

History of Funded Programs

Fiscal Year 2025

Biology Ahead: A Summer Bridge Pilot Program at Penn State Berks (Penn State Berks) [PY1]

“Biology Ahead is a summer bridge which creates a support system and provides academic enhancement for underrepresented Biology students from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to ensure a successful transition to college. This one-week residential program seeks to help prepare students for their first-year mathematics and science courses. Biology Ahead seeks to recruit and retain more diverse students in the biological sciences by embedding evidence-based curricular and co-curricular activities designed to enhance student learning and retention to graduation. The cohort of Biology Ahead students will also be enrolled in the same first-year seminar class taught by the summer bridge instructor.”

First Year Academic Advocacy Initiative (Penn State Mont Alto) [PY2]

“All undergraduate students pursuing a baccalaureate degree will be introduced to academic advocacy services through their required first-year seminar course and will be encouraged to utilize the services. Additionally, first-year baccalaureate undergraduates considered to be the most at-risk, based on a campus developed risk-factor scale, will receive direct outreach from peer academic advocates (PAA) to address issues in a timely manner. PAAs will be trained to work together with the students to review their progress, present options, develop a plan for success, and facilitate communication and receive resource referrals (academic, personal, or other.)”

Hazleton Peer Academic Coaching Program (Penn State Hazleton) [PY2]

“Penn State Hazleton proposes continuing the Peer Academic Coach (PAC) Program that embeds PACs into PSU 8 (first-year seminar) sections. PACs will provide in-class and individual semester-long support by assessing students’ strengths/needs and implementing personalized action plans. PACS will be trained in evidence-based strategies to facilitate each session or workshop. The purpose is to empower students towards positive academic behaviors, resource identification, and belonging/engagement actions. The goals are to decrease numbers of first-semester students entering Academic Warning, reduce first-year DFW course rate, and increase first-year retention rates. PSU-HN students do not reflect the overall PSU academic profile in any category.”

The Penn State Wilkes-Barre SAGE (Successful Athletes Graduate and Excel) Program (Penn State Wilkes-Barre) [PY1]

“The 2024 – 2025 Penn State Wilkes-Barre SAGE Program, modeled on existing

programming at two other Commonwealth Campuses, intends to improve the academic, athletic, and social experiences of student athletes. The program will require monitored and unmonitored weekly study hours and one-on-one meetings with Athlete Advocates. One goal of these meetings is to identify student strengths and weaknesses, allowing the Advocate to refer students to the proper campus resources. The program will increase the academic performance of student athletes; increase use and engagement with campus resources, faculty, and staff; and maintain our student athlete retention rates.”

Behrend College Guidance and Empowerment for Mature Students (GEMS) (Penn State Behrend) [PY1]

“Being an adult learner on a campus with a largely traditional-aged population can be challenging. Issues such as limited class attendance availability, lack of financial aid, and life responsibilities affect adult students’ persistence to degree completion. So, too, does a perceived lack of community. Adult students may feel isolated or marginalized in an environment not built for them.

GEMS at Penn State Behrend is an adult mentoring program that addresses these barriers. GEMS provides a triangulated support system to enhance learning in the classroom and beyond. Through this program, adult students interact with supportive peers and develop meaningful relationships with faculty.

Penn State Behrend’s strategic plan identifies key goals for student success and campus diversity. GEMS aligns with these goals and harmonizes with university-wide strategic goals as well. By building a nurturing community for adult learners, we enhance retention; GEMS’ success will also lead to increased recruitment as more prospective students learn of the program’s benefits. GEMS also makes an important contribution to diversity because adult learners offer a unique classroom perspective that can inspire their traditional-age peers and create a positive dynamic in the classroom.

Through this program, adult learners will be given the skills to take charge of their education, gain invaluable skills in peer-to-peer support, and develop affirming relationships with faculty members that will guide their career paths and continuing education for years to come.”

Penn State York Nittany Scholars Program (Penn State York) [PY4]

“The Nittany Scholars Program (NSP) provides students with skills and opportunities to be successful. We will meet with students monthly or as needed through a combination of individual and group appointments and workshop opportunities that help students integrate to campus life, build academic skills, and plan for the future. The students have a strong supportive community where peers, faculty, and staff share resources and create meaningful relationships that provide a sense of belonging.”