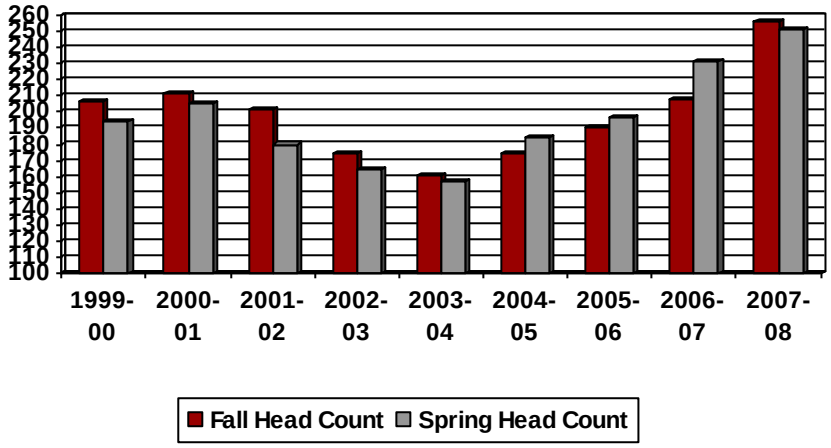
Development of the ACCELerated Evening College in the Hybrid Format
January 2008

Established in 1998, the ACCELerated Evening College (AEC) consisted of courses offered by resident faculty volunteers and recruited adjuncts. The AEC was established to address external competition. The primary audience for the AEC was returning adult students seeking speed and convenience as they pursued completion of a degree in the General Studies degree completion program. Courses were eight weeks long and met one night a week for 4 ½ hours. Students and faculty both considered the classes too long. Indeed as the chart below shows enrollment in the General Studies program began to decline.

Figure 1

Enrollment in ACCELerated Evening College/General Studies



The declining enrollment in 2001-2003 (Figure 1) caused the Division of Continuing Studies (DCS) to consider alternative formats for courses. In 2002, two potential course formats considered were fully online and blended with part of each course online. Ultimately, fully online was considered undesirable since part of the literature about online programs focused on retention which was a major issue at that time. Conversely, some research by Chuck Dziuban, University of Central Florida and Tony Picciano, City University of New York, suggested that blended learning, also called Mixed Mode or Hybrid, was as good as or better than traditional or online instruction. Dziuban reported, "*Our comparison of success and withdrawal rates in courses with varying Web presence reveals that classes featuring both face-to-face and Web components achieve higher success rates and comparable or lower withdrawal rates than those that are fully online or face-to-face.*" (F-Light article, 2001 Issue, University of Florida)

In 2003, the DCS proposed to begin to build courses for the AEC in the hybrid format. DCS established the goal by 2007 to move nearly all of the courses offered in the AEC into the hybrid format with 50% of weekly class to be delivered online and thus reducing

face-to-face weekly class meetings to 2 ¼ hours. DCS decided to invest its small amount of net income from corporate foreign language course contracts in development of hybrids. After review of the DCS proposal, the campus agreed to continue the development to reach the goal. However, the campus commitment was delayed when the DCS secured a $58K grant for developing hybrid courses. By late 2006 with continuing campus support, 160+ credits had been developed in the hybrid format and considered possibly sufficient to meet the needs of the AEC. Hybrids were considered as becoming institutionalized after being offered in other programs on campus.

Concurrent with development of the hybrid courses, the DCS launched Project Complete, a stop-out recovery program, in spring 2003. The DCS secured an initial list of about 7000 IU stop-outs residing in the IU Kokomo service area and began sending letters, followed by post cards regarding registration dates and invitations to Information Sessions. Based on attrition due to bad addresses and student moves to outside the service area, the data base at times has ranged from a high of about 7000 to a low of about 4500. As shown in Figure 1, the low point of enrollment was 157 in spring 2004 but began to rise each semester until reaching the high point thus far of 256 in fall 2007 about a 60% increase over three years.

Not all the increase is attributed to stop-outs returning to IU Kokomo. DCS also serves as a retention tool for traditional students who begin to take on characteristics of non-traditional students. Most often advisors in other programs refer students to the General Studies degree program. Conversely, DCS refers returning students to other programs on campus. As shown in an email from Norma Fewell, SCS received 42 students from other programs while 24 transferred from DCS to other schools on campus. Full-time student six year cohort graduation rates may be positively impacted by those students retained through IU's degree completion program.

It appears that the combination of accelerated classes in the hybrid format, efforts in Project Complete to recover and re-engage stop-outs, and an increased understanding of the General Studies degree by advisors in other programs has contributed to the substantial increase in program enrollments.