Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Unit Affiliation</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Room/Building</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezella McPherson</td>
<td>Director, Titan Success Center</td>
<td><a href="mailto:emmpherson@iusb.edu">emmpherson@iusb.edu</a></td>
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<td>520-4689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy Buckman</td>
<td>Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Services</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cmbuckma@iusb.edu">cmbuckma@iusb.edu</a></td>
<td>Room 159 Administration Building</td>
<td>520-4454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Marvin Curtis</td>
<td>Dean, Ernestine M. Raclin School of the Arts</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mvcurtis@iusb.edu">mvcurtis@iusb.edu</a></td>
<td>Room 103 Northside Hall</td>
<td>520-4390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><a href="mailto:welchta@iusb.edu">welchta@iusb.edu</a></td>
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<td>520-4107</td>
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<td>Karen White</td>
<td>Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Services</td>
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<td>Room 102B Administration Building</td>
<td>520-4477</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abstract

We envision that four Indiana University (IU) South Bend upperclassmen will share their stories of trials and triumphs in workshops to mentor and advise approximately 80 incoming IU South Bend freshmen (e.g., 2015 Leadership Academy, 2015 Summer Bridge Program, including those at the Elkhart Center) and 30 first-year ABC program/ivy Tech students. We expect the sharing of stories will provide first-year students with knowledge about successfully navigating through college, including understanding college expectations, increasing their financial literacy, and choosing and/or changing college majors. Similar to prior research (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014), we also hypothesize that first-year students who participate in our workshops will have higher first term grade point averages (GPAs) than their freshman peers from similar backgrounds who forwent these workshops.

Introduction

[When asked about thoughts of dropping out of college, biology major graduate, Briana stated]: A couple weeks ago when my mom died. I didn’t feel like it was worth it... She was my sole motivation for coming to college... This degree is going to allow me to figure out neurological reasons as to why this disease is happening [and] why it is progressing. 2 (McPherson, 2012, p. 173)

Over the last decade, there has been a surge in enrollment of underprepared and underserved groups (e.g., minorities, adult learners, first-generation) in postsecondary settings (Kim, 2011; Steele & McDonald, 2008). Research also shows that the first year of college is when the highest student attrition

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1 The ABC (Associate + Bachelor’s = Career) program consists of 30 Ivy Tech first-time freshmen who plan to transfer to IU South Bend after earning their Associates’ degrees from Ivy Tech. The mentoring through storytelling workshop series will expose ABC program students to current IU South Bend upperclassmen in Summer 2015. ABC program students will be invited back to IU South Bend in the fall 2015 and spring 2016 workshops.

2 This quote gives you a preview of the power of mentoring through storytelling that we hope to bring to IU South Bend’s campus.
occurs (Tinto, 2012). Among the most prevalent transition issues faced by students are a lack of college study skills, financial challenges, and difficulties in choosing a major.

Limited financial aid and financial literacy knowledge also contribute to the attrition of underserved groups in college (Tinto, 2012). Similarly, IU South Bend’s Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Services and Interim Director of Financial Aid and Scholarships, Cathy Buckman (2015) stated:

Every semester IU South Bend students suffer serious financial consequences due to a lack of financial awareness. They miss deadlines for state and federal grant aid, lose their aid eligibility, default on their loans, damage their credit ratings, and are unable to finish their degrees. They take out maximum loan amounts and under enroll in coursework. They drop classes, fail to meet the requirements to maintain their aid, and run out of aid eligibility before they reach their degree. Too many have little understanding of the extent of the loan liability they assume. Also, too few fully understand the financial benefit of on-time degree completion. The need for financial literacy among college students has never been greater.

Access to accurate information on financial literacy is essential to increase college students’ likelihood of completing a college degree (Tinto, 2012). Research has also indicated that over 50 percent of incoming freshmen are undecided and have difficulty choosing majors and careers (Steele & McDonald, 2008; Tinto, 2012). Even students with declared majors might change their majors during their freshman year. This is confirmed in the narrative below.

[When asked why she left the biology major, a health science graduate, Crystal replied]: I took Molecules and Cells...I went to office hours. I studied weeks and a week before the exam and I still came out with an F on the exam. I am letting this go... That was the end of my freshman year, beginning of sophomore year... (McPherson, 2012, p. 144)

We plan to address the challenges stated above through our proposed “Mentoring Through Storytelling” project. Providing incoming first year students with upperclassmen’s personal stories fosters engagement and a sense of community. The stories bring to life the value of higher education, demonstrate the transition to the university, and guide new students in accessing campus resources. Addressing financial literacy and helping new students to understand how to best use financial assistance while incurring the least possible debt is important for student retention and persistence. Additionally, mentorship has been shown to increase grade point averages (GPAs), retention, persistence, and graduation rates (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). In the next section, we discuss the methods for capturing students’ stories.

One way to utilize the storytelling method is through narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is an approach to gathering data that is useful for “oral, first-person accounts of experience” (Reissman, 1993, p. 69). Within narrative analysis, researchers or practitioners can draw out personal narratives centered on lived experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). We envision using the narrative analysis methodology to allow for at least four IU South Bend upperclassmen to share their stories to mentor and advise approximately 80 incoming IU South Bend freshmen (e.g., 2015 Leadership Academy, 2015 Summer Bridge Program, including those at the Elkhart Center) and 30 first-year ABC program/Ivy Tech students. We expect the sharing of stories will provide first year students with knowledge about navigating through college, including understanding college expectations, increasing their financial literacy, choosing and/or changing college majors.

Similar to prior research (Stephens, Hamedani, & Destin, 2014), we hypothesize that first year students who participate in our workshops will have higher first term GPAs than their freshman peers from similar backgrounds who forwent these workshops. Stephens et al. (2014) confirmed that attending
a panel in which first-generation and continuing students shared stories of successes and challenges in navigating through college had a positive impact on freshman first-generation college students’ GPAs.

**Project Goals for Vision 2020 Grant**

Indiana University (IU) South Bend data shows that there is a graduation completion gap based on race and income (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2014). Similar to prior research (Kim, 2011), while there has been a surge in enrollment at IU South Bend, fewer students are being retained and graduating when compared to the IU system (Indiana Commission for Higher Education, 2014). To narrow this gap, for this project, we have developed three primary project goals. Our first goal is to help students successfully transition to college by understanding college expectations (e.g., studying, attending class, asking for help). The second goal is to increase students’ financial literacy. The final goal is to help students struggling to make decisions about choosing and/or changing a major at the end of their first year.

**Assessment Plan**

This project will use a mix of methods, including pre/post-test questionnaires and a focus group. Consistent with pre-testing and post-testing (Babbie, 1986), before the “Transition to College” workshop in July 2015 we will distribute a pilot pre-test questionnaire that will ask first-year students about their knowledge of college expectations, financial literacy, and choosing, and/or changing majors. After the “Choosing and Changing Your Major” workshop, we will distribute a post-test questionnaire to see if there are differences in first-year students’ responses on the pre-test questions.

Our dependent variable will be first year GPA. Our independent variable will be knowledge about college expectations, financial literacy awareness, and choosing and changing majors. We plan to work with statistician, Dr. Biniam Tesfamariam and evaluation expert, Dr. Michelle Bakerson to test the validity of our pilot pre-test and post-test questionnaires. These efforts will be instrumental in helping us to develop rich data that supports the validity and reliability standards in quantitative research methods.

Additionally, we plan to file an IRB with the IU South Bend Office of Research Administration. With student consent, we will collect students’ fall 2015 and spring 2016 term GPAs to determine if their GPAs are higher than their peers from similar backgrounds who forwent these panels. We will also conduct a focus group between July and August 2016. De La Harpe, Radloff, and Wyber (2000) provide evidence on the learning that occurs in group discussions. In April 2016, we plan to engage a minimum of 8 to 10 students from our workshops in a conversation about their first year college experiences to learn more about their successes and challenges. The focus group data will be analyzed using a qualitative data analysis program (e.g., Maxqda) to code the transcript and develop themes consistent with qualitative research (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, we and a research assistant will engage in triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through the peer debriefing process, students will be asked for feedback regarding their experiences and the value of this project for themselves. With student consent, these peer debriefing sessions will be videotaped or audio recorded. Finally, we plan to use our data to present our research and best practices at conferences and possibly publications.

**Action Plan to Reach Project Goals**

In April 2015, we will begin the planning stages for this project by holding meetings to identify and select storytellers/mentors (e.g., upperclassmen), develop storytelling training materials, and order office supplies. We will also select venues and research IU South Bend media services options (e.g., camcorder, audio digital recorder) for our workshops. The trainings for upperclassmen storytellers/mentors will be led by Dr. April Lidinsky and Ernestine M. Raclin School of Arts faculty and staff
mentoring through storytelling 4

experts identified by Dean Marvin Curtis. The students’ stories, in oral or written format will be evaluated to ensure their quality and clarity, while keeping the authors’ voices. The marketing and advertising materials for our workshops will be developed and finalized with the support of peer mentors from April to June 2015.

In July 2015, 110 Leadership Academy, Summer Bridge Program and ABC Program students will experience the “Transition to College” workshop. Stories shared by upperclassmen might cover topics such as: college adjustment, college confidence, and motivation for completing a college degree. After the panelists speak, there will be time allotted for reflection and discussion in which students have conversations with their peers on the workshop topic. This format will be consistent in the latter workshops.

The “Financial Literacy” workshops will focus on upperclassmen sharing stories on lessons learned regarding what students need to do to maximize and retain their eligibility for aid. They might also share information on renewing their aid for sophomore year, the benefits of on-time degree completion, loan management, and college funding options.

The final panel, entitled “Choosing and Changing Your Major” will focus on students similar to Crystal who will discuss why they changed their majors and/or share stories centered on choosing a major at IU South Bend. This workshop will also have a lunch reception following the panel to celebrate the end of their first year and completion of our workshop series.

Fiscal Sustainability

We plan to fund our workshop series beyond the grant by asking IU South Bend administration for funding. We might apply for grants through organizations and foundations, including The Kresge Foundation, Department of Education, the Lumina Foundation, and the Indiana Commission for Higher Education. After the grant period, we envision these workshops to be housed in the Titan Success Center.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision 2020 Budget Fiscal Year 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer mentors (paid hourly with 7% fringes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research assistant (paid hourly with 7% fringes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and advertising materials (e.g., FedEx duplications services for 220 pre and post-tests, 50 printed color table tents, 50 printed color flyers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio transcription services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office supplies (e.g., 2 reams of white paper 500 count, 5 rolls of masking tape, postage for 110 letters, 110 envelopes, 2 staplers, 1000 staples).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food for 110 students from Sodexo Texas Barbeque ($1425) and beverages ($100)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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## Vision 2020 Budget Fiscal Year 2 (Tentative)

<table>
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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peer mentor (paid hourly with 7% fringes)</td>
<td>$700.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research assistant (paid hourly with 7% fringes)</td>
<td>$750.00</td>
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<td>Audio transcription services</td>
<td>$540.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website manager (paid hourly with 7% fringes)</td>
<td>$1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food for 110 students from Sodexo Beach Party ($1315) and beverages ($164)</td>
<td>$1479</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing and Advertising Materials (e.g., FedEx 50 printed color brochures, 50 printed color flyers, 50 printed color table tents)</td>
<td>$150</td>
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<td>Office Supplies (e.g., 4 reams of white paper 500 count, 2 rolls of masking tape, postage for 110 letters, 110 envelopes)</td>
<td>$381</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,000</strong></td>
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## Project Timeline (Fiscal Year 2015-2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April- May 2015</td>
<td>- Identification and selection of storytellers/mentors, review of training materials, research media services (e.g., camcorder, digital audio recorder), venues, duplication services, and marketing and advertising needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April – June 2015</td>
<td>- Planning for “Transition to College” and “Financial Literacy 1” Workshops.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July – August 2015</td>
<td>- Distribute pre-test</td>
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<td>- “Transition to College” and “Financial Literacy” Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August-November 2015</td>
<td>- Pre-test data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2015</td>
<td>- Planning for “Financial Literacy 2” Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>- “Financial Literacy 2” Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2015-January 2016</td>
<td>- Collect and analyze students’ fall 2015 term GPAs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January- March 2016</td>
<td>- Planning for “Choosing and Changing Your Major” Workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>- Submit grant application for year 2 funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2016</td>
<td>- Distribute post-test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “Choosing and Changing Your Major” workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Lunch reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April - July 2016</td>
<td>- Data collection (e.g., post-test, focus group, students’ spring term GPAs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Analyze data (e.g., focus group, post-test, students’ spring term GPAs)</td>
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Project Timeline (Fiscal Year 2016-2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Proposed Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April – June 2016</td>
<td>-Planning for “Transition to College” and “Financial Literacy” Workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July –August 2016</td>
<td>-Distribute pre-test&lt;br&gt; -“Transition to College” and “Financial Literacy 1” Workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August - November 2016</td>
<td>-Pre-test data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2016</td>
<td>-Planning for “Financial Literacy 2” Workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2016</td>
<td>-“Financial Literacy 2” Workshop&lt;br&gt; -Collect and analyze students’ fall 2016 term GPA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January- March 2016</td>
<td>-Planning for “Choosing and Changing Your Major” Workshop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2017</td>
<td>-Submit grant application for year 3 funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>-Distribute post-test&lt;br&gt; -“Choosing and Changing Your Major” Workshop and lunch reception.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April -July 2017</td>
<td>-Data collection (e.g., focus group, post-test, spring 2017 term GPAs).&lt;br&gt; -Analyze data (e.g., focus group, post-test, spring 2017 term GPAs).</td>
</tr>
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</table>

References


Appendix

Routing Form
Campus Partners
Emails and Letters of Support
Transcription Service Fees
Erika Zynda  
Office of Research Administration  
A247  
South Bend

Project Director: Ezella McPherson  
Titan Success Center  
(574) 520-4689  
E-mail: emncpher@iusb.edu

Co-Investigator: Andrew Welch  
Education  
(574) 520-4107  
Email: welchae@iusb.edu

Project Title: Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation

Amount of this request: $ 5000.00

Type of Proposal:
- Faculty Research Grant
- Curriculum Development
- Seed Grant
- Research Project Initiation Grant
- Regional Research Grant
- Other Vision 2020 Grant

Special Needs:  
- Human Subjects
- Animals
- Biosafety:  
  - Pathogenic agent
  - Human tissue or fluids
  - Recombinant DNA

Brief layman's description of project:

We envision that Indiana University (IU) South Bend upperclassmen will share their stories of trials, triumphs, and tragedies in a series of workshops to mentor and provide advice to approximately 80 incoming IU South Bend freshmen (e.g., 2015 Summer Leadership Academy, 2015 Summer Bridge Program) and first-year ABC program students at Ivy Tech Community College. We anticipate these numbers will include a Summer Bridge cohort at the Elkhart Center. We expect that the sharing of stories will provide first-year students with knowledge about successfully navigating through college, including understanding college expectations, financial literacy, choosing and/or changing college majors, and using campus resources.

APPROVALS:

Project Director: [Signature]  
Date: 5/15/15  
Comments:

Chairperson:  
(If applicable)

Dean: [Signature]  
Date: 5/15/15
Vision 2020 Campus Partners

1) Dr. Michelle Bakerson, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor, School of Education and Arts
2) Dr. Linda Chen, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dean of Undergraduate Studies
3) Dr. Virginia Heidemann, Director, Academic Centers for Excellence
4) Joel Langston, Manager, Media Services, Instructional Media Services
5) Dr. April Lidinsky, Associate Professor of Women’s Studies
6) Dr. Marvin Lynn, Dean, School of Education and Arts
7) Dr. Biniam Tesfamariam, Institutional Research and Effectiveness Officer, Office of Institutional Research
Vision 2020 Email and Letters of Support

From: Langston, Joel B  
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2015 4:59 PM  
To: McPherson, Ezella May  
Subject: Re: Mentoring through Storytelling Project (Please respond)

Here is my confirmation.

Joel B. Langston  
Manager, Media Services  
Instructional Media Services  
UIT, IU South Bend  
574.520.5550  
jblangst@iusb.edu  
@burntpepperoni

Subject Line: Re: Mentoring through Storytelling Project  
Dear Ezella McPherson,
I agree to partner with the Vision 2020 “Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation” team for 2015-2016.
Best regards,
Joel B. Langston  
Manager, Media Services - UITS

From: Tesfamariam, Biniam K  
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2015 8:47 AM  
To: McPherson, Ezella May  
Subject: RE: Vision 2020: Mentoring Through Storytelling Invitation

Dear Ezella,
I agree to partner with the Vision 2020 “Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation” team for 2015-2016.
Best regards,
Biniam

From: Lidinsky, April  
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2015 8:21 AM  
To: McPherson, Ezella May  
Subject: Mentoring through Storytelling Project

Dear Ezella,

I agree to partner with the Vision 2020 “Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation” team for 2015-2016.

Best regards,

April Lidinsky
From: Heidemann, Virginia Margaret  
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2015 8:13 AM  
To: McPherson, Ezella May  
Subject: Mentoring through Storytelling Project

Dear Ezella,

I agree to partner with the Vision 2020 “Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation” team for 2015-2016.

Best regards,

Ginny

Virginia Heidemann, EdD  
Director, Academic Centers for Excellence  
Indiana University South Bend  
Administration Building 117C  
1700 Mishawaka Avenue  
P.O. Box 7111  
South Bend, Indiana 46634-7111  
(574) 520-4823  
vmheidem@iusb.edu

From: Bakerson, Michelle Ann  
Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 5:18 PM  
To: McPherson, Ezella May  
Subject: Mentoring through Storytelling Project

Dear Ezella,

I agree to partner with the Vision 2020 “Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation” team for 2015-2016.

Best regards,

Michelle

Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs  
Associate Professor of Educational Research  
WEAVEonline Administrator  
Office of Academic Affairs, A246H  
Indiana University South Bend  
1700 Mishawaka Avenue  
PO Box 7111  
South Bend, IN 46634-7111  
574-520-4391  
mbakerso@iusb.edu
February 27, 2015

Ms. Ezella McPherson  
Vision 2020 Committee  
Indiana University South Bend  
1700 Mishawaka Ave.  
P.O. Box 7111  
South Bend, IN  46634-7111

RE: Mentoring Through Storytelling Project

Dear Ms. McPherson,

I agree to partner with the Vision 2020 “Mentoring through Storytelling: The Road to Graduation” team for 2015-2016.

Best regards,

[Signature]

Marvin Lynn  
Dean and Professor  
School of Education

ML/pkg
Accurate, top quality audio and video transcription starting at just $1.50 per audio minute. Here's how we calculate our transcription rates.

**Recording Length**

| 3 hours | 0 minutes |

**Number of Speakers**

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**Turnaround Time**

| Standard Services free | Rush Services $0.75 | 24 Hour Services $1.25 | Same Day Services $1.50 |

**Optional Features**

Most transcription projects don't need these features, but if yours do, we're happy to help!

- Time Stamps / Time Code $0.25
- Background Noise $0.25
- Light Accent $0.25
- Verbatim $0.25
- Digitize $25
- Foreign Language Transcription $1.00
- Heavy Background Noise $0.50
- Strong Accent $0.50
- Technical Terminology $0.25
- Special Formatting

**Your estimate:**

$540.00

($3.00/min)

Our estimate generator provides an approximate project cost based on the settings that you select. In some cases, the final cost of your project may differ from this estimate.

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