

Thursday May 20, 2010

To Whom it May Concern,

The IC/BCC Coalition is made up of active members of groups associated with the Intercultural Center and the Black Cultural Center. As a part of the coalition mission, we seek to nurture personal ties and develop cross-cultural understandings in an effort to pursue common initiatives and support the existing initiatives of individual groups. The groups represented in the coalition have varying political commitments and supportive and social functions, and so we use the coalition space as a resource and forum for discussion and action on overlapping and common goals.

In an effort to address the above-mentioned mission we put together several larger group evening workshops in conjunction with our weekly dinner meetings. For example, through meetings in the Big IC Room and Sharples, we have been gathering together to update each other about activities and events. We have also been working on leadership development, fostering internal organizational growth, and passing on experience and knowledge to underclassmen. In addition, we have facilitated conversations with President Chopp, and have also actively encouraged more IC/BCC members to run for Student Council in order to improve representation in student government.

In our first workshop this semester, we incorporated a vision building activity, which required us to divide into 5 smaller groups. Each group, which consisted of various IC and BCC members chose a pertinent issue that they would like to see addressed at Swarthmore and presented a role play of the steps involved in its successful completion. Four of the five groups *independently* choose to present a bridge program as their group topic that sparked further discussion about a bridge program. We realized at that time that our definitions of a bridge program varied. For some groups, a bridge program at Swarthmore meant providing ESL students with the opportunity to become more proficient in writing, speaking, reading, and comprehending English; thereby increasing their comprehension of academic texts and expanding both the range of potential academic majors and social development. Others envisioned a bridge program as an opportunity to gain the experience and skills necessary to broaden and expand the academic options for domestic students coming from high schools that had not adequately prepared them academically, and who would otherwise be dissuaded and uncomfortable in pursuing certain fields once here. Despite these differences, everyone recognized the need for some form of summer bridge program.

As part of our initial research we sought out information regarding the history of Swarthmore's past bridge program, contacted alumni who were involved, and created a survey for Swarthmore students to determine interest for such a program and the particular areas of need for students at Swarthmore. Members of the coalition spoke with Charles James, who used to teach in the bridge program and Eric Ward who was a participant in the program.

Through these meetings and conversations we were able to gather information regarding the history of the Tri-Co college summer bridge program. As Chuck James informed us, the program initially targeted the growing number of enrolled African American students to help those who were not provided with the tools and resources in high school to enable them to succeed academically at Swarthmore. Invitation to the program was based on SAT score and participation was paid for and optional. The program grew to include members of other minority groups. The goal of this program was to replicate a semester at Swarthmore. The curriculum included lectures and other exercises in math, english, science labs, and history. Notable concerns surrounding the program included the stigmatization of students involved in the program and the bitterness of students outside of the program who felt that the opportunity gave some students an unfair advantage. These concerns, however, played a minor role in the abrupt end of the program. Bryn Mawr's withdrawal from the program (and consequent inability to host the program) due

to financial difficulties had a bigger impact on the decision to end the program. Swarthmore and Haverford chose to discontinue the program due to the expense in conjunction with student complaints of stigmatization.

Through conversations with Eric Ward '75, a participant in the past bridge program, we gained his general feedback and thoughts pertaining to the stigma attached to the program. Eric Ward reiterated the details of the program's length and academic rigor. He spoke of the program as a "phenomenal experience" which gave him and his peers a "bond and sense of teamwork based on similar interest and careers." He acknowledged that at times some students involved in the program felt uncomfortable with the potential stereotypes associated with the program and that others who didn't participate felt unfairly excluded from a good opportunity. For Eric Ward, however, these sentiments, did not overcome the ensuing academic success and feeling of ownership and membership in the Swarthmore community gained through participation in the program. Currently, we are still in the process of contacting other alumni who were involved in the bridge program in order to get a well-rounded idea of the bridge programs history. We are also looking into the more recently attempted chemistry bridge program at Bryn Mawr.

Our overarching vision for the bridge program is to address the needs of a diverse group of students, including both domestic and international students who would benefit from additional science, math, humanities and social science preparation. Imagining a bridge program at Swarthmore will require intense collaboration among students, faculty and administrators to actually describe the possibilities of and limitations on such a program. We hope that this letter is a first step to open up such productive conversations at Swarthmore. Although the IC/BCC coalition is particularly interested in issues of diversity at Swarthmore College, we do not envision the bridge program as simply designed to support students of color and increase racial diversity on campus, as the program in the 1970s was designed to do; instead, we believe that a bridge program at Swarthmore will help support multiple communities of students, in particular those who might be intellectually ready, but academically underprepared for the rigor of Swarthmore. As a coalition, we believe that the bridge program at Swarthmore will fulfill a unique need, supporting both underprepared *and* underrepresented students at Swarthmore. With the support from other Swarthmore student communities, as a coalition we are prepared to commit our time and energy to making a bridge program happen at Swarthmore.

In this letter, we will first present the data and findings we collected through the student survey; then, we will discuss the significance of our findings and the difficulties in distribution that we encountered. In the second section we will outline case studies from five competitive peer institutions. In the third section we will use the testimonial comments collected through the survey to describe the difficulties that many students at Swarthmore have faced as incoming freshmen. In the fourth section, we will describe a preliminary list of conversations to be had between the IC/BCC coalition and the administration about access to student data and about moving forward with the bridge program project. In the fifth section we will describe some suggestions for improvements for the class of 2014. Finally, we have included a short bibliography of scholarly literature about bridge programs; this literature needs to be rigorously reviewed to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of bridge programs at comparable peer institutions.

### **Quantitative Findings from Student Survey**

Our second step after preliminary research of the history of Swarthmore's Bridge program in the 1970s was to design a survey titled "Swarthmore Summer Bridge Interest Survey." We anticipated multiple functions for the survey. First was to gauge whether there was a need for such a program; we hoped to assess whether there was a significant student population currently at Swarthmore who might have benefited from such a program. We also hoped to map who these students are, racially,

socioeconomically, and along other demographic axes and in terms of academic interests and majors. We collected demographic information, student self-evaluations of preparedness and testimonial responses to questions about academic success and support (see our survey here: [http://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV\\_ePsRIizOHH1GEZK&SVID=](http://qtrial.qualtrics.com/SE?SID=SV_ePsRIizOHH1GEZK&SVID=)). The second function of the survey was to introduce the idea of a Bridge Program into the student body. From the large group meetings we knew that there was significant interest in IC/BCC communities, but we wanted to involve a wider proportion of the Swarthmore population in the project and gauge student interest.

Distribution constraints were a major limitation of the survey. We sent the survey out to IC/BCC listserves, and to all of the RAs requesting that they send it out to their halls; we also sent the email to as many student group listserves as we could. In total we got 158 respondents, however, we were disappointed that could not distribute the survey to the whole student body through the administration or through Student Council so that we could get a set of results that are representative of the entire student body. We hope to continue to collect data through this survey and find ways to get this survey out to a larger pool of students.

In spite of the limitations of the survey due to distribution, we feel that the results have at least preliminary significance, showing the need for more academic support, in particular among students of color and students on financial aid. Among the students surveyed we found that across ethnic and racial divisions students are generally less prepared for the academic rigor of the natural sciences in comparison to the humanities and social sciences. Students struggled noticeably with natural science related lab reports. When the level of preparedness in the natural sciences was broken down by race and ethnicity we found that students that identified as Black and Latino were mostly unprepared while students that identified as White, Multi, Asian, and other, contained higher percentages of prepared students. Other major findings of the survey included a need for department specific support systems for students in the humanities and social sciences and a reconstruction of the SAM program. When asked if attending a summer program assisting your academic transition from high school to Swarthmore would have been helpful upon entering college 62% of the international students and 77% of first generation college students said yes compared with the 50% of total respondents that said yes.

### **Why a Bridge Program? Qualitative Findings and Discussion**

In addition to collecting quantitative data as described above, the survey also gathered responses in the form of comments. Below, we will describe some of the most relevant replies that we received.

In response to the question 1: "Do you feel your previous academic experiences have sufficiently prepared you for the coursework in your classes at Swarthmore?" We received comments such as:

*"I have not taken many classes like this, but I know that I have absolutely no background in them. My writing skills were great in high school and bad here. I still can not write a critical analytical academic essay."*

*"I was significantly behind my peers in all natural science courses I took. Both the structure of classes and the material itself was more rigorous than I was ready for."*

*"My math and science classes at my private high school were definitely \*not\* rigorous enough for me to have any clue what was going on as I attempted to fulfill my NS distribution requirements."*

*"... not at all prepared in chemistry"*

*"I took everything that was offered but I found that I was still behind. Most of my knowledge of ecology and Bio 2 came from just being a farm kid."*

*"went to a public school...even though I took AP classes in high school, the teachers weren't motivated and didn't prepare us adequately for the exam, much less the content of their subject"*

*"I received a very bad evaluation after my first lab here because I was totally unprepared for what we were doing."*

These comments indicate that some students' high school education did not adequately prepare them for Swarthmore's academic rigor. Although some students were able to make up for their lack of preparation through dedicated work, other students continue to need academic support that they have not yet received. Based on these comments, it can be said that students tend to face difficulties in classes that they take for distribution requirements, in particular for the Natural Sciences. Since the course distribution requirements are, in part, designed to help expose students to a variety of different major options, the lack of preparation of students in particular fields, might make them less likely to commit to majors in those subject areas.

One student also described an experience with a professor:

*"I have had professors tell me that my previous work has not prepared for Swarthmore and that I would need to work extra hard. I also have had a professor who I met with weekly because my work was poor - this was not helpful at all."*

Although this is not representative of the experiences of all students, it points to the fact that in some cases, the support of the professor alone is not enough to support students who attended high schools that did not prepare them for certain classes at Swarthmore.

Students also provided more specific suggestions with regards to resources they wished that they had access to at Swarthmore:

*"More writing resources without having to take intro to academic writing for a full credit..."*

*"More of a crash-course in computer programming/MATLAB/etc. in Engineering, for people who aren't going into a programming-heavy engineering field. There's some in E5, but not in areas that are very relevant later on. I feel like I'm continually at a disadvantage for labs because I don't have much of a programming background, even when the lab doesn't directly relate to programming. Maybe something emphasized beyond freshman year?"*

One student specifically mentioned a lack of support for students who are not receiving dramatically bad grades yet not achieving their potential:

*"I just felt all of my freshman and sophomore years that I was floundering, no idea what I was doing. But because I wasn't doing badly and because I didn't have a learning disability, there were no resources for me to go to to find out how to just feel more on top of my academics and get better at the math I needed for econ."*

Several other students referred to the fact that a lack of early academic support can prevent them from taking certain courses throughout their Swarthmore career:

*"...sort of basic math course - though my private high school was of a fine calibre and prepared me well for Swarthmore, I struggled in math and choose not to take Precalculus and upper level math courses. This lack of background has prevennted me from taking many courses needed as prerequisites for courses I am interested in taking in the future"*

This quote also demonstrates that the need for academic support is not limited to only students from certain demographic categories, and that even some students from private schools could benefit from more academic help, particularly in the math and sciences. Furthermore, one student commented on the importance of transition support in determining a component of academics at Swarthmore as important as the major:

*"I wish I had more preparation in science, I had, I would have been a physics major."*

*"For students without strong preparation in math prior to Swarthmore, majoring in Math is difficult."*

Many students also responded to question 6a, "Did you ever approach a faculty member with the concern that you felt academically unprepared for a course?" There were positive as well as negative comments; however, for the purpose of this survey, the comments that were most relevant to academic support are included below:

*"Mathematics. I was told to consider taking a different level of the same course, keeping in mind that doing so would make me less eligible for a major/minor."*

*"Spanish 003, Chem 10, Chem 22 - Advice was generally not helpful. Work harder, get a tutor, have more meetings - nothing a struggling student needs to hear"*

*"Chemistry, Physics - To seek out private tutors, attend the study sessions, do more problems"*

*"Math 15. I only received advice on things that I already knew (ie: help sessions, tutoring, etc.) and felt that the professor could have been more truthful about my lack of improvement in the subject earlier in the semester."*

It appeared that some professors, when approached by students, suggested private tutors and problem sessions. However, the experiences of these students indicate that these help sessions and tutors alone may not be adequate resources to support students who do not have a basic foundation which sets them behind others who underwent a more comprehensive high school curriculum.

The final question of our survey asked: "In light of your experience at Swarthmore, do you feel that attending a summer program assisting your academic transition from high school to Swarthmore would have been helpful upon entering college?" We received both positive and negative feedback, indicating that there is not necessarily a universal need for a summer program across the student body at Swarthmore. Some of the students who responded that they did not feel that they needed such a program, commenting that they felt adequately well prepared or that they found ways to adjust to Swarthmore even if they were not initially well prepared by their high school. However, more than ten of the written responses acknowledged that while they themselves would not have required such a program, they know other students who would find it beneficial:

*"I think that my particular experience with I.B. at my public high school was sufficient but, I would urge for a program to still be implemented for I have witnessed the struggles of many students in handling the academic load. These students are clearly qualified in terms of intelligence but are not as grounded in the other skills required to succeed at the collegiate level without incurring massive amounts of stress."*

*"The program should exist but I personally don't feel that I would have needed it."*

*"No, I do not feel that I would have needed this - but that is especially because I was at a small private school for the last two years of high school"*

*"I'm an exception and not the rule when it comes to international education. I felt very prepared for Swarthmore, but I know not all students have the same experience"*

*"I was lucky enough to have an educational experience in high school that did a great job preparing me for Swarthmore academics, extracurricular, and social life"*

*"I felt like I got enough support once I was here. Pass/fail is super awesome for freshmen. But I can definitely see how a summer program would be beneficial to others!"*

*"I felt adequately prepared for Swarthmore's academics. However, I know that there are many other students who do not, and it is my impression that a Summer Bridge program would be extremely appreciated by many of those students."*

Students who articulated a need for a summer program provided a number of reasons:

*"I think that the option to attend a summer program to prepare me for college writing skills and the level of work necessary would have been invaluable."*

- "I really do feel as though my high school education (even having taken 11 AP courses) failed to prepare me for even the introductory classes at Swarthmore. The AP classes at my high school were focused on how to get a good grade on the test and not so much on actually teaching the material. For this and many other reasons, I felt unprepared during my first few semesters here."*
- "A program that would allow us to take college-style courses/seminars would definitely help to prepare a first generation college student/student of color for the expectations of college."*
- "I needed (and perhaps still need) a better math education. My school/school system did not have the math classes other students had access to, and that put me at a huge disadvantage."*
- "Mainly for an acculturation into typical college academics. Though not a first generation college student, my parents attended very different institutions. The difference between expectations and available resources coming from my high school were immense."*
- "A math/science summer program, or a general program prior to my freshman fall at Swarthmore would have been amazing. Not only would it have strengthened my skills in areas that I already felt comfortable in, it would have helped me assess where my academic weaknesses laid."*
- "especially for international students whose first language is not english and who didn't go to an international school before Swarthmore."*
- "Reading materials, and understanding what is expected from the student in terms of discussions and elaborating ideas on papers"*
- "It would be extremely helpful since I had a really hard time adjusting to the overwhelming amount of readings and papers I had to write. It's a huge leap to go from writing 200 word essays to 2000 word ones on a regular basis."*

As can be seen, the bridge program survey that the IC/BCC coalition administered points to a need among some incoming Swarthmore students for a transitional program that can help compensate for differences in academic preparation at their high schools and aid in adjusting to the academic culture of Swarthmore, including expectations, peer culture and rigor.

### **Bridge Program Case Studies**

In this section we will describe a few of the Bridge programs at comparable peer institutions including Cornell, Williams, Bates, Princeton and UCLA. These case studies were compiled through a combination of scholarly research and interviews with program administrators (when specified). Looking at peer institutions' programs helps us understand the rationale for having a bridge program, evaluate its effectiveness and compare program structures. Bridge programs have numerous goals, including helping to diversify the student body, racially and socioeconomically, by supporting underrepresented student populations. Bridge programs are envisioned to help introduce students to the academic rigors of the college, to connect students who might face initial academic difficulties with teachers and with peers to create support networks for those students, and to help first generation college students and underrepresented students to the culture and campus before the rest of the student body arrives. Bridge programs have recently been introduced as a way to diversify students going into the Sciences.

There are many bridge program models at small liberal arts schools; however, we have focused on presenting the programs at colleges and universities that are as academically rigorous as Swarthmore; many of the programs described below are in large research universities, and we cannot economically or administratively replicate such Bridge programs at Swarthmore. However, there are models for small liberal arts schools that we can model, including Williams' Summer Science Program and Summer Humanities and Social Sciences Program and Bates College's Summer Scholars Program.

Here, we do not intend to present in-depth comparative analyses between the case study schools and Swarthmore to assess the viability of a Bridge Program at Swarthmore. Instead we are laying out

descriptions of different programs at peer institutions to demonstrate that it is a widespread program that continues to be sustained in many institutions throughout the economic recession as an central part of their mission to diversify the student body and to maintain support for underprepared and underrepresented students.

### *Cornell University*

Cornell University provides approximately 175 students an opportunity to attend its Prefreshman Summer Program (PSI), a 7-week program designed to help invited students prepare for the challenges of freshmen year at Cornell. Over the summer students enroll in the regular summer sessions courses with a course schedule determined by the student's college. In addition to taking classes, students go on field trips, listen to guest lectures, and participate in numerous social and cultural activities.

PSI is mandatory for students admitted through the school's affiliated EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) or HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program). Enrollment in the program is also based on a student's high school experiences and intended course of study. The program is managed by the college's Learning Strategies Center, which also provides tutoring, study skills workshops and supplemental courses.

(More information: The Center for Learning and Teaching's Learning Strategies Center:607.255.6310,<http://www.sce.cornell.edu/ss/programs.php?v=PREFRESH&s=Overview>).

### *Princeton University*

Each summer Princeton University gives approximately 80 students an opportunity to attend its Freshman Scholars Institute (FSI). As described by the Assistant Dean of the College, Diane McKay, FSI is a 7-week long program designed "for students whose transition is a bigger step from high school than it is comparatively for other students." Enrollment in this invitation-only program is based on multiple factors including a student's academic background and socioeconomic status. The curriculum for the program consists of two seminar style courses; students take a quantitative reasoning-based class in statistics or calculus and a humanities class entitled, "Ways of Knowing" that deals with epistemology and cognition. The students receive full credit for taking these courses. In addition to the seminars, the students attend weekly lab tours, writing center sessions, and activities hosted by student RA's.

The program was originally designed for incoming engineering students in 1995, but because of its measurable success it was expanded to include work in the humanities in 1998. The program's success can be summed up by student participants' feedback.

"It gets you into the groove of Princeton by taking away the first shock," he explained. "It's better dealing with the shock when you're taking two classes as opposed to a full load. It was an easy transition for me because I was in direct contact with professors and got to know them really well."

"It prepared me for my writing seminar," she explained, "because we were writing papers in FSI every week."

(Contacts: Associate Dean of the College: Frank Ordiway, Office: 409 West College Phone: 609-258-1998 Fax: 609-258-6371 , E-mail: [ordiway@princeton.edu](mailto:ordiway@princeton.edu); Assistant Dean of the College: Diane McKay, E-mail: [dmckay@princeton.edu](mailto:dmckay@princeton.edu) )

## *University of California, Los Angeles*

As part of UCLA's Academic Advancement Program, the University offers two New Student Programs, the Freshman Summer Program and the Transfer Summer Program, over the summer for incoming freshman and transfer students to prepare them for the academic rigor of UCLA. The University has a director and a 'supervisor' who work full time on the program and are supported by student employees.

The program lasts for six weeks over the summer, and recently has enrolled about 160 transfer students and 270 incoming freshman, less than usual due to budget cuts. Curriculum includes writing intensive, social science, and natural science courses. Students take two to three courses that meet UCLA requirements for graduation, and receive personal attention, in either small groups or individual sessions, from teaching assistants and tutors. The program has been successful since the late seventies with recent studies showing that those who attended New Student Programs have higher achievement upon regular enrollment.

Eligibility for the program is determined through admissions; admissions compiles a list of those 'eligible' for the New Student Program and sends it to the Academic Advancement Program who then contacts those students and invites them to apply for the summer program. Students not on the list can still apply by petitioning with a personal statement.

(Contacts: Director of New Student Programs: John Hamilton, 310 206 1571, [jhamilton@college.ucla.edu](mailto:jhamilton@college.ucla.edu); Assistant Director of New Student Programs: Mananita Paez, 310 206 1571; more information: <http://www.aap.ucla.edu/summer/index.html>).

## *Bates College*

Founded in 2009, Bates' Summer Scholars Program provides ten students of color and first generation students with an accelerated introduction to the math and science programs at Bates College. The program compresses two full semester courses, one in mathematics and the other in lab-science, into an intense six-week program aimed to build the skills and relationships Bates students will need to enforce their commitment to math and science. Students receive full credit for these two courses and are also introduced to time-management, research, and study skills. Classes are lively and discussion-based and labs are hands-on investigations of complex questions, focusing on designing experiments, analyzing data, and presenting conclusions. Students live together in a house, which invites collaborative learning. Students are placed with upper-class mentors during the summer who further facilitate their transition in the fall. All funds for tuition, room, and board are provided and students receive a \$2,400 summer stipend.

Lauren Okano, a Bates junior from Wyoming who took part in the inaugural summer program, can vouch for the value of the bonds she formed. "I came into the school year with faculty connections and friends, and I was already adapted to living at Bates," she says. "I knew exactly who to go to if I needed something in particular." Bringing her involvement full circle, Okano has served as one of two residence fellows for this summer's program, living with the new students in a house at Bates. "Lauren taught us work together," explains Akinyele Akinruntan, a Summer Scholar from Memphis, Tenn. "She told us to make sure we take advantage of the resources that are here for us." (Source: Houbley, Doug. "Summer Scholars Program Gives First-years Solid Start in Math, Science". *Bates College*. 20 May 2010. <<http://home-dev.bates.edu/views/2009/08/05/summer-scholars/>>.)

(Contacts: Thomas Wenzel: 207-786-6296, [twenzel@bates.edu](mailto:twenzel@bates.edu); Carmita McCoy: 207-786-6014, [cmccoy@bates.edu](mailto:cmccoy@bates.edu))



## *Williams College*

Williams College has two pre-enrollment programs for students of color and first generation college students, the Summer Sciences Program (SSP), started in 1987, and the Summer Humanities and Social Sciences Program (SHSS), modeled off of SSP in 2000. These courses are designed to aid the transition of students who have designated an interest in these subject areas to the academic rigor of Williams College. Each program is five weeks long and serves about 35 students total. The programs offer courses to students that are comparable to the academic work they will do in their first year. The programs are particularly aimed for students to get to know the campus and form close relationships with key faculty and administrators, resources that they are often more reluctant to take advantage of than their white and/or class-privileged counterparts. Additionally, the programs aim to tap into the intellectual curiosity of incoming students and encourage them to pursue research opportunities and graduate school. Furthermore, each program has three to four TA's (usually juniors at Williams) who serve as mentors to the students. All costs of the program (room, board, food, and travel expenses) are paid and students receive \$900 tuition abatement. Students of color and first generation students are identified by the admissions office and invited to participate in the programs. Students who express an interest and apply are then selected into the program through a lottery process.

Participants in the Summer Humanities and Social Science program take classes in Social Psychology, Philosophy, Political Science, and Comparative Literature. Participants complete community service projects throughout their time in the program and present on their community work during the last two days. Participants in the Summer Sciences Program take courses in Chemistry, English, Mathematics, and Biology as well as complete a chemistry lab component. Students also engage in workshops on time management and an overview of college administrative offices. To break up their rigorous academic summer work, participants in the programs have pizza parties, trips to Six Flags, and an overnight stay at the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

Research is currently underway to determine the success of the programs, but alumni evaluations demonstrate their clear success. Alumni report that the programs "greatly aided their in their transition to Williams and that they have tended to stay connected to the professors they worked with in the summer. Overall, approximately 90% of participants in the Summer Science Program have graduated from Williams College and 50% have continued on to graduate programs in science, medical schools, or science related positions." (Source: "Science Programs at Williams." *Williams College*. 20 May 2010. <<http://www.williams.edu/go/sciencecenter/center/RS94html/SciProg2.html#Pre-FirstYear>.>)

Despite the common concern that participating in this program would cause students to feel stigmatized or that students not included in the program would be upset at their exclusion, the founder of the program, Chip Lovett, explained in a phone interview that there has been absolutely no backlash or stigma felt by participants throughout his 23 years running the program. Though their budget has been partially cut during this economic recession, Lovett says that this program would be the last to ever be cut by the administration.

(Contacts: Summer Science Program- Chip Lovett: 413- 597-2124, [clovett@williams.edu](mailto:clovett@williams.edu); Summer Humanities and Social Sciences- Molly Magavern: 413-597-3747, [Margaret.L.Magavern@williams.edu](mailto:Margaret.L.Magavern@williams.edu))

There are still a number of competitive peer institutions with similar programs that need to be investigated, including Harvard's program, William and Mary's program through the Center for Student Diversity, Mount Holyoke, and University of California, Berkeley. In particular the outcomes and costs of programs at small liberal arts schools need to be assessed. Furthermore there is particular research, both qualitative and quantitative that we must work to identify, including program costs, structures,

curriculum, academic success of those who participate in bridge programs, and the impact on underprepared students who *don't* attend the bridge programs at their school. Additionally, it would be optimal to assess long-term impacts of bridge program participation through alumni follow-ups.

### **For the Class of 2014**

We anticipate that the timeline for the bridge program is between 2 and 3 years, so below are some support systems and improvements that are already institutionally viable and may be plausible for implementation for the class 2014 to address some of same issues we have identified in our survey as barriers to academic success.

#### *Orientation*

- During freshman orientation, SAMs could be assigned to CA groups in order to connect SAMs with students outside their halls.
- SAMs could also be introduced to international students at this time so as to establish more lasting relationships.
- A peer mentor program could be set up to connect older first generation college students with incoming first generation freshmen.

#### *Writing Associates Program (WA)*

- Explicitly state that students must choose between taking Intro to Academic Writing or being assigned a WAM
- There have been complaints from students who have been rejected from having a WAM. Some students' argue that the only reason a student would ask for a WAM is if they really needed one. We suggest that more WAMs are accepted to accommodate the requests for WAMs.
- In the past few years the writing center has worked hard to diversify the WA program both racially and socioeconomically; the writing center should continue to make improvements in this area, including emailing professors of color to ask them for WA nominations.
- The Writing center should host WA writing sessions that specifically reach out to particular student populations. Such sessions need to be planned in conjunction with particular student groups on campus, to reach out to the BCC, IC groups, first generation college students, students with learning disabilities, international students etc. and that are tailored to particular student needs.

#### *Other*

- It would be helpful if there was a policy that encouraged professors to list all academic support systems that are available in their course syllabi.
- Yearly advisor evaluations and suggestions
- Make it possible for students to have tutors for more than 10 hours a semester per course
- Make textbooks for classes more available for students in the natural and social sciences.

### **Moving Forward**

Below we have outlined possible conversations between the IC/BCC coalition and the administration and other interested faculty members, students etc., that need to take place in order to move forward on investigating the possibilities of the bridge program.

- Discuss racial and socioeconomic breakdown of students on academic probation, and investigate reasons for students' being on academic probation. Investigating the relationship between academic probation and student preparedness might help us to understand how a bridge program

might be useful.

- Discuss racial and socioeconomic breakdown of students participating in the Honors program. We would like to assess how students decide to participate in the honors program, and what supports students need in order to diversify participation.
- Discuss GPA distribution against demographic variables. It might be important to assess, not only who is in Honors and who is on academic probation, but to understand what the trends are of success among students in different majors and how it is related to their gender and class, racial and educational backgrounds.
- Brainstorm ways to reach out to faculty. Find faculty members who might be supportive, to understand why faculty members might oppose such a program. In particular, we should work to involve faculty from the education department, both for design and implementation and for future program evaluation.
- Discuss school climate and culture; we must attempt to project student and faculty perceptions of bridge program students in order to anticipate problems.
- Discuss funding possibilities, including possible funding streams, fundraising, grant proposals and cost-benefits analysis. We also must set this conversation in the context of the current recession, including projections about the future financial stability of the college and doing comparative analyses, examining the financial security and costs of programs at competitive peer institutions.
- Discuss possible impact on future admissions; if the program is successful, what are the possibilities for diversifying our outreach efforts, and recruiting more students from poor-performing schools.

The IC/BCC Coalition would like to formally meet with interested administrators and faculty members to begin to imagine the structure and implementation of a bridge program at Swarthmore.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

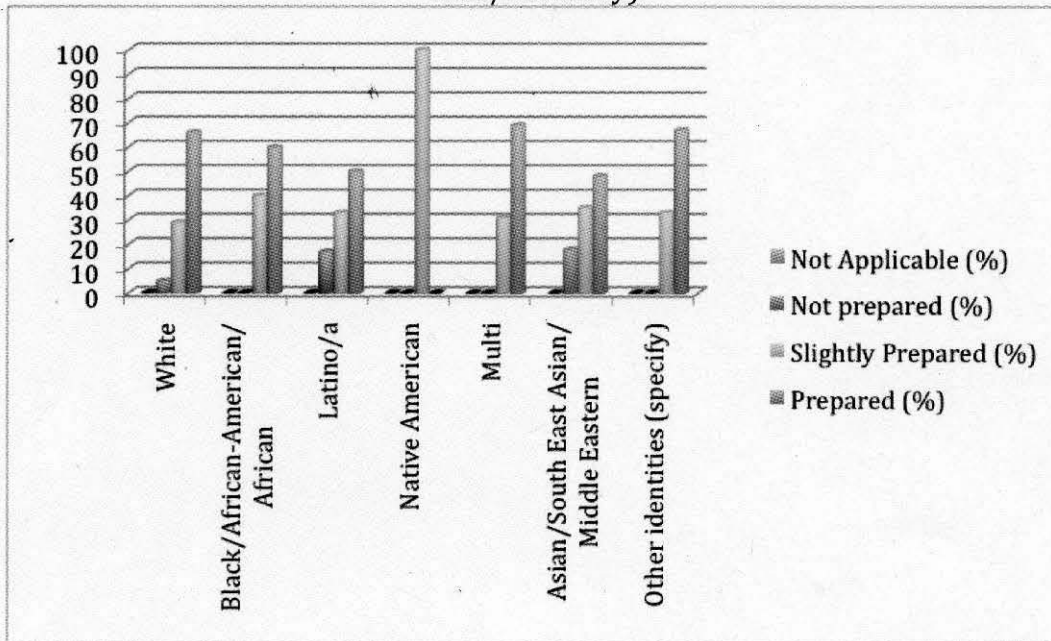
**IC/BCC Coalition**

## Figures from Survey Data

For the survey question, “Do you feel your previous academic experiences have sufficiently prepared you for the coursework in your classes at Swarthmore?” data was differentiated based on the *arts & humanities*, the *natural sciences*, and the *social sciences*. Separate graphs were created based on students’ race/ethnicity and financial aid status.

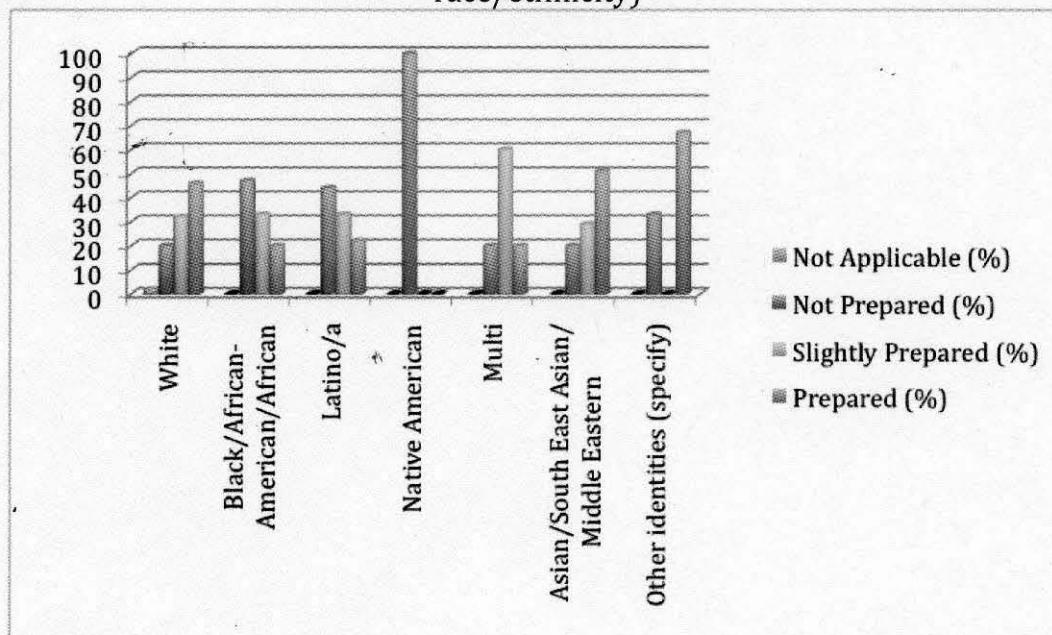
In Figure 1, a significant percentage of Latino and Asian students did not feel that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework in the arts & humanities at Swarthmore College. 17% of Latino and 18% of Asian students answered that they felt “not prepared,” compared to only 5% of White students.

Figure 1. Students’ feelings of preparation upon taking courses in the arts & humanities (by race/ethnicity)



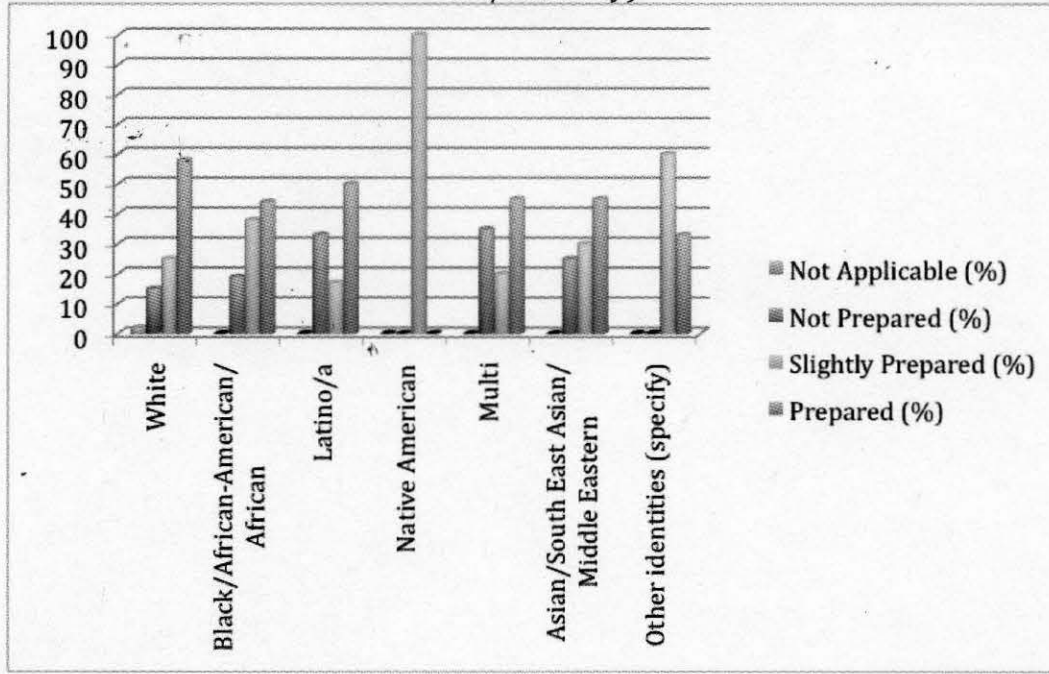
In Figure 2, a significant percentage of Latino and Black students did not feel that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework in the natural sciences at Swarthmore College. Specifically, 44% of Latino and 47% of Black students answered that they felt “not prepared,” compared to only 20% of White students.

Figure 2. Students’ feelings of preparation upon taking courses in the natural sciences (by race/ethnicity)



In Figure 3, a significant percentage of Latino, Asian, and Multi students did not feel that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework in the social sciences at Swarthmore College. Specifically, 33% of Latino and 25% of Asian, and 35% of Multi students answered that they felt “not prepared,” compared to only 15% of White students.

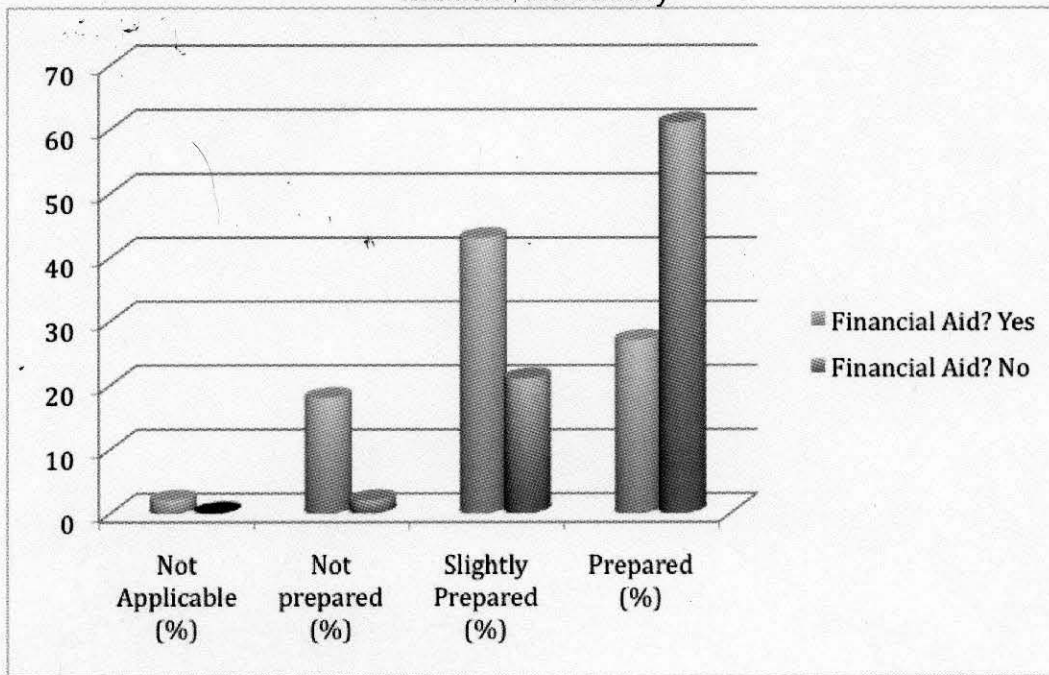
Figure 3. Students’ feelings of preparation upon taking courses in the social sciences (by race/ethnicity)



Students on financial aid were less likely to feel that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework at Swarthmore College.

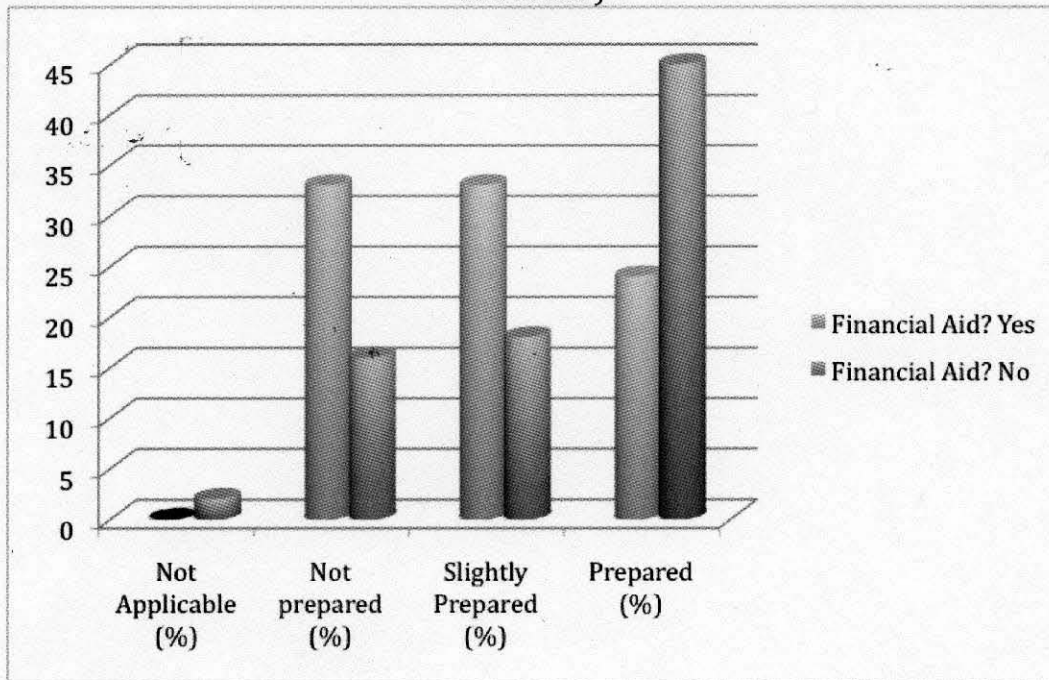
In Figure 4, a minority of students on financial aid felt that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework in the arts & humanities. Specifically, only 27% of students on financial aid answered that they felt “prepared,” compared to 61% of students not on financial aid, at Swarthmore College.

Figure 4. Students’ feelings of preparation upon taking courses in the arts & humanities (by financial aid status)



In Figure 5, a minority of students on financial aid felt that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework in the natural sciences. Specifically, only 24% of students on financial aid answered that they felt “prepared,” compared to 45% of students not on financial aid, at Swarthmore College.

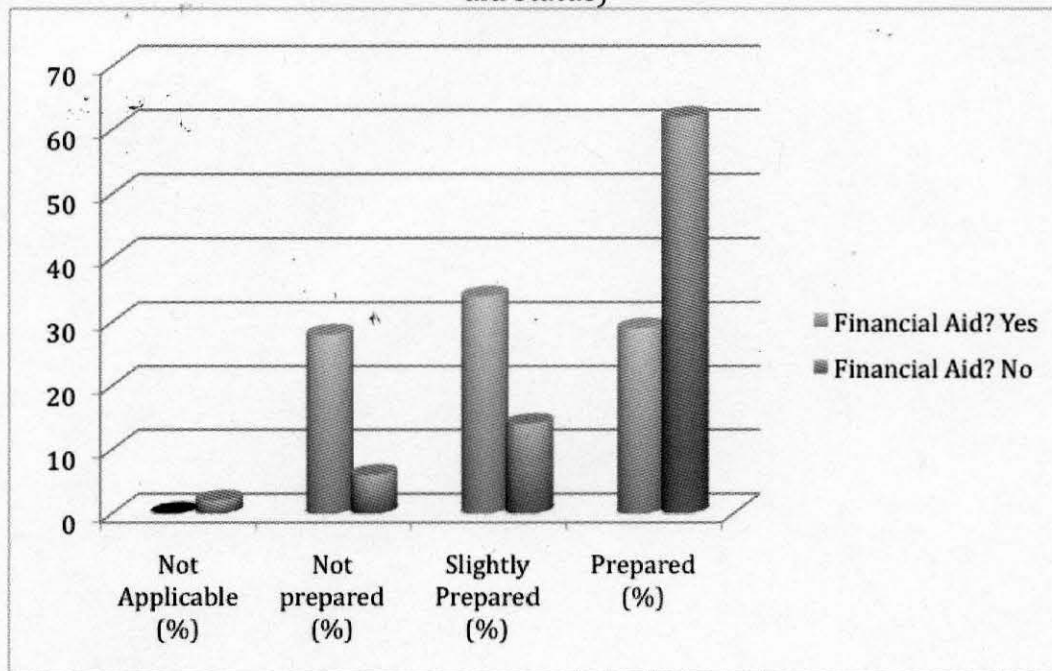
Figure 5. Students’ feelings of preparation upon taking courses in the natural sciences (by financial aid status)





In Figure 6, a minority of students on financial aid felt that their previous educational experiences have sufficiently prepared them for coursework in the social sciences. Specifically, only 29% of students on financial aid answered that they felt “prepared,” compared to 62% of students not on financial aid, at Swarthmore College.

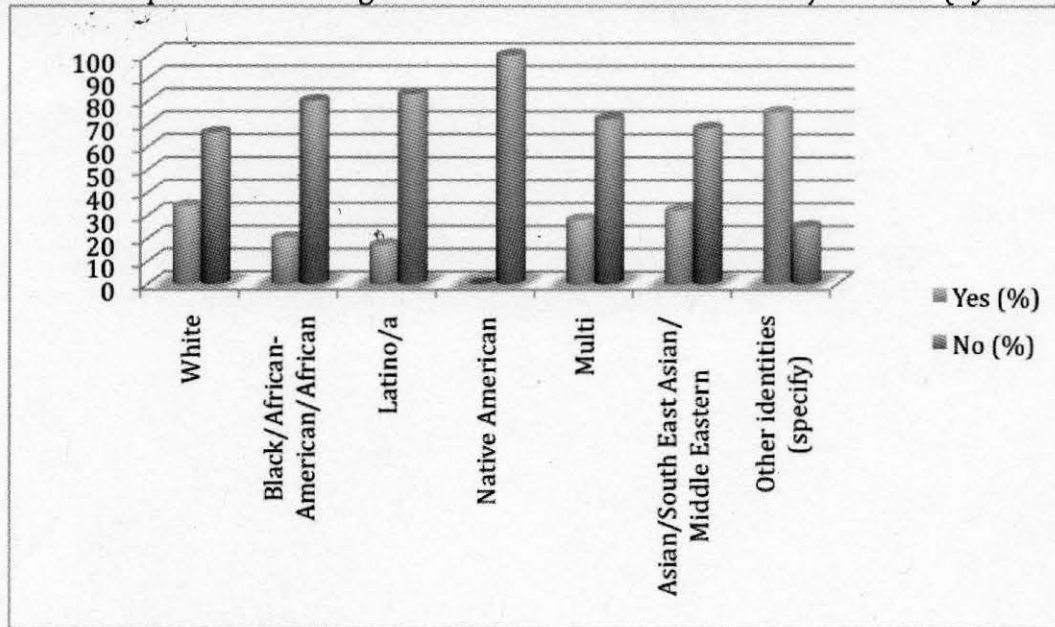
Figure 6. Students’ feelings of preparation upon taking courses in the social sciences (by financial aid status)



For the survey question, "Are you or have you been an academic assistant (SAM, WA, Ninja, etc.), or a one-on-one subject tutor?" data was differentiated based on students' race/ethnicity, financial aid status, and high school type.

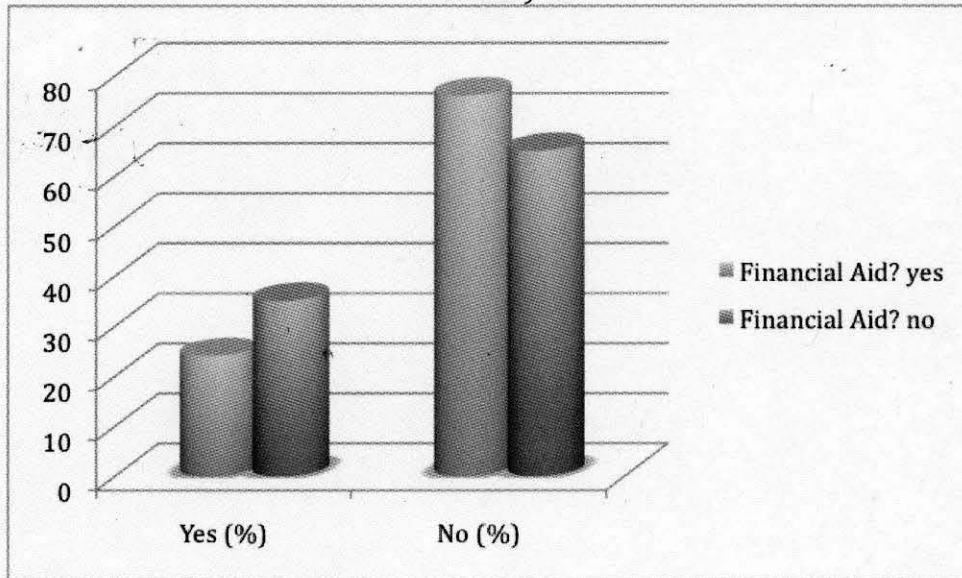
In Figure 7, a significant percentage of Black and Latino students have not had experiences serving as an academic assistant or subject tutor. More specifically, only 20% of Black and 17% of Latino students answered, "yes" to having served as an academic assistant or subject tutor, compared to 34% of White students at Swarthmore College.

Figure 7. Student experience serving as an academic assistant or subject tutor (by race/ethnicity)



In Figure 8, a significant percentage of students on financial aid have not had experiences serving as an academic assistant or subject tutor. More specifically, only 24% of students on financial aid answered “yes” to having served as an academic assistant or subject tutor, compared to 35% of those not on financial aid, at Swarthmore College.

Figure 8. Student experience serving as an academic assistant or subject tutor (by financial aid status)



In Figure 9, a significant percentage of students who attended public, magnet, and urban high school types have not had experiences serving as an academic assistant or subject tutor. More specifically, only 24% of students who attended public high school, 21% of students who attended magnet schools, and 13% of students who attended school in urban areas have served as academic assistants or subject tutors, compared to 34% of students who attended private school, 33% of students who attended charter school, 32% of students who attended a school in a suburban area, and 43% of students who attended school in a rural area, at Swarthmore College.

Figure 9. Student experience serving as an academic assistant or subject tutor (by high school type)

