

Program History

The Bepko Learning Center at IUPUI is the culmination of the vision and courage of former Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Education Herman Blake, Dean of University College Scott Evenbeck, former Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Faculties William Plater, and former Program Coordinator Tonja Conour-Beilouny. The IUPUI Supplemental Instruction program began in August 1991 and was based on the philosophies created in the 1970s by Deanna Martin, Ph.D., from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. Supplemental instruction is based on the premise that students can play a key role in the academic development of their peers by being role models, by applying collaborative learning techniques, and by facilitating group experience related to course material.

Dr. Martin's philosophy has been adapted to meet the needs of an urban university such as IUPUI. The program's philosophy recognizes the need to work around the complex schedules of Supplemental Instruction leaders and students while targeting courses that have a drop/failure/withdraw (DFW) rate of 30 percent or above. Mathematics and science courses are highly targeted because they pose an increased challenge to the large portion of students enrolled in undergraduate degree programs. Supplemental Instruction leaders are students who excel in the educational process, model good student characteristics, and care about the struggles and successes of other students striving to learn.

University support, faculty involvement, and continuous growth are responsible for the success of the program at IUPUI. In 1992, the program began working with its first students and a staff of nine mentors who specialized in two at-risk courses, psychology and finite mathematics. The program experienced its most dramatic expansion during the 1994–1995 academic year. Soon afterward, the program grew, adding lower-level mathematics, biology, chemistry, and a myriad of liberal arts courses. Several sections of structured learning assistance, required mentoring sessions, were also added with the supplemental instruction sessions.

Academic results have been consistent throughout the program's history, clearly indicating a dramatic enhancement of the academic skills and achievements of participating students compared to nonparticipants. Furthermore, the sense of community and interconnectedness fostered by the program has been equally dramatic. Follow-up research has shown that the retention of students who actively participate in mentoring has increased significantly.

This growth has both necessitated and ultimately been fostered by the increased involvement of faculty. Perhaps the greatest assets a university possesses are its dedicated instructors, experienced students, and supportive staff. It is through collaboration, shared values, and common goals that the path for future graduates is paved. As the program grows, the continued enhancement of the relationship of instructors, students, and staff will be paramount. The concept of "students helping students" has flourished and continues to grow today in the Bepko Learning Center.