

## **CTE/Dev Ed Bridges prove successful for students at CSC**

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GALESBURG—Kylie Stalides asked a question and a flurry of hands shot into the air.

“Oh my gosh!” she exclaimed. “You guys are vicious!”

Stalides is an English instructor at Carl Sandburg College (CSC). The enthusiasm during her semester review for this section of English Fundamentals II was nothing new. Thanks to a Bridge Grant from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the class was one of three this spring in the first semester of Sandburg’s Health Initiatives Program (HIP).

The Bridge program allows preparatory students who are interested in pursuing a specific career field the opportunity to take classes that have a syllabus geared toward that field. HIP students took Bridge classes this spring in English, reading, and math. CSC received funding for the program through a grant application process and will expand its Bridge program this fall to include sections for automotive and welding with additional Bridge programs contemplated for the spring 2013 semester.

“All we’re doing is taking students in preparatory courses who have a like interest and putting them in the same section,” said Lauri Wiechmann, Bridge Grant team member and dean of Career, Technical and Health Education at Sandburg. “There are a lot of opportunities to create different Bridge programs and then follow them through to success.”

Preparatory students who are interested in specific career fields offered through Bridge and have the appropriate scores on their COMPASS tests are selected for the program. In the first semester of the Bridge program, 19 students participated. The program’s success will be measured by student completion and performance.

“If students are struggling in a developmental area, confidence is something that needs to be addressed anyway,” Stalides said. “The Bridge program has helped boost their confidence in a lot of ways.”

Bridge program students from this past semester will take General Biology and baseline health career classes during the next school year before taking Anatomy and Physiology I and II in 2013-14. Students will then apply to enter a health career program in the 2014 fall semester.

“They will be coming into their career program in ’14, which is a perfect Bridge program,” Wiechmann said. “They’ll have a solid foundation coming in because we’ve geared them up through the ranks of taking it.”

“Research shows that if they’re combined, they’re a much stronger group,” Weichmann explained. “For them to cohort through the preparatory classes and into General Biology and into Anatomy and Physiology, they may break into career programs, but they’ll have gen-ed classes to keep them together.”

Stalides said she kept her Bridge section’s syllabus the same as that for her other classes but “just tweaked it.” Instead of writing about how they thought their high school education prepared them for college, Bridge students wrote about how they viewed the health care system and how they would like it to work. They also wrote essays on breastfeeding and how to prevent heart attacks.

“I just kind of gave them a context to run with and they really ran with it,” Stalides said.

It was only after the class’s first essay that Stalides sensed a dramatic difference.

“They all connected to it,” she said. “They were really powerful essays, really moving essays. It was amazing. I remember sitting here reading the first essay and being really excited that I had gotten involved in Bridge.”

Bridge student Tiffany Rose of Galesburg, who plans to go into nursing, said the contextualized learning environment helped her in her first semester as a college student.

“It’s easier to get to the length of the paper if you’re interested in what you’re writing about,” Rose said. “It was about halfway through the semester when I finally realized that my grades were a lot better. I was just a lot more interested. If you’re interested in something, you wake up and do it.”

Another student, Sherry Broussard of Knoxville, said she could tell her writing habits had changed by the semester’s midterm.

“I struggled at the beginning even getting a page for the journal entries,” Broussard said. “By my third or fourth essay I exceeded the amount of pages that she was requiring.”

Rose and Broussard were not the only ones whose interest had been piqued. Stalides said her Bridge class had better grades (all C or above), better class participation, and a higher attendance rate than her other sections had. She also never had a student tardy the entire semester, a first for her as a teacher, she said. Stalides also learned through developmental reading assistant professor Yancy Pitman and developmental math professor Michael Neill that students were applying concepts to their other Bridge classes as well.

Pitman’s reading course, College Survival Skills, had vocabulary assignments in which students learned 100 prefixes and suffixes that are common in health care. Students also took tests to match the meaning of each of the prefixes and suffixes and spent the last eight weeks of the class reading various chapters about the health field in which they are interested.

Neill’s math course, Arithmetic Fundamentals, incorporated problems that could be found in a health care environment, such as determining the correct dosage for a patient. Students in the program also have a dedicated counselor.

The HIP project at Carl Sandburg College was funded through the ICCB’s Career and Technical Education/Developmental Education Bridge Grant. ICCB awarded five community colleges such grants during Fiscal Year 2012. These grants were developed in partnership with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (IDCEO) to establish curricula that would aid students with remedial/developmental education needs in transitioning towards postsecondary CTE programs. For more information about Developmental Education / CTE Bridge programs funded by the ICCB contact Tricia Broughton, Associate Director for CTE Programs at [tricia.broughton@illinois.gov](mailto:tricia.broughton@illinois.gov) or Brian Durham, Senior Director for Academic Affairs & CTE at [brian.durham@illinois.gov](mailto:brian.durham@illinois.gov).



HIP\_Group1: HIP students gather for a portrait following their final exams and a pizza party. Students include, front row, left to right: Paula Stanford, Shara Reed, Tiffany Rose, and Jessica Upton. Back row, l-r: Mona Henderson, Melissa Hammitt, Sherry Broussard, and Kandi Curtis. (Photo by Bill Gaither, Carl Sandburg College)