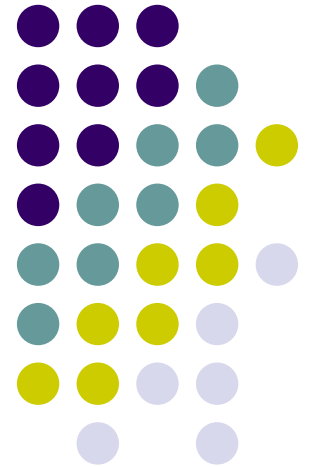


# Faculty Engagement with Diverse Students and Issues of Diversity

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Tom Stucky, Nancy Evans, Scott Weeden,  
and Elizabeth Rubens  
E.C. Moore Symposium  
February 24, 2006



# Agenda



- Provide overviews of three action research studies that were part of the Indiana Project on Academic Success (IPAS)
- Questions
- Discussion
- Evaluations



# What is IPAS?

- Statewide project – 16 Indiana universities involved in a variety of initiatives
- Funded by Lumina Foundation
- Pls-- Ed St. John/Don Hossler at IU Bloomington
- Goal: Improve retention by engaging in assessment of current and experimental practices

# IUPUI's Two Challenges



- #1 Transfer Process for Ivy Tech Students
- #2 Faculty Engagement with Diverse Students and Issues of Diversity

# Faculty Learning Community



- Faculty and facilitator focus on specific issue over extended period of time
- Faculty peers give one another support and feedback as they engage in action research process

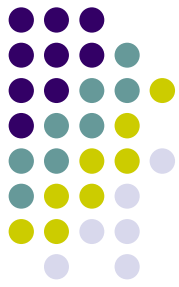


# Incentives

- Improve climate for diversity (defined broadly)
- Improve retention at IUPUI
- Learn more about action research methods, SoTL, IRB requirements, etc.
- Opportunity to work with other supportive faculty

# Engagement Strategies

- Started with a basic list of potential engagement strategies (handout)





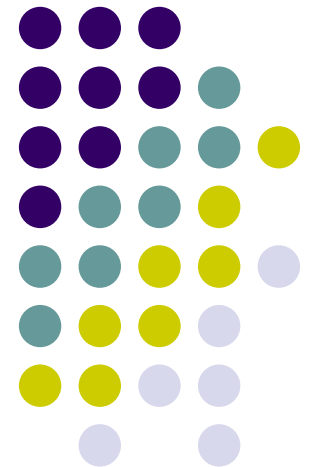
# Process

- Describe challenge
- Brainstorm possible strategies
- Selected one key strategy to implement
- Design a basic action research plan
- Gain IRB approval
- Implement plan
- Gather data
- Share results

# Investigating a Strategy to Improve Student Attendance

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# A Classroom Challenge: Student Attendance



- Spotty attendance → poor test scores → withdrawal/ poor grades/ failure
  - Half in / half out
- Failure to attend without withdrawing
- Remedy: increased contact from instructor



# The Current Study

- Research question: Would increased instructor contact with consistently absent students increase student retention and success?
- What is best research design?
  - Can't randomly assign
  - Can't do pre/post design
  - Limited to cross sectional design



# Research Plan

- Email students that were absent two or more days in a row
- Later amended to address spotty attendance (e.g. miss every other class)
- Call if don't respond to email
- Confidential survey for reactions
- Course is one I regularly teach
- Informal dry run in previous semester
- A note on IRB approval

# Results



- Survey questions/responses (handout)
- Evidence suggests contacts:
  - Boosted attendance short term
  - Little impact on final grades or retention
- GPA predicts both attendance and course success (handout)
- GPA partly result of prior attendance
- Evidence suggests increased contact is viewed positively (or not negatively)
- Caveat: Only surveyed students that finished!

# Lessons Learned



- Factors affecting attendance often beyond control (urban campus)
- Signup sheets suggest you think attendance important
- Emailing students involved minimal effort and may in individual cases help
- At least know are doing what you can
- Difficulty:  $\frac{1}{2}$  in/  $\frac{1}{2}$  out students may not read Oncourse or respond to phone calls /bad #s
- Pedagogical lesson: Just try something!
- Need institutional exit surveys for withdrawals

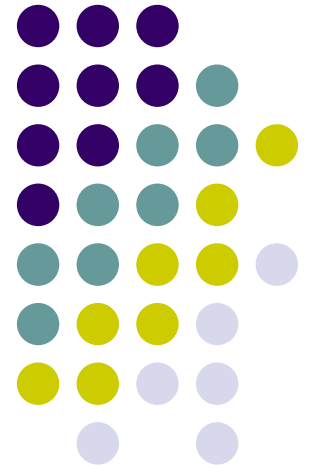
# Using Student Mentors to Increase Student Success

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# Challenge

- CIT 106 – Introductory Computer Applications Course
- Diversity in skill level of students (advanced and beginners)
- Skill level often varies by application
- Beginner students lack confidence, are nervous, need a lot of step-by-step help
- Advanced students sometimes bored if the class slows down to help beginner students



# Research Question

- Does using advanced students as mentors for beginner students increase engagement, confidence, and student learning of both the beginner and advanced students?

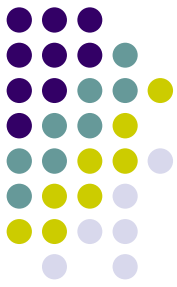
# Engagement Strategy



- Fall 2005 implemented a mentoring requirement into course
- Inserted statement in syllabus
- Students were *expected* to help each other work on course assignments during class

# Assessment Methods

- Teacher observations
- Mentoring survey piloted



# Observation of Beginning Students



- Are students on or off task?
- What are their responses to new material?
- What is their level of confidence as evidenced by their reactions and questions?
- What is their level of intimidation at starting something new?

# Observation of Advanced Students



- Are students on or off task?
- What is their level of enthusiasm?
- Do they seem willing and/or excited about helping beginner students?
- Are they developing increased teaching and communication skills?



# Observation Results

- Beginning students relieved to have someone else to rely on besides instructor
- Beginners' confidence increases
- # of questions from beginners during demos decreased
- Exhibit “excitedness” about learning so much stuff (beginners and advanced)

# Survey Results

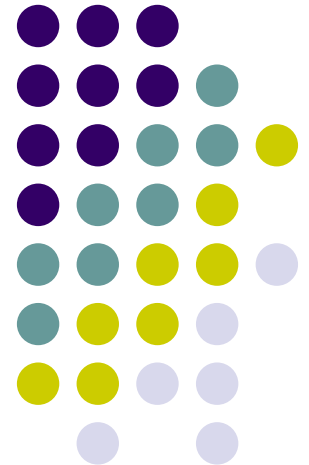


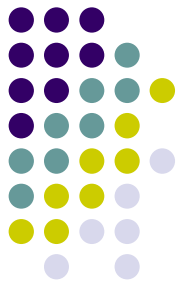
- Consistency in two sections
- Student mentoring definitely viewed by students as helpful
- 949 Strongly Agree/Agree to 94 Strongly Disagree/Disagree
- See handout

# Raising Student Diversity Awareness in a Composition Classroom

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Dept. of English  
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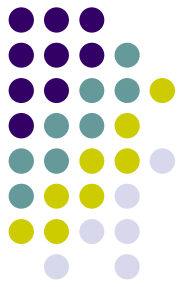


## Experiences Leading to the Study

- Students read literature about the experience of Hispanic American (Richard Rodriguez's Hunger of Memory)
- Students “identify” with the Rodriguez family as working to assimilate (re-tells the experience of the American dream)
- White students affirm his critique of Affirmative Action in chapter 5: A. A. discriminates against whites
- Students appear to struggle identifying with experience of those different from them

# Characteristics of White Safety

(Winans, 2005)

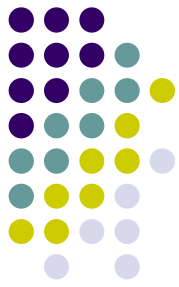


- The desire to remain safe from threat that one is racist
- The feeling that one is colorblind
- Supported by norms, narratives, and generalizations that signify that race does not play a role in interactions
- Classrooms do not raise uncomfortable issues regarding race and power



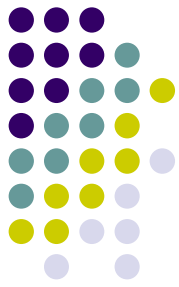
# Research Question

- What pedagogical interventions might be possible to prompt students to move beyond the safety of their perspectives about themselves and others, especially those of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, in a first-semester writing class (English W131)?



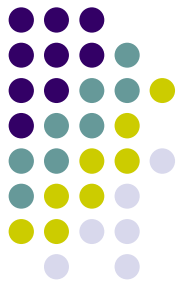
# Methods of Gathering Data

- Approval from IRB
- Creation of a class “Rules of Engagement” tool and assessment of class interaction using the tool
- Instructor observation
- Review of student writing in response to reading content
- Analysis of pre- and post-survey results from the “Diversity Knowledge, Awareness and Behaviors Scale” (DKABS)
- Course evaluations



# Results

- Students felt working with the “Rules of Engagement” tool was successful
- I note more consideration of the plight of the Rodriguez family
  - Appears based on new assignment sequence
- Student-produced surveys reveal surprises for students



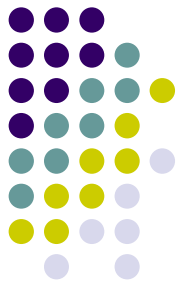
# Results

- Little change on DKABS surveys, except:
  - Better understanding of reactions to others' differences
  - Recognition of influence of upbringing on values
  - Members of other groups hold stereotypes based on one's primary identity
- DKABS caveat: need to reverse code and fine tune
- Little to no change on the evaluations:
  - Reaction to me drops
  - Reaction to the course is unchanged
  - Students still comment negatively about reading Hunger of Memory



# References

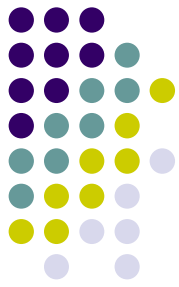
- Rodriguez, R. (1983). Hunger of memory: The education of Richard Rodriguez: An autobiography. New York: Bantam.
- Winans, A. E. (2005). Local pedagogies and race: Interrogating white safety in the rural college classroom. College English, 67, 253-73.



# Discussion

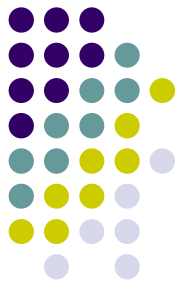
- How can faculty encourage and effectively facilitate classroom discussion re: issues of diversity?
  - What preparation is required?
  - What skills are necessary?

# Discussion



- Use of a class derived list of rules of engagement appears to help class interactions on controversial issues
  - Students feel better about the interactions
- Seeking big, immediate changes may not be realistic
  - One semester with one instructor is probably not enough
- Student perception can be affected by having discussions with others and reporting on this interaction
- Pointed or focused assignments from a reading also appear to help

# Handouts & Evaluations



- Thanks for Participating!