Bridge participation on International students' academic success outcomes (retention rates and academic performance). Additionally, analyses were conducted to explore International student performance by Summer Bridge section type.

Results shown in Tables 1 and 2 suggest that International students who participate in the Summer Bridge program have higher levels of academic success compared to nonparticipants. However, Summer Bridge participants had higher English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Placement Levels*, were more likely to be female, and were more likely to live on campus than nonparticipants. Although international students in the Engineering Integrated section had higher EAP placement levels, they did not have higher levels of academic performance (Fall or First-Year GPAs) compared to students in the All International student sections. (Note: A higher EAP placement level indicates that the student is required to take *fewer* EAP support courses).

*IUPUI policy permits multiple options for demonstrating minimum English proficiency for admission which are not comparable; therefore, level of EAP course placement was used as an indicator of English language proficiency.

Table 1. 2014 and 2015 Summer Bridge Participants Compared to Nonparticipants: Academic Success and Characteristic

	2014 Summer Bridge Participants N= 66	2014 Summer Bridge Nonparticipants N=39	2015 Summer Bridge Participants N= 56	2015 Summer Bridge Nonparticipants N=49
One-Year Retention Rate (any IU)	89%	82%		
One-Year Retention Rate (IUPUI IN)	88%	82%		
Fall-Spring Retention (Any IU)	97%	85%	88%	78%
Fall-Spring Retention (IUPUI IN)	97%	85%	88%	78%
First Fall Semester GPA	3.14	2.86	3.01	2.85
First Fall DFW Rate	12.50	20.57	14.64	18.10
First Fall English GPA	3.34	2.85	3.07	2.85
First-Year GPA	3.00	2.79		
First-Year GPA Below 2.00	14%	13%		
Comparison Measures				
Avg. EAP Placement Level	9.94	8.63	8.72	7.41
Age	19.00	19.31	18.84	18.88
% Female	32%	28%	43%	33%
% Campus Housing	27%	13%	25%	8%

Note: Bolded items are significantly different or meaningful different based on independent samples t-test or chi-square test results.

Table 2. 2014 and 2015 International Summer Bridge Sections and Academic Success

Section Type	2014 Summer Bridge Program				2015 Summer Bridge Program			
	N	Avg. EAP Placement Level	One-Year Retention IUPUI IN	FY GPA	N	Avg. EAP Placement Level	Fall-Spring Retention IUPUI IN	Fall GPA
International 1	17	9.00	88%	2.83	21	7.17	90%	3.22
International 2	18	10.21	89%	3.32	16	9.08	87%	2.98
International 3	15	9.36	80%	2.86				
Engineering	12	12.57	100%	2.94	9	11.22	78%	2.76

Methods for Student Survey and Focus Groups with Instructional Team Members

Recruitment Procedures for Survey

The Office of Institutional Research and Decision identified the names and contact information for all 2013, 2014, and 2015 international Summer Bridge participants.

Data Analysis for Survey

In January 2016, international Summer Bridge students were e-mailed and asked to voluntarily complete a survey about their experience. Student responses to the survey were anonymous. Participants were given 6 weeks to respond to questions related to concerns about college, interactions with domestic peers, developing connections and sense of belonging, and their overall experience at IUPUI after Summer Bridge. The first four questions, were in Likert-scale form (1=*Strongly Disagree*; 2=*Disagree*; 3=*Neutral*; 4=*Agree*; 5=*Strongly Agree*). The subsequent 7 questions were in free response form. Two methods were used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative sections of the survey. For the Qualitative section, content analysis was used to evaluate student responses. For the quantitative section, a simple descriptive statistical analysis was used to determine the percentage of student's responses to each question. In general, students tended to respond to questions on the positive side of the scale. The small sample size did not allow inferential statistical tests such as an independent sample t-tests to be performed.

Recruitment Procedures for Focus Group Interviews

The Summer Bridge Program identified members of the 2013, 2014, 2015 leadership team (advisors, faculty, and peer mentors) who were involved in a mixed or international only section. Advisors, faculty, and peer mentors who agreed to voluntarily participate in the focus group interviews were asked to come to a focus group interview scheduled throughout January and February. Prior to the start of interviews, participants were provided an IRB approved Study Information Sheet. Only participants and interviewers, Jessica Rauch, Bridget O'Mera, and Rosemarie Lerma, were present during the focus group sessions. The interviews lasted 30 minutes to one hour in duration and were audio recorded.

Demographics of Focus Group Participants

A composition of advisors, faculty, and student peer mentors from international and mixed sections were interviewed. Six advisors were identified and four were interviewed. All have been a part of international sections and one of those had also been a part of a mixed section. Ten faculty members were identified and eight were interviewed. Six were in international sections and two were in mixed sections. Twenty three peer mentors were identified and four were interviewed. Two were in mixed sections and two were in international sections.

Data Analysis for Focus Group Interviews

Analytical procedures were designed to facilitate an exploratory content analysis of focus interviews. This report considers an *overall* view of *all* advisors, faculty, and peer mentors, respectively, who participated in an interview. The main goal is to understand and describe notable themes and patterns of discussion found across the respective program staff.

Content Analysis for Focus Group Interviews

The focus group audio files were transcribed verbatim and a content analysis was employed. Patton (2002) describes content analysis as “referring to any qualitative data reduction or sense making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (p. 453).

Examination of Student Survey Responses

Key quantitative analysis findings

- There were few major differences in the student's responses to their concerns about college before they arrived at IUPUI. There were no differences by section types with regard to students' feelings that Summer Bridge enabled "confidence that I could meet the academic and course work demands at IUPUI" or "establish close friendships with students from different backgrounds."
- Students in mixed summer bridge sections had higher levels of agreement with the statement "academic assignments prepared me well for college" with 88% indicating either agree or strongly agree compared to students in the International only sections (72%).
- 88% of respondents in the mixed sections indicated that Summer Bridge provided them with "meaningful class discussions".
- 75% of International Summer Bridge students agreed or strongly agreed that participating in Summer Bridge enabled them to "adjust to college life".
- 75% of students in a Mixed section agreed or strongly agreed that Summer Bridge enabled them to "establish close friendships with American students" compared with 48% of students in International sections.
- Students in an International section indicated higher levels of agreement that after Summer Bridge, they had a satisfactory opportunities to "adjust to college", "feel like I was part of a community", and "feel like I am part of the IUPUI community or that I fit in here".

Key qualitative analysis findings

- International students that had some time to get to know American students felt that it was fun and beneficial. An example student comment is "Yes I got the opportunity to know some American students during Summer Bridge experience and it was fun getting to know more about them."
- Students in International Only Summer Bridge sections mostly felt that interactions with Americans met their expectations but also felt they would benefit and enjoy more time with them. For example, "I wish we had more time with the sister section and talk more about OUR expectations rather than focusing only on the American culture."
- All of the respondents mentioned that they did not feel isolated or have any difficulty relating to some of the other students in Summer Bridge.
- Among the students who were in an International Only section, 6 did not think international and domestic students should be in the same bridge section, while 10 thought they should be mixed together. The primary reason for those who did not desire an integrated section was that they wanted a more comfortable space to improve their English skills and other American college adjustment skills.
- When asked about suggestions to improve the Summer Bridge experiences, the top two responses were that they wanted more activities or they felt it could be a shorter program.

Survey demographics

Shown in Table 3 is a breakdown of survey participants and the entire sample by gender, high school GPA, IU cumulative GPA, retention at IUPUI or any IU, and English proficiency overall (2013-2015). It is notable that in terms of gender, respondents to the survey were split almost evenly (49% Female, 51% Male) while the entire sample contained a higher proportion of males (35% Female, 65% Male). All respondents were retained at an IU campus whereas 87% of the entire sample was retained at an IU campus. Another meaningful finding is that the likelihood of needing additional English instruction was 77% for respondents and 82% for the entire sample.

Table 3: Student Demographic Characteristics

	Survey Participants	Entire Sample
<i>Percentages</i>		
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	49%	35%
Male	51%	65%
<u>High School GPA</u>		
Lower than 2.00	54%	63%
2.00-2.49	0%	<1%
2.50-2.99	6%	4%
3.00-3.49	11%	15%
3.50 or higher	29%	17%
<u>IU Cumulative GPA</u>		
Lower than 2.00	49%	41%
2.00-2.49	3%	8%
2.50-2.99	6%	11%
3.00-3.49	11%	13%
3.50 or higher	31%	26%
<u>Retained at IUPUI</u>		
Yes	94%	92%
No	6%	8%
<u>Retained any IU</u>		
Yes	100%	87%
No	0%	13%
<u>English Proficiency</u>		
No Supplemental English	23%	18%
Need Additional English Instruction	77%	82%

Entire Sample N=111 for Retention Variables; N=167 for Gender, High School GPA, IU GPA, English Proficiency
 Respondents N=18 for Retention Variables; N=35 for Gender, High School GPA, IU GPA, English Proficiency

Table 4: Quantitative Responses to Question 1

Before arriving at IUPUI and participating in Summer Bridge, my biggest concerns about college were...									
Question		N	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
feeling welcomed and supported	Int	25	3.88	1.05	4%	4%	24%	36%	32%
	Mixed	8	3.75	0.71	0%	0%	38%	50%	13%
being able to adjust to college life	Int	25	3.96	0.89	0%	4%	28%	36%	32%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.64	0%	0%	25%	63%	13%
being able to make connections with other students	Int	25	3.92	0.86	0%	8%	16%	52%	24%
	Mixed	8	3.75	1.04	0%	13%	25%	38%	25%
being able to communicate with faculty	Int	25	3.68	0.95	0%	12%	28%	40%	20%
	Mixed	8	4.00	0.53	0%	0%	13%	75%	13%
being able to communicate with advisors	Int	25	3.84	0.90	0%	12%	12%	56%	20%
	Mixed	8	4.00	1.07	0%	13%	13%	38%	38%
being able to communicate with staff	Int	25	3.80	0.91	0%	8%	28%	40%	24%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.64	0%	0%	25%	63%	13%
feeling like I belong at IUPUI	Int	25	3.92	0.91	0%	4%	32%	32%	32%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.64	0%	0%	25%	63%	13%
being able to meet academic or course work demands at IUPUI	Int	25	4.16	0.80	0%	4%	12%	48%	36%
	Mixed	8	4.25	0.89	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Table 5: Quantitative Responses to Question 2

Thinking about the academic experience, participating in Summer Bridge provided me with...									
Question		N	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a class environment that respects students from different backgrounds	Int	25	4.44	0.77	0%	0%	16%	24%	60%
	Mixed	8	4.38	0.52	0%	0%	0%	63%	38%
meaningful class discussions	Int	25	3.92	0.91	0%	8%	20%	44%	28%
	Mixed	8	4.00	0.53	0%	0%	13%	75%	13%
meaningful class assignments	Int	25	3.84	0.99	0%	12%	20%	40%	28%
	Mixed	8	4.25	0.71	0%	0%	13%	50%	38%
academic assignments that prepared me well for college	Int	25	3.88	0.97	0%	12%	16%	44%	28%
	Mixed	8	4.13	0.64	0%	0%	13%	63%	25%
feelings of confidence that I could meet the academic and course work demands at IUPUI.	Int	25	4.00	0.96	0%	8%	20%	36%	36%
	Mixed	7	4.00	0.58	0%	0%	14%	71%	14%

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Table 6: Quantitative Responses to Question 3

Thinking about the social experience, participating in Summer Bridge enabled me to...									
Question		N	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
feel welcomed and supported at IUPUI	Int	25	4.08	0.91	0%	4%	24%	32%	40%
	Mixed	8	4.13	0.83	0%	0%	25%	38%	38%
adjust to college life	Int	25	4.20	0.71	0%	0%	16%	48%	36%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.99	0%	13%	13%	50%	25%
make connections with other students	Int	25	4.32	0.63	0%	0%	8%	52%	40%
	Mixed	8	4.13	0.64	0%	0%	13%	63%	25%
interact with American students	Int	25	3.60	1.12	4%	12%	28%	32%	24%
	Mixed	8	4.00	0.53	0%	0%	13%	75%	13%
interact with students from different backgrounds	Int	25	4.24	0.72	0%	0%	16%	44%	40%
	Mixed	7	4.00	0.58	0%	0%	14%	71%	14%
establish close friendships with American students	Int	25	3.40	1.00	4%	12%	36%	36%	12%
	Mixed	8	4.13	0.83	0%	0%	25%	38%	38%
establish close friendships with students from different backgrounds	Int	24	4.00	0.88	0%	4%	25%	38%	33%
	Mixed	8	4.00	0.93	0%	13%	0%	63%	25%
feel like I belong at IUPUI	Int	25	4.04	0.79	0%	0%	28%	40%	32%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.99	0%	13%	13%	50%	25%
communicate effectively with faculty	Int	25	4.08	0.76	0%	0%	24%	44%	32%
	Mixed	8	4.50	0.53	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
communicate effectively with advisors	Int	25	4.24	0.66	0%	0%	12%	52%	36%
	Mixed	8	4.13	0.99	0%	13%	0%	50%	38%
communicate effectively with staff	Int	25	4.08	0.76	0%	0%	24%	44%	32%
	Mixed	8	4.13	0.64	0%	0%	13%	63%	25%

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Table 7: Quantitative Responses to Question 4

Thinking about my experience at IUPUI the first semester AFTER Summer Bridge, I had satisfactory opportunities to...									
Question		N	Mean	SD	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
interact with American students	Int	25	3.52	0.96	4%	8%	32%	44%	12%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.35	0%	0%	13%	88%	0%
interact with students from different backgrounds	Int	25	4.00	0.87	0%	8%	12%	52%	28%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.35	0%	0%	13%	88%	0%
establish close friendships with American students	Int	25	3.68	0.95	4%	4%	28%	48%	16%
	Mixed	8	3.75	0.46	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%
establish close friendships with students from different backgrounds	Int	25	3.96	1.02	4%	4%	16%	44%	32%
	Mixed	8	3.75	0.71	0%	13%	0%	88%	0%
adjust to college life	Int	25	4.04	0.79	0%	4%	16%	52%	28%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.64	0%	0%	25%	63%	13%
feel like I was part of a community	Int	25	4.08	0.81	0%	4%	16%	48%	32%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.99	0%	13%	13%	50%	25%
feel like I am part of the IUPUI community or that I fit in here	Int	25	4.04	0.89	0%	4%	24%	36%	36%
	Mixed	8	3.88	0.83	0%	13%	0%	75%	13%

1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Examination of Focus Group Interview Responses

Key Findings

- Most of the international students arrive one or two days before the start of Summer Bridge.
- Arrival complicates personal logistics for the students and planned curriculum for institutional team members.
- Interactions between international and domestic students during Bridge are highly beneficial.
- International students have varying degrees of English language proficiency that require adjustments to the Summer Bridge curriculum.
- International students with high English proficiency are best equipped to interact and keep up with domestic students, particularly in mixed sections.

Primary themes and examples of responses

The primary themes relate to the central question of this study; should international students be placed in intergrated/mixed sections with domestic students or should they be placed in international student only sections for Summer Bridge? Summer Bridge leaders were asked a series of questions related to their role in the program, their experience in the mixed and international only sections, planned and observed interactions between domestic and international only sections, as well as their opinions about type of section would best serve the needs of all students. The following themes emerged from Advisors, Faculty, and Peer Mentors, respectively:

Arrival and Housing Logistics (Advisors)

- “The trickiest part is they come so late in the summer.”

Arrival and Housing Logistics (Faculty)

- “I would say one of the biggest obstacles we had is housing. I don’t know how doable this is, if we can have all international students to live on-campus for these two weeks. Instead of being scattered all over and having to deal with paying their utilities, figuring out going “Some [international students] have just arrived the day before.”
- “In the international, they – because of their limited time here – international students might only be here one day, two days before Bridge starts – and while it’s gotten better over time, they have so many issues. Our students can’t even pay attention because they’re so nervous about all the other issues that are upon them: getting a car, getting a driver’s license... all these types of issues”

Arrival and Housing Logistics (Peer Mentors)

- “I think that one of the things about bridge is that it fits into that window of students who are immediately arriving to the U.S. and they arrived the day before bridge or the day that bridge started and came the next day.”
- “[International Students] want to know: Do I have housing? How do I buy a bike? How do I get a cell phone? How does this wifi work?”
- “The trips to Walmart were something IPMP [International Peer Mentoring Program] ran for I-House for years and then branched out. You want to get the students to have the things they need to live and if they don’t have access to things, it’s difficult. Where the school is situated it is a 45 minute bus ride up Lafayette.”

Interactions with domestic students and the sister section concept (Advisors)

- “One of the new things they started doing was having a sister section. Maybe they would have their math section with the sister section or their speech component lesson with their sister section and I think they started to incorporate having lunch with the sister section. So I think that has been a really good addition to the international bridge section because it’s pulling more engagement between the domestic and international students.”
- “The international student groups that I have been with have been paired with American groups and they love it. I remember one group saying, ‘When are we going to do something again with the American students?’ I also think that for the non-international students it is a great opportunity to meet international students.”

- “I thought it would be good to pair with an all American group. To interact with them several times. So that they had their program that we could program specifically to them, like with the extended technology session. But they are still getting the social interaction that they wanted and that we want them to have.”

Interactions with domestic students and the sister section concept (Faculty)

- “I think in the reading, we were combined with the English speaking class. [International students] loved interacting with native English speakers. We did something together with that section every other day, so they got to know this group of 20-25 students, and they felt really comfortable because it was a small group, yet they met different students and they got to interact throughout the fall semester they continued to go to activities together with the sister section.”
- “In the international section [Engineering has] now, it is designed to be about half international and half domestic students who are engineering or technology majors. That opportunity has been really neat. It’s always been kind of neat to see some of them interacting with each other. It’s a different environment for sure but it’s a positive one.”
- “My students were really eager to meet American students, so we had structured activities to do with the sister class. [The sister] section was all American students, so those students were appointed to take my students on a tour to introduce them to Indiana and learn about Indiana, but of course the American students learned just as much as the international students.”

Interactions with domestic students and the sister section concept (Peer Mentors)

- “Everybody got involved and wanted to participate. They wanted to go places. At the end of the first semester, a couple of them ended up transferring to be with brothers or husbands at Purdue and IUB. We run into that issue a lot. There was a collective sad that they weren’t going to be around the next semester.”
- “We did a weird Tai Chi segment with our sister section, and it was interesting... but they were all kind of laughing. Both international and domestic students were laughing. Even the Chinese students were like, ‘I’ve never done this in my life,’ and so they all really bonded over that. And I think that’s probably something they all remember the most.”

English Language Proficiency (Advisors)

- “In the international sections that I was a part of, the students had varying levels of English proficiency.”
- “I did notice that students who wanted to have more interaction were students who had stronger English proficiency. They were either fluent or close, and they were ones who would have had an easier time transitioning into a major specific section. I did notice that where proficiency was weaker, they even had difficulty interacting with other international students. They definitely didn’t request more interactions. They were hesitant.”
- “If they are fluent then they want to be with American students. Definitely those who struggle with English they may not be able to cope.”

English Language Proficiency (Faculty)

- “Why they love the international group only – at first they wrote that they were intimidated by native speakers. They didn’t know if they’d understand them, or they were making comments about how they speak so fast and they can’t understand what they’re saying.”
- “They have language needs. In fact, I often forget because they don’t tell me when they don’t understand, but sometimes they don’t understand what I’m saying, so typical language barriers will make them shy – we were a *family* and they were shy! So imagine how shy they’re going to be in a class of English speaking students.”

English Language Proficiency (Peer Mentors)

- “Their concerns are at a different level and they think they will speak English later. Trying to get them to buy in was one of the harder parts and getting them to speak English so I can help you learn that. I would like to think you could get students to speak English right away, but there is a support system within international bridge, I will give you resources on day one and two, and after that we should move on since these issues will be taken care of.”
- “I think after the initial first 2 or 3 days the interactions with American students met my expectations. They were participating, using English more, because those initial needs [e.g. registration, housing logistics, etc.] were met.”
- “I imagine trying to provide those English resources in an integrated section and I feel like that could be a lot of shame and they aren’t in a space where they could ask for that.”

Advocates for mixed and for international only sections (Advisors)

- “Some students wanted more interactions with a mixed group, and then others liked having a separate section just for them.”
- “The international student groups that I have been with have been paired with American groups and they love it.”
- “Proficiency, I think that they need a section by themselves. The fear of speaking in English, having more time to have things explained. The quality of their writing or homework. That is just going to be at a different level than domestic students. You should put them in a section with an EAP instructor and then be purposeful with interactions with American students.”

Advocates for mixed and for international only sections (Faculty)

- “I think some students should be together for a few different reasons. Primarily it’s that we want the international students to be part of the campus, and I’ve learned that putting them in their own sections isolates them and it doesn’t allow them to meet domestic students, which they want to do.”
- “So they love this safety net of being international only, and with that, we addressed some issues that were just part of acculturation.”
- “For me, I think [mixed section] worked very well.”

Advocates for mixed and for international only sections (Peer Mentors)

- “I don’t think it necessarily has to be exclusive. I think having international students that have tested high enough in their English that they can go into their bridge sections and be integrated, I think they are at the level they can use the resources. But I think there are needs of the lower level English group that need to be addressed first. If they are not somewhere where they can be comfortable to safely discuss that in the first few weeks, then I don’t think they would do well when pushed them further in the semester.”
- “And it was really cool to see the domestic students and the international students exchange, and they were both really engaged and I think that really benefitted the domestic students as well, but also the international students felt like they were being heard and accepted in this country.”
- “I think the pros [of a mixed section] would be that they would always be integrated and they might make domestic friends easier. But I think the way our section did it [International Only with Sister Section], it was so integrated already, that it worked very well. It wouldn’t work very well for parts where we’re talking about learning about acclimating to American life or American culture, you wouldn’t be able to specifically talk about that if you separated them, so I think that the key is to have instructors that want to work with each other and integrate certain parts of the bridge but also understand when to separate. So I think the way we did it would be better than putting them in the same class.”

Secondary themes and examples of responses

The secondary themes relate to the underlying questions of this study; how well does IUPUI welcome and facilitate transition of international students to the campus? Also, what service and program areas are we excelling in and which do we observe room for improvement in?

Campus Services (Advisors)

- “I say, don’t look at the name, just does the student have an F1 visa? If not, that is not our student. I can imagine confusion. You will find a few immigrants from countries where they have asylum. They are here as domestic students and they say they want to be with international students. Their English proficiency may be very, very low, but they are still domestic students.”
- Some students were having problems with major requirements. I know that at that time there were issues with transfer credit among international students. Also, how information is relayed to them. Some students not realizing they were directly admitted to a major. Also, some students who came with transfer credits - that review took time. Also, lack of scholarships and campus jobs for international students. Those are some issues I saw.”

Campus Services (Faculty)

- “When I see my students – I see my Americans and I say hi, because I taught another first year seminar that was all American students. But with my international students, when I see them, I hug them, and they hug me. We really feel like we’re family.”

Campus Services (Peer Mentors)

- “Where domestic students would get help, those offices send them to us [Office of International Affairs]. They say, ‘Please answer their question.’ When they call Bursar, because they have an accent they get transferred to us. I feel like a lot of the resources on campus do that.”
- “The offices where we work, if you have an international student. If I am working in an office and an international student comes in, they are automatically deferred to me. No one knows how to deal with them. So people automatically defer them to someone in the office who is international.”
- “I know that training is hard to convince at the faculty and staff level. I feel like it would be beneficial. I know we have had big issues with Arabic students getting turned in for academic issues. Things where if it were an American student that would never happen.”

Overall Findings and Observations

The results of this study show several areas where the program is excelling and where there is room for improvement. For example, the program is excelling in fostering student interactions and engagement with the 2015 addition of Sister Sections. However, there are still areas where the program could improve upon. For example, student arrival and housing logistics need to be improved upon due to the timing of arrival and lack of information for understanding off-campus housing arrangements. The overall findings and observations have been broken down by leadership team role.

Advisors

The role of advisors in Summer Bridge is to coordinate with faculty “to create what happens,” to “connect to students,” to do “trouble-shooting as far as student schedule and then because some students arrive late helping them [situate themselves].” The advisors who participated in the focus groups indicated arrival and housing logistics as an area of concern. For example, one advisor said “the trickiest part is they come so late in the summer.” English language proficiency was also a concern that advisors needed to be aware of because “students had varying levels of English proficiency.” This meant that some students or, in some cases, the entire section needed special sessions apart from the mandatory scheduled technology and English workshops facilitated by University College. For example, due to language proficiency, one advisor said, “Like with the technology session, we said we are going to have to handle that ourselves the next year.” The Advisors indicated interactions with domestic students and the sister section concept as a positive aspect. For example, one advisor said, “The international student groups that I have been with have been paired with American groups and they love it.” Advisors who participated in mixed sections said, “it worked very well,” and those who participated in international only sections said, “Having more time to have things explained. The quality of their writing or homework. That is just going to be at a different level than domestic students. You should put them in a section with an EAP instructor and then be purposeful with interactions with American students.” In addition to understanding the areas that are successful and those that need some work, advisors pointed to a campus-wide area of concern: campus services. Advisors explained that if students don’t have an F1 visa they cannot receive services from Office of International Affairs. For example, one advisor said, “Immigrants from countries where they have asylum. They are here as domestic students and they say they want to be with international students. Their English proficiency may be very, very low, but they are still domestic students”. Advisors also said that, “there are issues with transfer credit” and “lack of scholarships and campus jobs for international students”.

Faculty

Faculty members play an instrumental role in coordinating and instructing Summer Bridge sessions and integrating students to college life. Instructing international bridge students was a rewarding experience for faculty members, who often describe their sections as a “family.” Many international students “have just arrived the day before” Bridge begins, so faculty members must first address their basic adjustment and logistical needs. For example, one faculty member explained “I couldn’t believe that some of my students were supposed to be in bridge but they’re looking for a place to live. I don’t know how or why that happens but they come in at the last minute. They shouldn’t have to scramble for housing when they arrive.” Once their basic needs have been met, “students are eager to meet and interact with the Americans” in their sister sections. Faculty reported that these interactions were beneficial to both international and domestic students alike. One faculty member pointed out that “the American students learned just as much as the international students.” However, instructors of international sections typically agree that these students should have their own separate section where they can be comfortable and understand one another’s unique concerns and needs; especially for international students with low English proficiency. Faculty members still keep in contact with many of their Bridge students, and continue to help them with their academic and adjustment needs.

Peer Mentors

The peer mentors lead by example and are the first stop for international students to disclose any problems or fears. The peer mentors that were a part of the focus group mentioned that the international students spent the first few days of Bridge worried about shopping for household items or using transportation. For example, one peer mentor stated “[International Students] want to know: Do I have housing? How do I buy a bike? How do I get a cell phone? How does this wifi work?” This meant that international students were not fully participating and getting what they needed out of the Bridge experience. Peer mentors also saw that the students benefitted from interactions with both international students and domestic, regardless if they were always together in a mixed section or if they were only together for small activities every so often. For the International students, the peer mentors also mentioned that because of the limited English for some, they are slower to pick up some of the important information, but after a few days they are more comfortable using English. To the peer mentors, the international students seem to do better if they start out with a high English score or they have a safe space to continue to build up their English proficiency. The peer mentors see there is a benefit to international students and domestic students interacting with each other. The only difference between the mentors is that the mentors involved with students with higher English scores (i.e. Engineering Bridge sections) think the international students should be integrated always; but the International Only mentors see a benefit in keeping them in their own safe space and not having them integrated all of the time. The last thing the mentors mentioned was that some of the professors and staff members who the international students need to work with are not as helpful as they could be. They often seem to be unwilling to understand their struggles, and want to have the International Office help the international students with everything they need.

Conclusion

International students reported having very positive experiences with the Summer Bridge program. Students in the International only section were more likely report that the program helped them adjust to college and less likely to establish close friendships with American students compared to the Integrated (Mixed) section students. International students who participate in Summer Bridge have higher levels of academic success compared to nonparticipants. However, Summer Bridge participants had higher EAP Placement levels, were more likely to be female, and were more likely to live on campus. Although international students in the Engineering Integrated section had higher levels of English language proficiency, they did not have higher levels of academic performance (Fall or First-Year GPAs) compared to students in the All International student sections.

Summer Bridge instructional team members advocate for an Integrated or an International students only section that is linked with an American students only section (sister section). It is evident that all instructional team members believe that both international and American students benefit from opportunities to interact with one another. Quality interactions may provide students with enhanced understandings of diverse cultures and allow international students to navigate the U.S. college environment more successfully. English language proficiency is an important factor in understanding if International students will be more comfortable in an International only vs. an Integrated section. Many international students arrive the day before bridge begins, so instructional team members must address their basic adjustment and logistical needs. An International-only section may provide the flexibility to address the unique needs of international students.

International students have unique, basic needs (e.g., housing, transportation, navigating the U.S. and IUPUI environment) that must be addressed early in their transitions to IUPUI to make certain that they will be academically and socially successful.

Appendix A: Qualtrics Qualitative Responses

Please describe if you had the opportunity to get to know American students during your Summer Bridge Experience?

International Student Only Summer Bridge

- I did, with my sister bridge group
- We had the scavenger hunt with one of the explore group from American students. Before it we did a survey of multiple question about the US and then we paired up we students and went to multiple places on campus to finish the work. After that we went to a field trip to the museum with the group too.
- I haven't experienced any.
- Met some American students but wasn't close to them. My best friends who are American I met in class.
- We went out to field trips with the sister section and we had the chance to interact with them
- Talking to the sister section was very useful
- it was more easier to me to communicate with international student than American.
- Yes, through IPMP and OTeam I met a ton of Americans. I also was lucky enough to live in the Tower and the residential activities helped. The events Summer Bridge organized in the evenings during the Bridge program were extremely helpful as well. I remember meeting a lot of people at events like the concert in Taylor courtyard and the water balloon fight and so on.
- we have put class together with one of the American class that we will get to know some American students.
- I didn't have an opportunity to know American students
- my summer bridge class was just for international students but we were later merged with David's class who were just American students and we had opportunity to interact with them, played games together and we got to make friends and know each other better.
- Yes
- Yes I got the opportunity to know some American students during Summer Bridge experience and it was fun getting to know more about them.
- it's good.
- Well, there were no American student in my group, but I got to know others from other classes.
- We had lunch time and ice breaking time with other sections which is mostly American students.
- We had a "sister section" of American student with whom we occasionally spent leisure time, like visiting museums and scavenger hunts. It was an interesting experience and I think it is important to intersect the sections like that but I also enjoyed being with my section separately.
- As I spent most of the time with international students I didn't get to know many American students during my Summer Bridge experience. I don't think that this was a bad thing because I enjoyed being around students from different backgrounds like me.
- Yes, I got to know a lot of them. It was really fun meeting new people from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Well, I was in the international bridge so there weren't any American peers. But my mentors were American students and I got to know them.

Integrated/Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- Yes, I did. The class was mostly made up of American students.
- Yeah I got this opportunity as I was oved to an American engineering section after y English placement exam
- it's a good idea for me because i have to know new culture and improve my English language.
- Yes

Please describe if your opportunities to interact with American students during your Summer Bridge experience met your expectations?

International Students Only Summer Bridge

- It was alright
- Yes it did, but not as much. To me I thought it will be mixed together because when people forming an international group no matter how much you say but it is still kind of an outsider group. Just my own opinion.
- yes, they did because it help me settle to a new culture.
- Not really. It helped me interact with International students.
- Yes because they were all so nice and easy to talk to.
- I wish we had more time with sister section and talk more about OUR expectations rather than focusing only on the american culture
- It was a good experience.
- Yes, most of the friends I made were through the 2 weeks of Summer Bridge
- they get to know some culture from us and we get to know from them
- Very hard to interact with American students even the American students are so friendly but the don't prefer to make friends easily
- yes it did to an extent because the few American friends i have today were from the summer bridge program.
- Yes
- i can talk with them well
- N/A
- We exchange a lot of different things and chatted a lot, overall it was a pretty fun experience.
- Yes and no. I'm not sure what my expectations were. I met a few people who were alright and a few mean or high-strung people. I prefer the students from my International Bridge section. Most American students I've met since I came to the US are very kind and friendly but distant. I understand and respect the "American bubble" but it becomes hard to make real friends versus acquaintances only.
- I didn't really interacted with American students but I don't think that this was a bad thing about Summer Bridge.
- Oh yes, it certainly did. I still miss the Summer bridge and feel that we should have it every year.
- I didn't really have any expectations.

Integrated/Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- I believe so, yes. I knew that they were very different from where I was coming from, especially in the way they interact with faculty and staff.
- They did, American students were really interested in my country and culture and they helped me whenever I struggled with the language
- yes

Please describe if you felt isolated or had a difficult time relating to some of the Summer Bridge students?

International Students Only Summer Bridge

- Nope not at all
- No, because at the first day of summer bridge I already met my friends and some of my old friends from high school.
- no, i did not.
- I got along well with other students.
- I didn't have any problems or difficulties
- NOT AT ALL. the class felt like a big caring family where we were in the same conditions
- good
- I was in a class of non-native English speakers since I am one too but I have been in an English speaking school so many of the activities were too basic for me. But I had a good time and made good friends.
- No it was a good experience to break the ice
- No i didn't feel isolated in anyway because the summer bridge instructors made sure they carried everyone along.
- No.
- I felt completely free to relate with other Summer Bridge Program Students. During summer bridge was when I met friends that are still close to me till today. So summer bridge helped me and other students to get involve and to know other students.
- NO
- No. The program was good overall.
- I consider my Summer Bridge section to be like family, supportive and kind. The only reason why I feel slightly isolated is because I live off campus and unlike students who do, I'm not as involved with student activities or students as much as I'd like.
- I never felt isolated.
- No, not at all.
- Not at all. We got along pretty well.

Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- No
- I did not. My Bridge class was very helpful in all aspects of my academic integration into IUPUI.
- No I made a lot of friends
- No

Do you think that international and American students should be mixed together in the same Bridge program section?

International Students Only Summer Bridge

- Mixing cultures. Would be best, and one of the easier transitions before actual classes.
- Yes. Same answer as Q6.
- yes, because it would help international students.
- Yes, because the bridge for International students is way slow, it feels like we were treated like little kids rather than college students.
- I don't think so because I personally felt more welcomed with only international students as we have the same fears
- No Because American kids are more "happy" about college and they talk about "American" things that internationals don't know about.
- yes
- Yes, it forces international students to speak in English without being in a class too big and hard.
- No because the number of the American students more than the number of international students and from this point the international student whose English in the first semester not good enough will be isolated and also the American students first time the avoid to interact with others from overseas
- I think the international students should be kept together for a couple of weeks to learn the basic things needed to know about relating with the American students then they can be mixed with the American students for the rest of the Bridge program.
- Yes. It gives a feeling of belonging.
- I would say yes that international and American students should be mixed together in the same Bridge Program Section because it will create an avenue for both students to learn more about themselves culturally and behaviorally. I would also say No because for international student coming to the States for the first time the culture shock might be too much to handle, but it should be given a try.
- yes. totally.
- Amm, I do not think so. Because many of us are just starting college and being in a group that is facing almost the same difficulties would drive their focus together.
- I think both are important. I liked the way my section was all international because as international students, we have different viewpoints, backgrounds and experiences than American students do and thus we need different lectures and preparation for not only college but life in general. However, we had a few sessions with American students which prepared us for normal campus life and exposed us to their culture.
- I don't think so. I think that I felt more comfortable with only international students because as we were on our first week at an American university we were all going through the same challenges so we could understand and help each other better.
- Oh yes for sure.
- They should. That promotes a learning environment for both Americans and international students By exposing each other's culture.

Integrated/Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- Yes, for better communication
- Yes, I do. College in the US, being such a strong country economically and academically, means people of coming together from different places of the world. So, it is necessary that all students in a university campus get to experience that reality, and a good way to that is through Summer Bridge. So, I believe they should be mixed.
- Yes American students will provide a full college experience for internationals
- yes

Please describe any suggestions to improve the Summer Bridge program overall?

International Students Only Summer Bridge

- None I can think of currently.
- Shorter, more of going out than in class. and make it like college class not high school class.
- none.
- I think two weeks before classes is too much, the amount of knowledge that I gained could be gained in 2 or 3 days. Which is the tour in campus.
- none
- Have more activities, maybe bring a couple of more teachers to see what kind of elective classes are available.
- less time
- More sessions on getting involved and getting jobs. I knew enough from the program to figure it out but it would have been nice to know a little more
- Spend one entire day out of the campus as a trip at any park in Indianapolis.
- I think the length of the summer Bridge program should be more than two weeks to enable the international students get very accustomed to life in the U S especially those coming to the United States for the first time.
- As asked in the previous question I think that international and American Students should be mixed together during the program.
- nothing
- I would say make students aware of what they can do in social groups on campus, that would help a lot.
- Honestly, Summer Bridge is an amazing program and I can't think of anything I would change about my experience. I highly recommend it to all incoming students because it is not only educational but a fun community builder as well.
- Summer Bridge was awesome but I think that we should be able to keep meeting at least once or twice a semester because I made really good friends over my Summer Bridge experience but I never got to meet with them again because we are always busy with classes and everything. So I think that it would be great if we could meet again with the Summer Bridge mentors and supervisors.
- Encourage more activities like camping or trekking maybe. Showing us the entire city, so that we can get to know the city we are living in, in the best manner possible.
- None in my opinion.

Integrated/Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- Good enough
- I believe the program at IUPUI is perfect the way it currently is.
- More activities with other bridge sections

Please describe any suggestions to improve your IUPUI experience overall?

International Students Only Summer Bridge

- MORE ACTIVITIES (LIKE WOW BUT FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR). Social aspect of attending IUPUI isn't as good as I'd hoped for.
- more real international food.
- none.
- Decide if I need more English courses from my placement test without taking account my TOEFL score. If you are going to take my TOEFL score into account then increase the requirements, instead of wasting money on course I don't need.
- none
- less assignments
- I've loved my experience at IUPUI
- I think the IUPUI administration should provide better financial incentives for the international students that are not on scholarship from their country or better still reduce their tuition fees. Please
- Offer help with dealing with finances and budgeting.
- Students should be prepared for the college life and that could be done with the help of faculty members and mentors.
- more American students will be better.
- I do not really know what to say.
- IUPUI overall has an amazingly friendly staff but sometimes I don't feel like all of them are very capable to do their jobs or lack effectiveness.
- Better food on campus! We don't have a lot of healthy options! International students usually struggle with American food because it is often unhealthy.
- They should have more activities going on. Moreover, they should have different types of food from all or most of the cultures.
- None in my opinion.

Integrated/Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- Good enough
- Maybe make the learning center/spaces for the other sciences bigger (like the MAC). Currently I am going to the Physics Learning Space and, although I always get the help I need, it is visually a very small place which means there is a big delay on giving the students the help they need.
- I think it's been great so far

Appendix: Qualtrics Qualitative Responses

Other comments about your experiences in Summer Bridge and/or IUPUI:

International Students Only Summer Bridge

- It was good.
- N/A
- none.
- it was great and it helped me very much
- nothing
- Summer Bridge was extremely helpful for me to start at university in a different country.
- My academic experience here so far has been impressive and encouraging starting with the summer bridge experience till the end of last semester. I will be honored to remain with the IUPUI family.
- It was a lot of fun!
- Summer Bridge was fun and I enjoyed every bit of it because it was there I started my college life.
- It was good.
- Overall it was a great experience and I will miss it a lot.
- N/A

Integrated/ Mixed Students Summer Bridge

- GREAT
- It was the best way to assimilate how college life works in the US.
- It really helped to make friends that would after be with me in class