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Evaluation of the Summer Transition Grant Program

Report to the 2011 Legislature



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About the Minnesota Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

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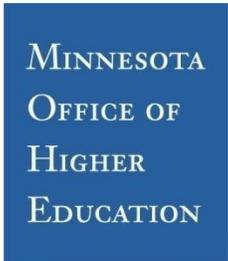
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Introduction

The 2009 Minnesota Legislature created the Summer Transition Grant program to provide financial assistance directly to eligible Minnesota students attending research-based high school-to-college summer developmental transition programs offered by Minnesota colleges in the summer between high school graduation and the freshman year of postsecondary education. The grant program is administered by the Office of Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as “The Agency”) and was first implemented during the summer of 2010 for students who graduated from high school after December 31, 2009. The annual program appropriation was originally \$4.9 million for the 2010-2011 biennium and was subsequently reduced during the 2010 legislative session.

According to the statute (Appendix A), the purpose of summer transition programs is to develop the skills and abilities necessary to be ready for college-level coursework when the student enrolls in a postsecondary program. Programs must address the academic skills identified as needing improvement by a college readiness assessment completed by the student, as well as provide support services to participating students.

Legislation included a strong evaluation component to measure the effectiveness of summer transition programs in meeting goals. The program statute requires the Agency to convene a data working group comprised of knowledgeable data collection and academic delivery staff from the types of institutions participating in the program. This group assists the Agency in developing the methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of programs designed to improve academic performance and postsecondary retention, including the identification of appropriate comparison groups.

Summer Bridge Programs: Current Research

Summer bridge programs are typically designed to orient students who are academically underprepared for campus life/college culture while addressing any academic areas of concern and/or the skills and self-efficacy needed to improve their success (Walpole, Simmerman, Mack, Mills, Scales & Albano, 2008).

Many summer bridge programs enroll students during the summer between high school graduation and the first year of postsecondary education, with the goal that students will become prepared for college-level coursework and more smoothly transition into the postsecondary environment. Summer bridge programs offer a combination of components that address the three dimensions of integration identified by Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) as factors associated with increased retention: institutional integration (knowledge and use of university services), academic integration (study skills and habits), and social integration (extent to which students interact with persons associated with the university).

For many students, bridge programs are the first formal introduction to academic study at the college level. Overall, the first year of higher education is one of the most crucial points in a student's education—the majority of all attrition occurs during the first year and represents over half of all institutional attrition (Tinto, 1993). Molnar (1993) has identified that students are likely to make their decision to stay or withdraw within their first six weeks of college; therefore, the first weeks of participation in summer bridge programs are highly important to students' future college success, especially because many bridge programs last only about six weeks in length.

Summer Transition Grant Program Overview

Application Process

As part of their program proposal, participating campuses were required to have marketing and outreach plans to reach potential students and direct them to the appropriate application materials. In order to apply for a Summer Transition Grant, students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) accessible at: www.fafsa.gov. Students also completed either the paper or on-line Summer Transition Grant application developed by the Agency in order to collect data needed for award calculation and program evaluation (Appendix B). The application also contains a data release section whereby the student permits colleges to release private student data to the Agency for program evaluation purposes. As with the Minnesota State Grant program, the Summer Transition Grant application was submitted no later than 30 days after the start of the summer program.

Eligible Students

The program is intended to serve students who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education, though the statute does not specifically exclude other types of students from participating. Underrepresented groups in this case include: African-American, American Indian, Latino and Southeast Asian or other historically referenced racial/ethnic minorities; students who are economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation college.

To be eligible for a Summer Transition Grant to attend a summer transition program, a student must:

- Graduate from high school (or earn GED in lieu of high school diploma)
- Plan to enroll in college the fall term following high school graduation
- Demonstrate a need for academic remediation based on the college readiness test administered to the student prior to beginning the summer transition program
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Complete the Summer Transition Grant application no later than 30 days after the start of the summer transition program
- Be enrolled for at least three but no more than 15 credits in an eligible summer transition program at an eligible Minnesota postsecondary institution during the summer following high school graduation or receipt of a GED
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen. An “eligible noncitizen” means a permanent resident of the U.S., a conditional permanent resident of the U.S., or a holder of an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) with one of the following designations: Refugee, Asylum Granted, Parolee, Victim of Human Trafficking, T-Visa holder, or Cuban-Haitian Entrant.
- Be a Minnesota resident as defined in Minnesota Statutes 136A.101
- Demonstrate financial need according to the award calculation formula (typically, students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs in high school will qualify)

Eligible Institutions and Programs

All Minnesota public and private higher education institutions are eligible to participate in the Summer Transition Grant program if they meet the definition of eligible institution used for other state financial aid programs in Minnesota Statutes 136A.101.

Proposed program strategies that will lead to student success may differ based on the interests, needs and resources of the student participants and project site. According to Minnesota statutes, summer high school-to-college transition programs must be research-based, include instruction to develop the skills and abilities necessary to be ready for college-level coursework and address the academic skills identified as needing improvement by a college readiness assessment completed by the student. Academic coursework may be existing developmental courses offered by the institution or courses designed specifically for the summer transition program. Programs must also provide support services surrounding academic coursework to assist the student in transitioning to the college environment.

In the fall of 2009, the Agency notified all Minnesota postsecondary institutions about the new Summer Transition Grant program and encouraged them to submit program proposals for the summer of 2010 by February 1, 2010. The notice was sent to college presidents as well as academic affairs, student services, diversity/multi-cultural and financial aid offices on each campus. The Agency followed-up with a webinar to provide a more detailed overview of the program and instructions for submitting program proposals. Twenty-one campuses initially expressed an interest in submitting a program proposal to the Agency. Seven of those campuses submitted a program proposal to the Agency and all programs were approved by the Agency's program approval committee, which consisted of 12 volunteers drawn from K-12 teachers and counselors, TRIO programs and college outreach and access programs. Out of the seven approved programs, three campuses offered programs during the summer of 2010: Central Lakes College in Brainerd, Minneapolis Community and Technical College and North Hennepin Community College. The major reasons for not participating cited by the remaining campuses were the uncertainty of Summer Transition Grant funding due to budget cuts at the state level, the inability of student Summer Transition Grants to cover the cost of offering the program and inadequate staffing or turnover of key personnel on campus. Additionally, some of the summer programs did not meet the requirements in statute, in that they accepted all students regardless of college-readiness level.

Program Evaluation

The program statute provides a list of data elements that should be used during the evaluation process (see Appendix C). The statute also requires the Agency to form a data working group comprised of campus program administrators and research staff to advise the Agency on program evaluation and assist with gathering the necessary data needed for the annual program evaluation report due to the Legislature on March 15. The Agency called the group together in February 2011 and finalized data elements and selection of comparison group data for the evaluation report. The group consisted of program administrators and research staff from the three campuses participating in the Summer Transition Grant program during the summer of 2010.

Description of Participating Programs

During the summer of 2010, a total of 43 students at three campuses participated in summer transition programs offered by Central Lakes College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College and North Hennepin Community College.

Central Lakes College

Central Lakes College's newly-developed High School-to-College Summer Transition Program included developmental courses, workshops and support services over an eight-week period. Thirteen students participated in the program, enrolling for an average of 12 credits. Based on Accuplacer college readiness test scores, each student was placed in one or more of the appropriate developmental reading or math courses ranging from one to five credits, as well as other courses such as College Success Skills, Staying On-Course in College, Computer Basics-Applications and Service Learning. Workshops offered included Career and Leadership Program Options, Speechcraft: Communications, Job Shadowing, Career Planning & Goal Setting, and Understanding Student Financial Aid. Students had the opportunity to plan and participate in student life activities, such as service-learning projects and athletic events. Strategies used by the campus to ensure program success included living allowances for students, financial incentives for 100 percent attendance and retention to fall term, weekly group debriefing sessions, and college upperclassmen serving as personal mentors throughout the summer and into fall term. There was also a strong academic advising component to this program, whereby students met with an academic advisor during the program and before each semester thereafter to create and monitor an individualized education plan consisting of course selection, statement of academic goals and professional development goals.

Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC)

Building off of its Power of You program, which provides free tuition to students from low-income families who graduated from a high school in the Minneapolis or St. Paul school district, Minneapolis Community and Technical College designed a new summer transition program to help Power of You recruits improve reading, writing and math skills prior to enrolling in college. The transition program, Power of You Express, offered eight credits of developmental English during a seven-week summer session. Successful completion of the English courses, which are thematically linked and contain "college knowledge" content, allow students to be college-ready in reading and writing. Students also used the Advancer + software to improve their math skills. In addition to taking developmental courses, students received advising, including career advising and interest tests, resource referrals, development of three-year plans, and assistance with the admissions and financial aid application processes. Continuity is achieved by assigning the same writing instructor and Power of You advisor to students once enrolled in college. During the summer of 2010, 18 students participated in the Power of You Express program.

North Hennepin Community College

The Cornerstones Summer Program administered by North Hennepin Community College offered students six credits of developmental reading and writing courses and a two-credit Freshman Year Experience course during a six-week summer session. The program grew out of the existing Cornerstones College Readiness Program, which serves students in grades 10 through 12 with twice-weekly tutoring and Saturday Academy workshops. Summer Program tutors and mentors attended classes with students and provided a tutoring hour in the middle of each class day. For the Academic Development course, students completed a portfolio to document their learning experience. Instructors served as academic advisors and provided assistance with completing the FAFSA and adapting to the

college environment. Opportunities for service-learning were also embedded in the curriculum. Fridays were used for college visits and other college-related field trips. Upon completion of the program, families were invited to a College Readiness Fair in July and program graduation ceremony in August. Twelve students received Summer Transition Grants during this program.

Program Operations

The Agency developed a user-friendly web-based system for use by students, program and financial aid administrators and agency staff. After entering each student’s application data into the system, the campus program administrator then enters academic information such as the name of student’s high school, high school grade point average, college readiness test scores (pre and post-summer transition program), summer courses taken and course outcomes. The financial aid director enters the student’s Expected Family Contribution, number of credits for which the student is enrolled and whether or not the student is receiving a Federal Pell Grant. The Summer Transition Grant is then calculated on-line so the campus can inform the student about the award amount. The Agency then disburses funds to the campus to cover all the awards entered by the campus. Any refunds from student withdrawals are returned to the Agency and recorded on the system. Agency staff subsequently collect fall term 2010 enrollment data and grade point averages from campus program administrators.

Award Calculation

The Summer Transition Grant award calculation is described in the Minnesota State Grant statute 136A.121, Subd. 9b. For students with an assigned family responsibility greater than zero, the Summer Transition Grant award calculation is identical to the Minnesota State Grant award calculation with one exception: the Federal Pell Grant is not subtracted in the award calculation unless the student is actually awarded a Pell Grant for that term. However, since students in transition programs offered by two-year public institutions are admitted to the college, they are eligible for Pell Grants and have them subtracted in the Summer Transition Grant formula. Table 1 shows the Summer Transition Grant award calculation for a student with an annual 9-month \$1,000 assigned family responsibility taking eight credits during the summer transition program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

Table 1: Summer Transition Grant Calculation

Student with \$1,000 Assigned Family Responsibility Taking Eight Credits at MCTC	
Tuition & Fees	\$1,303
Living & Miscellaneous Expense Allowance	+ \$1,866
Award Calculation Budget	= \$3,169
46% Assigned Student Responsibility	- \$1,458
96% Assigned Family Responsibility (\$1,000/2 x .96)	- \$480
Federal Pell Grant	- \$0
Summer Transition Grant	= \$1,231

For students with an assigned family responsibility of zero, the Summer Transition Grant award calculation is less similar to the Minnesota State Grant award calculation. While the award calculation budget is identical, a \$1,200 summer work expectation takes the place of the assigned family responsibility. Further, the Federal Pell Grant is not subtracted, even if the student is awarded a Pell Grant for that term. Thus, the Summer Transition Grant award formula generates a much higher award than the State Grant award formula. Table 2 shows the Summer Transition Grant award calculation for a student with a \$0 assigned family responsibility taking eight credits during the summer transition program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

Table 2: Summer Transition Grant Calculation

Student with \$0 Assigned Family Responsibility Taking Eight Credits at MCTC	
Tuition & Fees	\$1,303
Living & Miscellaneous Expense Allowance	+ \$1,866
Award Calculation Budget	= \$3,169
Summer Work Expectation	- \$1,200
Summer Transition Grant	= \$1,969

Summer Transition Grant Participants 2010

During the summer of 2010, a total of 43 students participated in summer transition programs. Thirty-three of these students were eligible for Summer Transition Grant funds totaling \$78,482. The three participating summer transition programs served the student populations intended. Participants included a high percent of students of color, low-income students and first-generation college students. Most students were from families with incomes low enough to have a zero Expected Family Contribution and thereby qualify for the maximum Summer Transition Grant.

Figure 1 shows the mean Summer Transition Grant amount at each participating campus, ranging from \$1,639 for eight credits at Minneapolis Community and Technical College to \$2,159 for 12 credits at Central Lakes College, with an overall mean award of \$1,825. Participants who were not awarded either withdrew from the program prior to disbursement of the award or did not demonstrate financial need for an award.

**Figure 1
Summer Transition Grant
Mean Awards - Summer 2010**



Student Demographic Information

Of the 43 participants, 13 enrolled at Central Lakes College, 18 students enrolled at Minneapolis Community and Technical College and 12 enrolled at North Hennepin Community College.

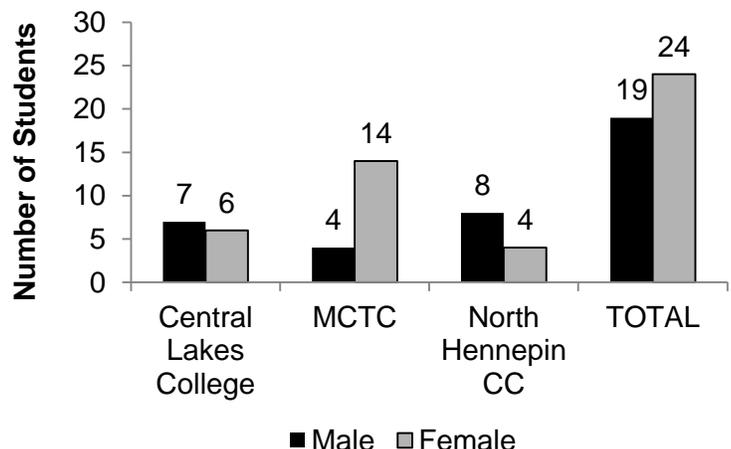
Age

The age of the 43 students participating in programs approved for Summer Transition Grant ranged from 17 to 20 years, with a median age of 18.

Gender

As shown in Figure 2, 19 program participants were male and 24 were female, as reported on the program application. Minneapolis Community and Technical College had the largest number of female

**Figure 2
Participants by Gender**

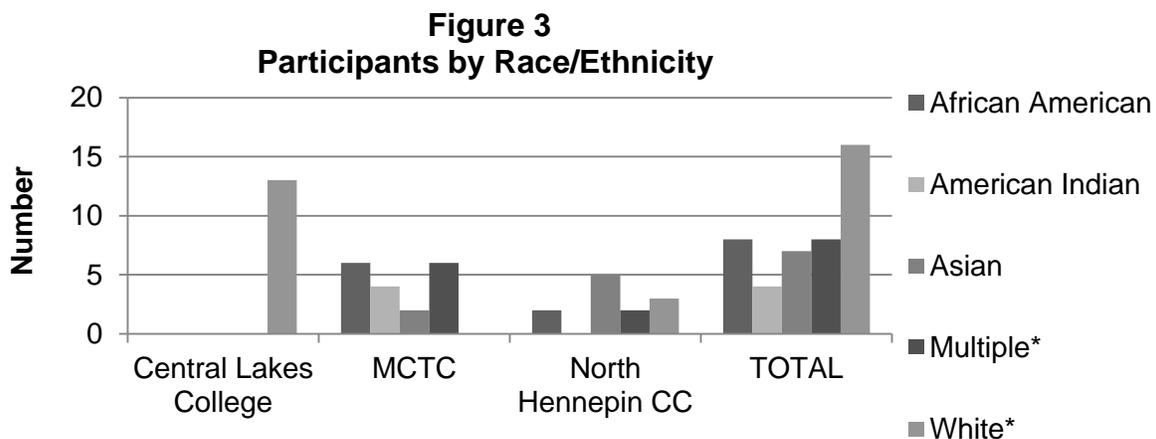


participants and North Hennepin Community College had the largest number of male participants.

Race and Ethnicity

On the Summer Transition Grant application, students were presented with the same racial and ethnic categories used for U.S. Department of Education reporting purposes.

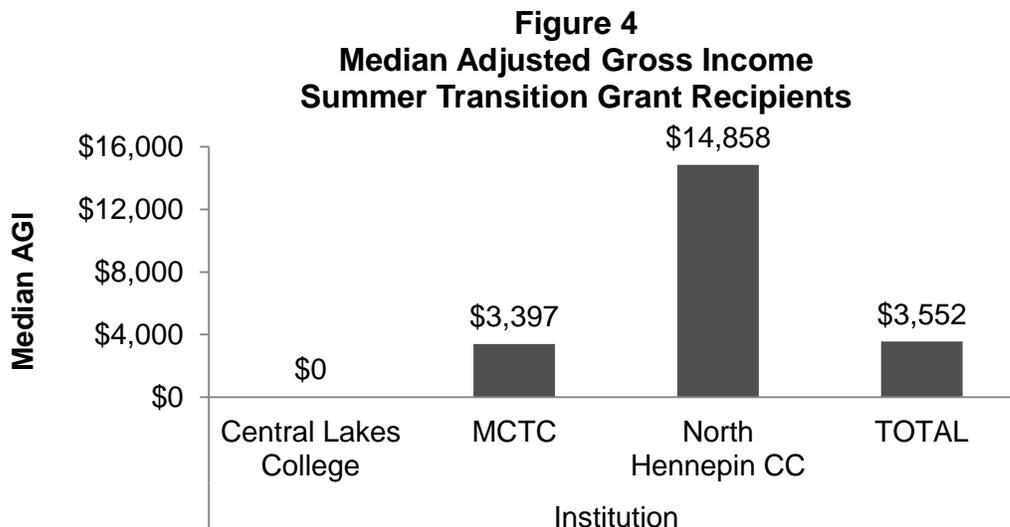
Out of a total of 43 students in all programs, 16 students indicated they were white, eight students indicated they were African-American, seven students indicated they were Asian and four students indicated they were American Indian. The remaining eight students indicated they had multiple racial backgrounds (see Figure 3). Five students who indicated they were either white or from multiple racial backgrounds also indicated they were Latino. Although Central Lakes College marketed the summer program to low-income students, students of color and first-generation college students, no students of color enrolled in the program.



*Includes Latino students

Adjusted Gross Income and Household Size

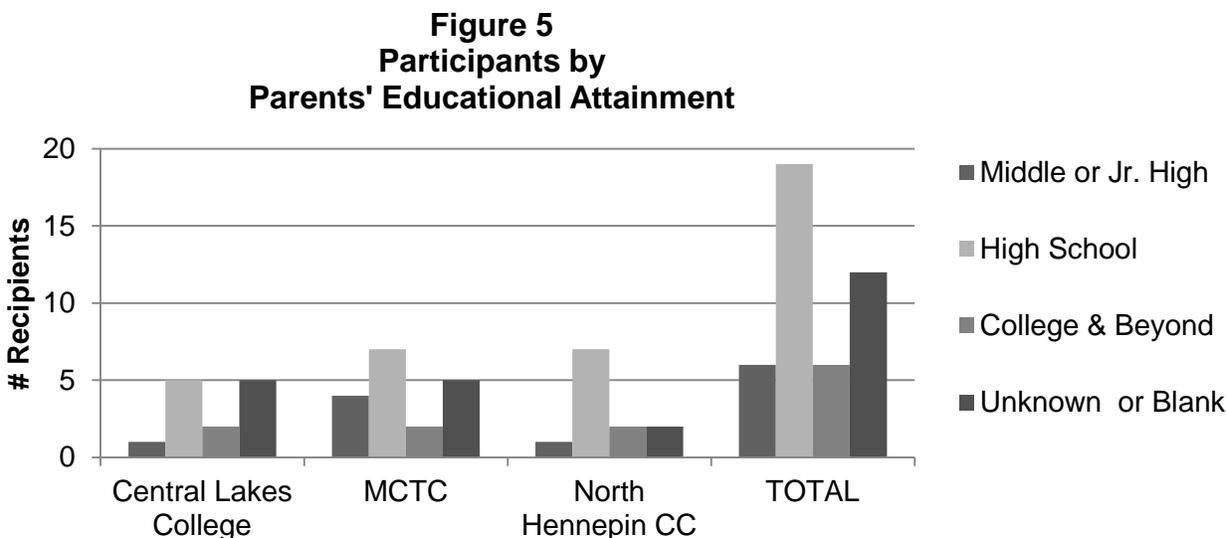
As shown in Figure 4, adjusted gross income for program participants, as reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), ranged from \$0 to \$101,301 (household size of seven), with an overall median adjusted gross income of \$3,552.



Participant family size, as reported on the FAFSA, ranged from one to seven family members, with a median household size of three. Though most students were classified as dependent students for financial aid purposes, several were able to apply for financial aid as independent students with a household size of one because they were wards of the court, orphans or had been in foster care at some point after they reached age 13.

Parents' Educational Attainment

As shown in Figure 5, out of a total of 43 students, only six participants reported on the FAFSA that their parents had attended college.



High School of Origin

Summer transition programs recruited students from a wide array of regional high schools, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3
Summer Transition Grant Participant High Schools**

CENTRAL LAKES COLLEGE	MCTC	NORTH HENNEPIN CC
Bertha-Hewitt High School	AIOIC Careers Immersion	Blaine High School
Brainerd Senior High School	Broadway High School	Breck High School
Duluth East High School	City Inc, South	Champlin Park High School
Lincoln Education Center	Dunwoody Academy	Elk River High School
McGregor High School	John A Johnson High School	Fridley Senior High School
Onamia High School	North High School-Mpls	Osseo High School
Pequot Lakes High School	Patrick Henry High School	Park Center Senior High School
Pierz-Healy High School	PCYC Alternative School	Spring Lake Park High School
Pine River - Backus HS	Roosevelt High School	
Pine River ALC	South High School-Mpls	
	Urban League Academy	

High School Grade Point Average

Figure 6 shows an overall mean high school grade point average of 2.59 for program participants, ranging from 2.45 for students at Central Lakes College to 2.73 at North Hennepin Community College.

Figure 6
Mean High School GPA of
Summer Transition Grant Recipients

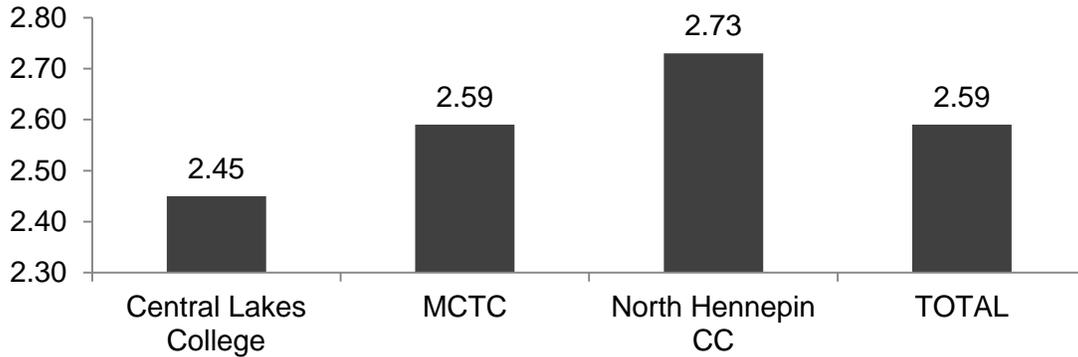
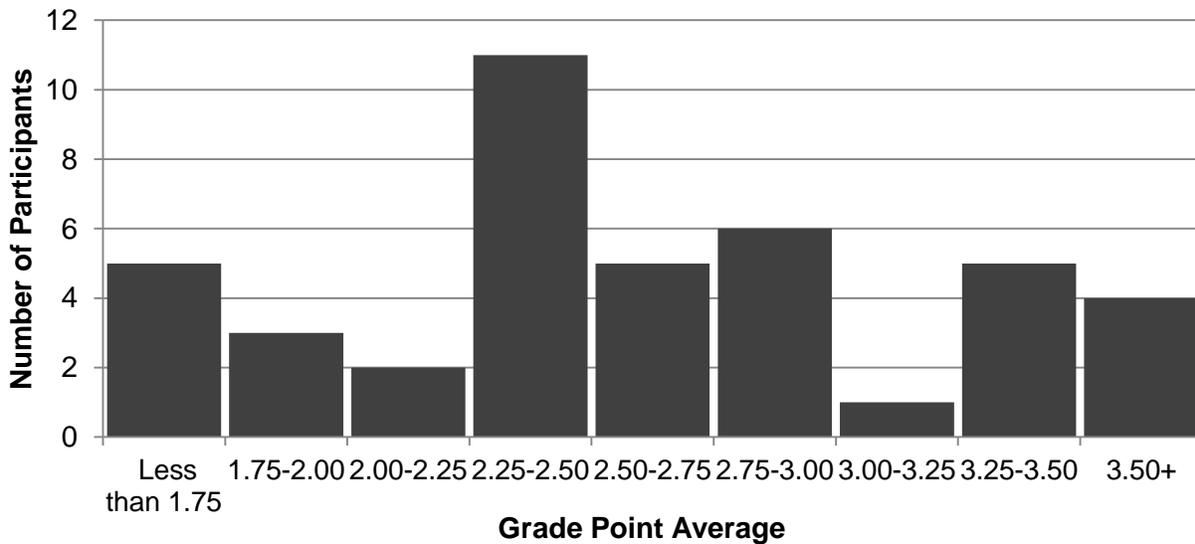


Figure 7 shows the distribution of high school grade point averages for all participants, ranging from a low of 1.32 to a high of 3.63.

Figure 7
Participant High School Grade Point Averages



Pre- and Post-Program Metrics

The program statute provides a list of data elements that should be used during the evaluation process. Many of these elements focus on pre- and post-program measures of student performance including college readiness test scores and course grades. These metrics are detailed below.

In evaluating pre- and post-program metrics, it is critical to realize that summer transition programs target at-risk students. At-risk student populations, which include low-income and first-generation students, have difficulty gaining access to higher education because they may not receive “adequate information and support regarding college preparation, requirements, admission standards, and procedures” (Walpole et al., 2008, p. 12). In terms of academic preparation, low-income students often come from secondary schools that “[are] resource poor, [are] taught by less qualified teachers, have teachers with lower expectations, have less access to rigorous coursework, and [are] tracked away from higher achieving groups” (Walpole et al., 2008, p. 12). Summer bridge programs are ambitious in that they attempt to resolve—in a short period of time—a lifetime of under-preparation among students who did not have access to the college “pipeline” (Choy, Horn, Nunez, & Chen, 2000).

College Readiness Test Scores

The program statute requires campuses to administer a college-readiness test prior to the start of the summer transition program to identify and address the areas showing a need for remediation. The same test must be administered upon completion of the program to measure program effectiveness. During the summer of 2010, all participating campuses used the Accuplacer test, a product developed by the College Board that is used by MnSCU campuses. The Accuplacer contains several components, including sentence skills, reading comprehension, arithmetic, elementary algebra and college-level math test. However, not every component of the test was administered at each campus, since some summer transition programs were not designed to provide developmental math courses. Figures 8, 9, and 10 show pre and post-test Accuplacer scores for the students participating in each of the summer transition programs, as well as the Accuplacer college-ready scores used by each campus to place students in college-level courses. Pre-test scores for students unable to take the post-test due to withdrawing from the program are excluded from the calculation of the median pre-test score.

In order to be placed in courses requiring college-level reading skills, students must score 78 or higher on the reading comprehension component. Placement into courses requiring college-level writing skills required both a reading comprehension score of 78 or higher, as well as a sentence skills score of 86 or higher for those campuses choosing to administer the sentence skills component. With the exception of Minneapolis Community and Technical College, median post-program scores in reading comprehension did not meet the minimum score required for placement into college-level reading courses.

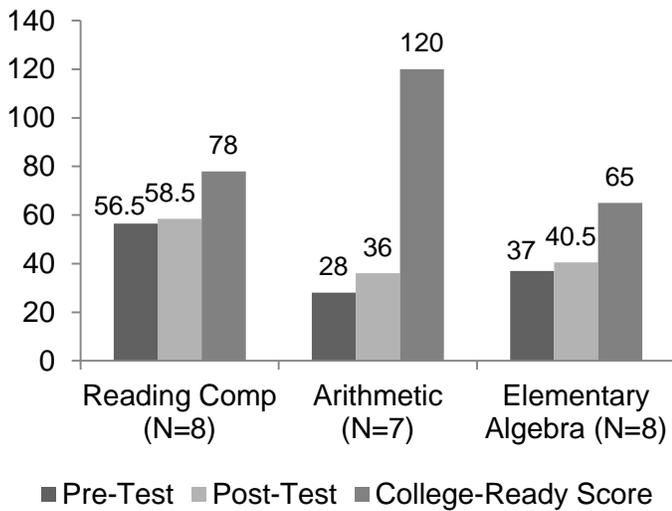
To be placed in a college-level algebra course, students must score 76 or higher on the elementary algebra test and 50 or higher on the college level mathematics test. A college may establish lower minimum score(s) for placement into introductory college-level mathematics courses other than college algebra and for developmental mathematics courses.

Though many participants did not test at the college-ready level upon completion of the program, many students did show improvement in Accuplacer test scores and achieved passing grades in their summer program developmental courses.

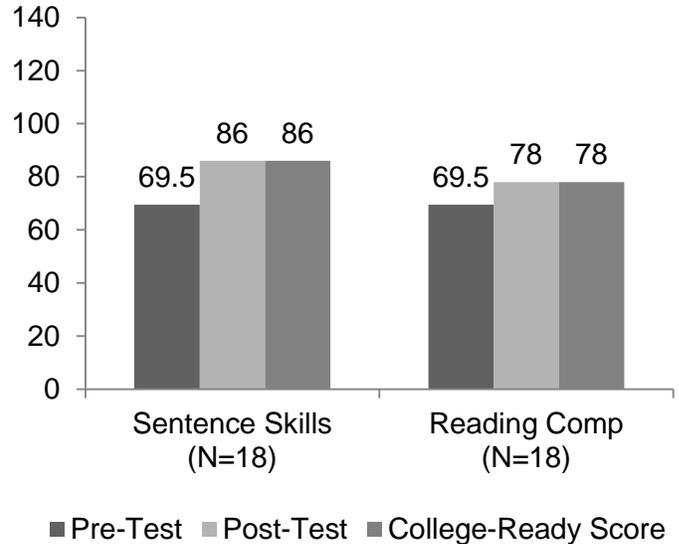
Participants at Central Lakes College made gains in arithmetic and elementary algebra test scores, but fell short of the minimum score required for college-level placement. Students were not tested on the Accuplacer math components at Minneapolis Community and Technical College or North Hennepin Community College, since the summer transition program focused on college-level reading and writing.

Campus program administrators caution that students who took the pre-test on campus were not overly enthusiastic about retaking the test upon completion of the program and may not have given their best effort. This may explain why post-test scores are lower at North Hennepin Community College than pre-test scores.

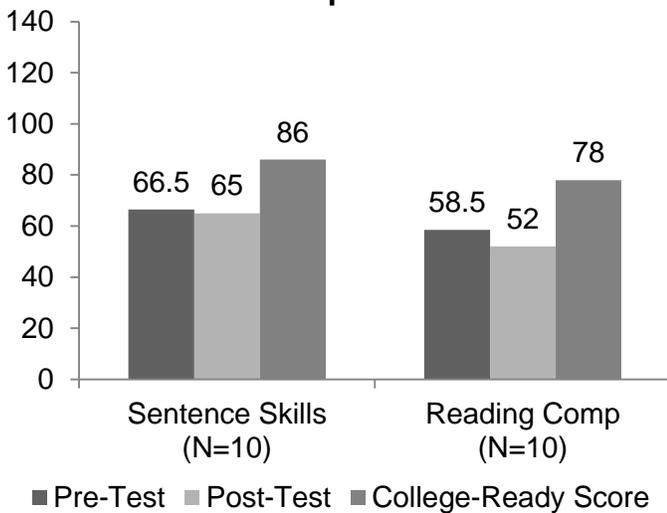
**Figure 8
Central Lakes College
Median Accuplacer Scores**



**Figure 9
MCTC
Median Accuplacer Scores**



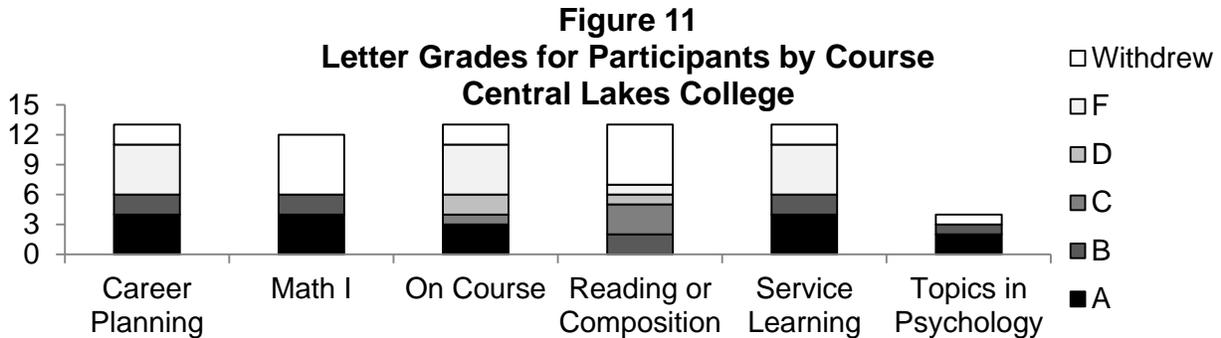
**Figure 10
North Hennepin CC
Median Accuplacer Scores**



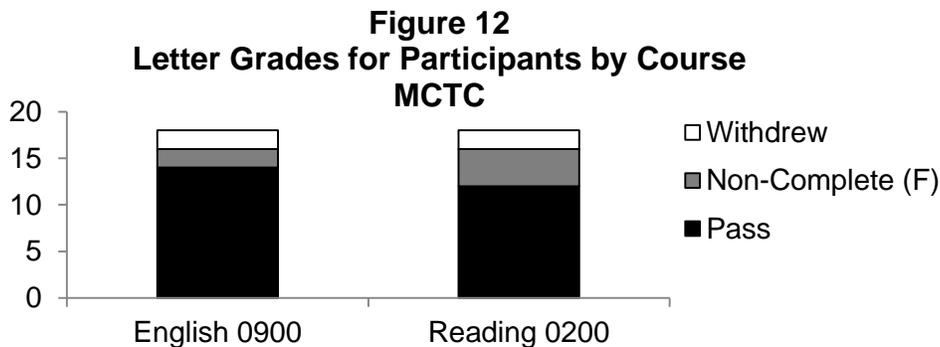
Summer Transition Program Course Grades

Summer bridge programs typically prepare students to meet the academic demands of college by requiring that students enroll in either developmental or college-level composition, math, study skills enhancement, and reading courses. Boylan, Bliss and Bonham (1997) found a relationship between the availability of advising and counseling services to community college students in developmental education and higher pass rates in both developmental mathematics and developmental English courses.

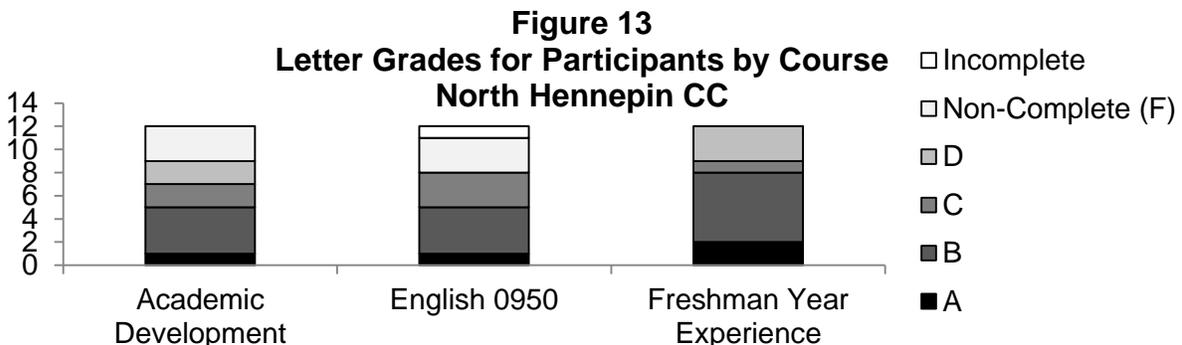
Course grade distributions for students in the summer transition program at Central Lakes College are shown in Figure 11. With the exception of the Math 1 and Topics in Psychology courses, slightly more students failed or withdrew than successfully completed each course.



Course grade distributions for students in the summer transition program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College are shown in Figure 12. Minneapolis Community and Technical College's courses were graded on a pass/fail system, with 14 students (78%) passing English 0900 and 12 students (67%) passing Reading 0200.



Course grade distributions for students in the summer transition program at North Hennepin Community College are shown in Figure 13. In each class, more students successfully completed than failed or withdrew from the course.



Fall Term 2010: Enrollment, Credit Loads and Grade Point Averages

Academic under-preparedness increases the dropout and stop-out risks for students. Hawley and Harris found that “the more developmental courses a student has to take, the less likely that student is to persist” (2005, p. 130). Additionally, academically underprepared students are less likely to successfully complete their courses and have lower grade point averages than their college-ready peers (Grimes & David, 1999). This risk can be mitigated through the academic advising support offered by summer transition programs. Several scholars have provided evidence to support the effectiveness of academic advising on the success of academically underprepared students. Dale and Zych (1996) found that enhanced student services programs for developmental students increased both student satisfaction and retention. Student success rates are shown to be nearly twice as great when at-risk students have regular meetings with advisors (Engle, Reilly, & Levine, 2004).

Pursuant to statute, the Agency and institution measured fall term 2010 enrollment, number of credits enrolled, and fall term grade point averages in order to evaluate longer-term program outcomes. To evaluate the number of credits enrolled, and fall term grade point averages for summer transition grant participants, the Agency utilized existing data and requested additional data from the MnSCU Central Office for a comparison group of students.

As fall term 2010 data was not available, a comparison group of fall term 2009 students was used. For each of the participating campuses, comparison group students had the following characteristics:

- graduated from high school in 2009,
- enrolled at the participating college during fall term 2009,
- enrolled in one or more developmental credits during fall term (as a proxy for below college-level Accuplacer scores), and
- qualified for a Federal Pell Grant based on the student’s Expected Family Contribution.

Comparison group data is presented where appropriate in the sections below.

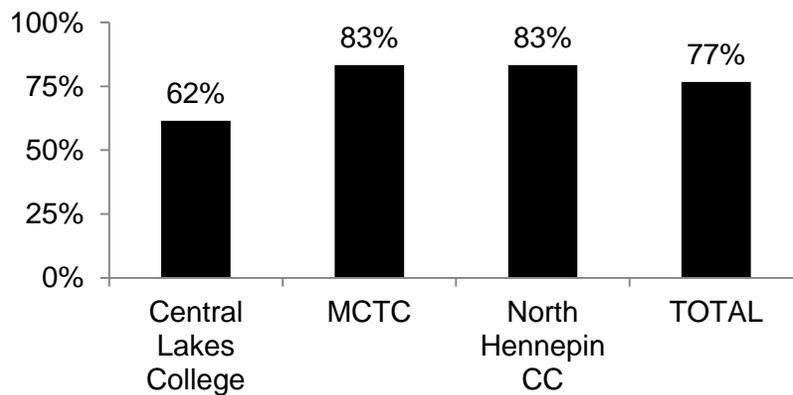
Table 4
Comparison Group and Participants Group by Campus

Institution	Comparison Group	STG Participants
Central Lakes College	32	13
Minneapolis Community and Technical College	214	18
North Hennepin Community College	334	12
Total	580	43

Fall Enrollment in College

Thirty-three of 43 (76.7 percent) of summer transition program participants enrolled at a Minnesota college during the fall term of the 2010-2011 academic year as displayed in Figure 14. Eighty-three percent of participants at Minneapolis Community and Technical College and North Hennepin Community College enrolled in college and 61.5 percent of participants at Central Lakes College enrolled in college. All but one of the students who did enroll in college during fall term enrolled at the same campus offering the summer transition program.

Figure 14
Percent of Participants Enrolling
Fall Term 2010*



*Includes three students who subsequently withdrew

As of the end of fall term, only three of 33 participants who enrolled in college (9.1 percent) had withdrawn which may be a positive indicator of the program's effect on retention. First-generation students are 8.5 times more likely to withdraw from college than students with college-educated parents (Ishitani, 2006). Evans (1999) found that summer bridge program students persisted at a higher rate than non-program students. Participants will continue to be tracked to monitor retention rates.

Fall Term Credit Loads

As shown in Figure 15, the mean credit load for all participants enrolled in fall 2010 was 12.5 credits. Students from Central Lakes College had the highest median credit load (15.5). Sixty-three percent of participants at Central Lakes enrolled in technical programs requiring 15 or more credits per term.

Figure 15
Mean Credit Load for Participants
Fall Term 2010

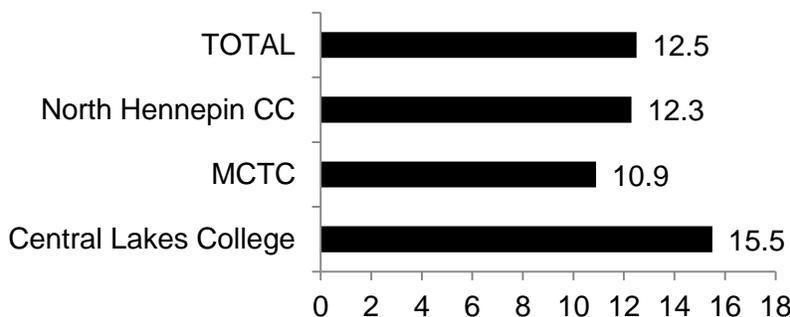


Figure 16
Developmental Credits as Percent of Total Credits
STG Participants & Comparison Group
Fall Term 2010

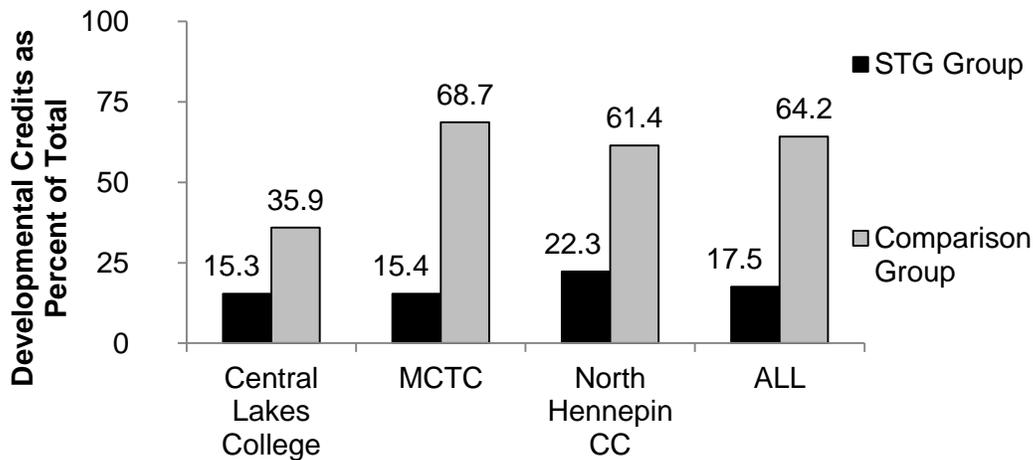
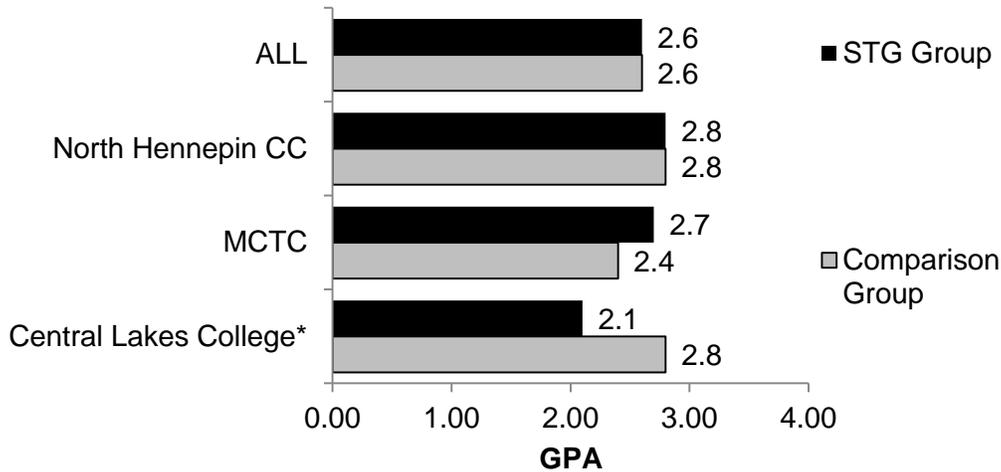


Figure 16 displays the percent of total credits for fall term 2010 which were developmental credits for Summer Transition Grant participants and students in the comparison group. For all institutions, Summer Transition Grant participants enrolled in significantly fewer developmental courses than the comparison group. The lowest percentage of developmental credits was for summer program participants at Central Lakes College, who had an average of 15.3 percent of total credits comprised of developmental credits, compared to 35.9 percent for the comparison group. The greatest difference between summer program participants and comparison group students occurred at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, with 15.4 percent of total credits comprised of developmental credits for summer program participants versus 68.7 percent for the comparison group. Developmental credits as a percentage of total credits averaged 17.5 percent for all summer participants versus 64.2 percent for the comparison group. Fewer fall term developmental credits are a positive outcome in that participants were enrolled in more credits applicable to a degree program.

Fall Term College Grade Point Averages

Fall term 2010 mean grade point averages for summer program participants are compared to students in the comparison groups in Figure 17. Overall, the mean grade point average for summer program participants (2.6) was equal to the mean GPA for students in the comparison group (2.6). However, Figure 16 data indicated that summer program participants took fewer developmental credits than students in the comparison groups. Mean grade point averages ranged from 2.1 at Central Lakes College to 2.8 at North Hennepin Community College, with mean of 2.8 for all summer transition grant participants. The low mean grade point average for Central Lakes College was due to students enrolled in technical programs requiring 16 through 18 credits per term, which may have proven too challenging. If the grade point averages of those students were excluded, the mean grade point average for Central Lakes College would have been 2.7.

Figure 17
Mean Grade Point Average
STG Participants & Comparison Group
Fall Term 2010



*Includes two students with GPAs < 1.0

In conclusion, many participants did not test at the college-ready level upon completion of the program, but did show improvement in Accuplacer test scores and achieved passing grades in their summer program developmental courses. Seventy-seven percent of program participants enrolled in college during fall term 2010, with participation rates as high as 83 percent at two of the campuses. Only 17.5 percent of the total credits taken by summer program participants during fall term 2010 were developmental credits, giving them a substantial boost over the students in the comparison group (64.2 percent of credits were developmental). Furthermore, those participants completing fall term had a mean grade point average of 2.6, which was identical to that of the overall comparison group even though summer program participants took a substantially lower percentage of developmental course credits during fall term. The 2.6 grade point average was above the 2.0 grade point average required for campus satisfactory academic progress requirements.

Finally, only three of 33 participants who enrolled in college (9.1 percent) withdrew during fall term which may be a positive indicator of the program's effect on retention. It is too early to determine the effects of summer transition program participation on persistence. The Agency and participating campuses will continue to collect enrollment and grade point average data on this cohort of program participants and comparison groups during future academic years.

Institutional Program Goals and Objectives

Central Lakes College

Table 5
Central Lakes College Summer Transition Program Goals

Goals	Outcomes
30 participants will be served	13 students served
67% of participants will be both low-income and first generation college students. 33% of participants will be from either group	92% of students were both low-income and first-generation 100% of students were from either group 38% received disability services
40% of participants will test at college-level for either reading or math on post-program Accuplacer	25% of those tested were college-ready in reading comprehension 0% of those tested were college-ready in math 87% showed improvement in one area, with 50% of this group showing significant improvement
50% of participants taking a reading course will successfully complete the course	45.5% successfully completed Reading I or II 2 out of 6 students successfully completed Reading I 3 out of 5 students successfully completed Reading II
75% of participants will achieve a score of 65 or higher on the arithmetic portion of the Accuplacer test or successfully complete Math 0594	14.3% (1 out of 7 students tested achieved score of 65 or higher) 50% (6 of 12 students successfully completed Math 0594)
80% of participants will persist through summer program and into fall term	61.5% 8 of 13 students enrolled fall term 2 of 8 students withdrew during fall term
60% of participants who enrolled fall term will persist into their second year of college	62.5% 5 of 8 students enrolled during fall term persisted to spring term

Program goals outcomes for Central Lakes College are shown in Table 6. Due to the uncertainty of funding for the Summer Transition Grant program, Central Lakes College was not able to start recruiting students until April 2010. Thus, they did not meet their goal of serving 30 students for two cohorts of 15 students. Nevertheless, the college was able to recruit 13 students, six of whom were recruited in late May, close to the start of the program. Ninety-two percent of the students recruited were both low-income and first generation college students, exceeding the college's goal of 67 percent.

Only 25 percent of students taking the Accuplacer tested at the college-ready level for English in the post-program testing, falling short of the college's goal of 40 percent. However, the college reports that 87 percent of students showed some improvement and, of those students, 50 percent showed significant improvement. The college came close to meeting its goal of 50 percent of students successfully completing the developmental reading course, with a 45.5 percent completion rate. The college fell short of its goal of 75 percent of students completing the developmental math course, with six out of 12 students (50 percent) successfully completing the course.

Eight out of 13 students (61.5 percent) in the summer program persisted into fall term, which did not meet the goal of 80 percent persisting into fall term. Two of the eight students who did enroll

subsequently withdrew. However, five of the eight students (62.5 percent) who did enroll for fall term also enrolled for spring term, exceeding the college’s goal of 60 percent for persisting past fall term.

Minneapolis Community & Technical College

Table 6
MCTC Summer Transition Program Goals

Goals	Outcomes
25 participants will be served	18 students served
90% of participants will participate in orientation day	94.4% 17 out of 18 students attended orientation
85% of participants pass both ENGL 900 and READ 200 and are ready to enroll in college-level courses for fall term 2020	66.7% 12 out of 18 students passed both ENGL 900 and READ 200 13 out of 18 students have college-ready Accuplacer reading scores
10 participants will have perfect program attendance	5 participants had perfect attendance

Program goals and outcomes for Minneapolis Community and Technical College are shown in Table 6. The college was able to recruit 18 students, but did not meet its goal of recruiting 25 participants. Just over 94 percent of participants participated in orientation day, exceeding the goal of 90 percent. Twelve out of 18 students (66.7 percent) passed both the developmental reading and math courses, falling short of the college’s goal of 85 percent. Of the six students who did not pass both courses, two students passed one of the courses, two students passed neither course, and three students withdrew. Thirteen out of 18 students had college-ready Accuplacer reading scores upon completion of the program.

North Hennepin Community College

Table 7
NHCC Summer Transition Program Goals

Goals	Outcomes
15 to 20 participants will be served	12 students served
90% of participants will complete program	100% 12 of 12 students completed No W grades reported
80% of those completing program will achieve program GPA of at least 2.5	33.3% summer program 4 of 12 students had program GPA of at least 2.5 80% fall term 8 of 10 students enrolling for fall term 2010 had GPAs > 2.5

Program goals and outcomes for North Hennepin Community College are shown in Table 7. The college was able to recruit 12 students, short of its goal of 15 to 20 participants. However, 100 percent of students completed the summer program, exceeding the college’s goal of 90 percent. Although only 33.3 percent of students had a grade point average of 2.5 or higher for the summer developmental courses, 80 percent of students had a fall term grade point average of 2.5 or higher, meeting the college’s goal of 80 percent.

Conclusions

Results for the first year of the Summer Transition Grant program are mixed.

Agency staff documented positive outcomes in three areas: population served, financial aid administration and academic improvement.

Population Served

The three participating summer transition programs served the student populations intended. Participants included a high percentage of students of color, low-income students and first-generation college students. Most students were from families with incomes low enough to have a zero Expected Family Contribution and thereby qualify for the maximum Summer Transition Grant.

Financial Aid Administration

The financial aid component of the program ran smoothly. A web-based system developed by the Agency was up and running in early May in time for schools to enter student application data and calculate awards for the summer term. Once student awards were calculated on the system by campus program administrators, funds were disbursed by the Agency with no delays. The web-based system also allowed campus program administrators to enter program evaluation data for each student easily.

Academic Improvement

Though many participants did not test at the college-ready level upon completion of the program, many students did show improvement in Accuplacer test scores and achieved passing grades in their summer program developmental courses. Participants at Central Lakes College made gains in arithmetic and elementary algebra test scores, but fell short of the minimum score required for college-level placement. Students were not tested on the Accuplacer math components at Minneapolis Community and Technical College or North Hennepin Community College, since the summer transition program focused on college-level reading and writing. Campus program administrators caution that students who took the pre-test on campus were not overly enthusiastic about retaking the test upon completion of the program and may not have given their best effort.

Only students enrolled in the summer program at Minneapolis Community and Technical College tested at the college-ready level on the post-program Accuplacer test. However, these students had the highest pre-program Accuplacer reading comprehension test score of 69.5 compared to other campuses. The median post-program Accuplacer test score for students at North Hennepin Community College was actually *less* than the median pre-program test score. However, 25 percent of students did test at the college-ready level for English and 87 percent showed improvement. Furthermore, student course grades during fall term 2010 may be a better indicator of program effectiveness. The mean grade point average for all participants was 2.93 – well above the 2.0 grade point average required for campus satisfactory academic progress requirements.

Seventy-seven percent of program participants enrolled in college during fall term 2010, with participation rates as high as 83 percent at two of the campuses. Only 17.5 percent of the total credits taken by summer program participants during fall term 2010 were developmental credits, giving them a substantial boost over the students in the comparison group (64.2 percent of credits were developmental). Further, those participants completing fall term had a mean grade point average of 2.6, which was identical to that of the overall comparison group even though summer program participants took a substantially lower percentage of developmental course credits during fall term.

Finally, only three of 33 participants who enrolled in college (9.1 percent) withdrew during fall term which may be a positive indicator of the program's effect on retention. First-generation students are 8.5

times more likely to withdraw from college than students of college-educated parents (Ishitani, 2006). It is too early to determine the effects of summer transition program participation on persistence. The Agency and participating campuses will continue to collect enrollment and grade point average data on this cohort of program participants and comparison groups during future academic years.

Agency staff also documented negative outcomes in three areas: program participation and program funding.

Program Participation

Unfortunately, only three campuses participated in the program during its first year of implementation, enrolling a total of only 43 students. One of the major reasons other campuses cited for their decision not to participate was the uncertainty of Summer Transition Grant funding. Potential budget cuts at the state level during the 2010 legislative session delayed recruitment of students. At the time of this report, campus participation is expected to double for summer 2011.

A considerable number of students failed or withdrew from developmental courses offered in the summer transition programs, particularly at Central Lakes College. The campus program administrator indicated that many of the students who failed or withdrew from courses were recruited to the program at the end of May in a “last-ditch” effort to get enough students to run the program. Students in that program also had the lowest mean high school grade point average compared to the other two participating campuses.

Another reason cited for low participation was the inability of a campus to recoup its full program costs through individual student Summer Transition Grants. Campuses cannot predict at the time of program planning and hiring how many students will enroll in the summer program and qualify for grants. Most summer transition program participants enrolled part-time, making revenues from student grants insufficient to fully fund programs. Thus, the funding structure for the program does not incentivize campuses to offer them unless they can secure additional funding sources.

Some of the summer transition program proposals did not meet the requirements in statute. Programs designed to acclimate first-generation college students to the college environment but not placing an emphasis on identifying and addressing academic remediation were not eligible. Most students admitted to four-year colleges must test college-ready to be admitted, thus programs offered by many four-year colleges did not meet the statutory requirements for this program.

Program Funding

Although disbursement of funds from the Agency to campuses went smoothly, campus program administrators reported students being confused and frustrated with having to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) twice. The 2009-2010 FAFSA was required for summer term 2010 enrollment and the 2010-2011 FAFSA for the 2010-2011 academic year. Some students who submitted the 2010-2011 FAFSA did not realize they had to complete the 2009-2010 FAFSA for the summer term and experienced delays in awards until that was accomplished.

Most of the campus summer program goals related to academic improvement, course completion and retention into fall term were not met. The exception to this was North Hennepin Community College which did exceed its goal of 90 percent summer program completion (100 percent) and 80 percent of students obtaining a grade point average of at least 2.5. Because the program statute allows institutions to set their own summer program goals and outcomes, it is difficult to compare program specific outcomes across campuses.

Recommendations

1. Consider expanding the statute to allow for participation by programs designed to acclimate first-generation college students to the college environment

If the program's intent is to identify and address the need for academic remediation in the areas of English and math, then the current statutory requirement that participating programs accept students showing a need for remediation should be continued. However, if the main goal of the program is to improve college participation, persistence and completion for groups underrepresented in higher education, the state should consider expanding the statute to allow participation by programs focusing on building academic skills and acclimating underrepresented students to the college environment.

First-generation students are 8.5 times more likely to withdraw from college than students of college-educated parents (Ishitani, 2006). Social integration has a powerful effect on student success—studies show that even low academic performers persist because of their successful social integration and perception of fit with their institution (Kennedy, Sheckley, & Kehrhahn, 2000).

Summer bridge programs are also popular for the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students in degree programs such as the science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM) fields (Maton, Hrabowski, & Schmitt, 2000; Reyes, Anderson-Rowland, & McCartney, 1998; Fletcher, Newell, Anderson-Rowland, & Newton, 2001). Some colleges and universities also recruit students who have been admitted conditionally and make the final admission decision after the students have participated in the program (Walpole et al., 2008), a factor which can serve to incentivize satisfactory completion of the bridge program.

Allowing summer bridge programs focusing on student integration or recruitment of underrepresented students to specialized fields to participate in this program may improve college participation, persistence and completion for groups underrepresented in higher education.

2. Restructure program funding to a competitive block grant model

All campus program administrators felt the program would be more successful if it were restructured as a competitive block grant to campuses. There are four primary reasons for restructuring funding in this manner. First, as a competitive block grant, state funding could be used to cover all or a significant portion of summer transition program costs. Second, such a move would also allow campuses to start program planning and recruitment earlier in the year without needing to identify individual students for grants. Third, a competitive block grant may provide a sufficient incentive for other campuses to offer summer transition programs. Finally, a competitive block grant would eliminate the need for students to complete two FAFSAs and reduce the burden on campus financial aid staff to rush the processing of student financial aid applications for summer term awarding.

The costs of running summer bridge programs can be high for small populations of students. For example, hiring summer tutors, opening residence halls and dining services, and holding extra classes over the summer can cause financial stress for institutions. This is often why many summer bridge programs are offered through federal TRiO grant programs, such as Upward Bound, Educational Talent Search, or Student Support Services. These programs have specified program funding separate from institutional resources or student financial aid.

Changing to a competitive block grant would have a minimal impact on students as admitted students would qualify for the traditional forms of need-based financial aid, such as the Federal Pell Grant and Minnesota State Grant. Furthermore, individual student stipends could be provided to offset living

expenses so that students can concentrate on academic improvement. Currently there are programs that utilize student stipends as an incentive for program attendance and completion.

3. Provide better direction to institutions and the Agency regarding goals and evaluation metrics

Clarification of goals and making said goals uniform and consistent across institutions would improve the ability to measure program effectiveness. Campuses were allowed to establish site specific goals. As a result, the three program sites established in total ten program goals.

The ten goals established by campuses included:

- Number of participants served
- Number/percent of participants who
 - are low-income and/or first-generation college students
 - attended orientation
 - had perfect attendance
 - completed the program
 - achieved passing grades in their course
 - achieved a college-ready score on the Accuplacer post-test
 - achieved a program grade point average of 2.5 or higher
 - enrolled in college fall term
 - persisted in college fall term of their second year.

No two program sites had the same set of goals. It may be more effective for the Legislature (or the Agency if authorized) to establish a set of uniform goals for programs that could form the basis for future program evaluation. This is not to imply poor performance on the part of any program but rather to highlight the lack of clarity in evaluation or performance metrics.

While summer bridge programs may recruit students based on academic need, resulting program outcomes can be measured in multiple ways. Many summer bridge programs nationally also offer a combination of components associated with increased retention (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980):

- institutional integration (knowledge and use of university services),
- academic integration (study skills and habits), and
- social integration (extent to which students interact with university faculty and staff).

In addition to assisting students with becoming college ready in academic, social, and emotional ways, bridge programs also ensure that students begin their first year in a position to make progress toward degree completion (Tinto, 2003). Through their learning community approach, summer bridge programs connect students together in small groups to counteract the type of isolation commonly experienced by many college students.

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Appendix A: Minnesota Statutes 2010

M.S. 135A.61 High School-to-College Developmental Transition Programs

Subdivision 1. **High school-to-college developmental transition programs.** All public higher education systems and other higher education institutions in Minnesota are encouraged to offer research-based high school-to-college developmental transition programs to prepare students for college-level academic coursework. A program under this section must, at a minimum, include instruction to develop the skills and abilities necessary to be ready for college-level coursework when the student enrolls in a degree, diploma, or certificate program and must address the academic skills identified as needing improvement by a college readiness assessment completed by the student. A program offered under this section must not constitute more than the equivalent of one semester of full-time study occurring in the summer following high school graduation. The courses completed in a program under this section must be identified on the student's transcript with a unique identifier to distinguish it from other developmental education courses or programs.

Subd. 2. High school-to-college developmental transition programs evaluation report.

(a) Institutions that offer a high school-to-college developmental transition program and enroll students that receive a grant under section 136A.121, subdivision 9b, must annually submit data and information about the services provided and program outcomes to the director of the Office of Higher Education.

(b) The director must establish and convene a data working group to develop: (1) the data methodology to be used in evaluating the effectiveness of the programs implemented to improve the academic performance of participants, including the identification of appropriate comparison groups; and (2) a timeline for institutions to submit data and information to the director. The data working group must develop procedures that ensure consistency in the data collected by each institution. Data group members must have expertise in data collection processes and the delivery of academic programs to students, and represent the types of institutions that offer a program under this section. The data group must assist the director in analyzing and synthesizing institutional data and information to be included in the evaluation report submitted to the legislature under subdivision 3.

(c) Participating institutions must specify both program and student outcome goals and the activities implemented to achieve the goals. The goals must be clearly stated and measurable, and data collected must enable the director to verify the program has met the outcome goals established for the program.

(d) The data and information submitted must include, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) demographic information about program participants;
- (2) names of the high schools from which the students graduated;
- (3) the college readiness test used to determine the student was not ready for college-level academic coursework;
- (4) the academic content areas assessed and the scores received by the students on the college readiness test;
- (5) a description of the services, including any supplemental noncredit academic support services, provided to students;
- (6) data on the registration load, courses completed, and grades received by students;

- (7) the retention of students from the term they participated in the program to the fall term immediately following graduation from high school;
- (8) information about the student's enrollment in subsequent terms; and
- (9) other information specified by the director or the data group that facilitates the evaluation process.

Subd. 3. **Report to legislature.** By March 15 of each year, beginning in 2011, the director shall submit a report to the committees of the legislature with jurisdiction over higher education finance and policy that evaluates the effectiveness of programs in improving the academic performance of students who participated in the transition programs.

M.S. 136A.121 Subd. 9b Onetime grant for high school-to-college developmental transition program

(a) A student who enrolls in a program under section 135A.61 is eligible for a onetime grant to help pay expenses to attend the program. The amount of the grant must be determined according to subdivision 5, except as modified by paragraph (b). The requirement in subdivision 9a that subtracts a federal Pell Grant award for which a student would be eligible, even if the student has exhausted the federal Pell Grant award, does not apply to a student who receives a grant under this subdivision in the award year in which the grant is received. The maximum grant under this subdivision must be reduced by the average amount a student would earn working in an on-campus work-study position for ten hours per week during a summer term. The office must determine an amount for student earnings in a summer term, using available data about earnings, before determining the amount awarded under this subdivision.

(b) For a student with an expected family contribution of zero, the maximum amount of the grant is the cost of attendance under subdivision 6.

(c) A grant under this subdivision counts as one of the nine semesters of eligibility under subdivision 9. A grant under this subdivision must not be awarded for the same term for which another grant is awarded under this section.

EFFECTIVE DATE. M.S. 136A.121 Subd. 9b became effective for students who graduate from high school after December 31, 2009.

Appendix B: Application

APPLICATION FOR SUMMER TRANSITION GRANT PROGRAM

The Summer Transition Grant program provides financial assistance to eligible high school graduates attending summer transition programs offered by Minnesota colleges and universities during the summer between high school graduation and fall term enrollment in college. Students must be U.S. citizens or eligible non-citizens, Minnesota residents, 2010 high school graduates and attending an eligible summer transition program offered by one of the colleges shown below. The amount of the Summer Transition Grant will vary based on the income and assets of your family and the cost of the summer transition program you selected. To apply for a Summer Transition Grant you must:

1. Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for both the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 academic years. The results of the 2009-2010 FAFSA will be used to determine eligibility for the Summer Transition Grant program and the 2010-2011 FAFSA will be used to determine eligibility for financial aid for the first year of college. Be sure to respond quickly to any requests from the financial aid office for further information needed to process your FAFSA applications.
2. Complete this application and return it to the Summer Transition Program administrator at the college offering the summer program (contact information provided on the top of this form). The administrator will then notify you about your eligibility for and the amount of your Summer Transition Grant.

Your Full Name:		Date of Birth: / / MM/DD/YYYY	
Social Security Number:		Phone Number: ()	
Permanent Address:			
Email Address:			
Gender: Male <input type="radio"/> Female: <input type="radio"/>		Race/Ethnicity:	
High School Name , City and State		Are you Hispanic or Latino? (a person of Cuban, Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture, regardless of race)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
High School Graduation Date: / Month/Year		Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Black/African American <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Two or More Races <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	
Summer Program you Will Attend: (check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Central Lakes College <input type="checkbox"/> Mpls CC&TC <input type="checkbox"/> North Hennepin CC		College you Plan to Attend Fall 2010: City/State in Which College Located:	

Student Consent for Access to Educational Records

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Summer Transition Grant program, the Office of Higher Education will need to obtain information from the college offering the summer transition program, as well as the college(s) you attend after completing the program, regarding your high school GPA, college readiness test scores, courses taken, course grades and financial aid received. Because student educational records are considered private data under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the college(s) you attend will need your permission to release this data to the Office of Higher Education. The Office will use this data for the sole purpose of evaluating the Summer Transition Grant program and will not release the information to outside parties. By signing below, you are giving permission to the colleges you attend to provide your data to the Office of Higher Education for the sole purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of the Summer Transition Grant Program.

Student's Signature

Date Signed

Appendix C: Evaluation Report Requirements

High School to College Developmental Summer Transition Program Evaluation Report Requirements

DATA MATRIX

Item #	Data element	Description in statute	Level of detail	Data source	Time frame
1	Demographics: <i>Age</i> <i>Income</i> <i>Household size</i> <i>Parent's Educational Attainment</i>	Demographic information about program participants.	Student	FAFSA	Summer
	<i>Gender</i> <i>Race</i>		Student	Program Application	Summer
2	High School of Graduation & year	Name of the high school from which the student graduated and year graduated.	Student	Program Application	Summer
3	Readiness test name and description	College readiness test used to determine the student was not ready for college-level academic coursework.	Program	Campus Program Administrator	Summer
4	Readiness test content description	The academic content areas assessed in readiness test.	Program	Campus Program Administrator	Summer
5	Readiness test scores	Pre and post-program scores received by students on the college readiness test.	Student	Campus Program Administrator	Summer
6	Services provided list; description	A description of the services, including any supplemental noncredit academic support services, provided to students.	Program	Campus Program Administrator	Summer
6	Credits attempted Credits completed	Data on the registration load, courses completed.	Student	Campus Program Administrator	Summer
7	Course grades	Course grades received by students.	Student	Campus Program Administrator	Summer
8	Institution of Fall Enrollment, current year	The retention of students from the term they participated in the program to the fall term immediately following graduation from high school.	Student	College OHE State Grant database OHE Enrollment database	Fall
8	Institution of Fall Enrollment, future years	Information about the student's enrollment in subsequent terms,	Student	OHE State Grant database OHE Enrollment database	Fall
9	HS GPA	Other information specified by the director or the data working group that facilitates the evaluation process.	Student	Campus Program Administrator	Summer

