

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Student Support Services

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

The Student Experience Mission Statement:

The Student Experience provides the University community with programs and services to support the academic mission of creating, disseminating and acquiring knowledge through teaching, research and service while empowering a diverse student population to achieve their highest educational potential. The Student Experience creates a stimulating and inclusive educational environment that is conducive to holistic personal growth. The commitment to students initiates prior to entrance, sustains throughout the college experience and continues beyond graduation. Enrollment Services provides equal access for education to potential students throughout the state and region and promotes economic stability and financial access to citizens. Student Affairs enhances student development and broadens intellectual, social, cultural, ethical and occupational growth. The Student Experience works closely with faculty, staff, students, and the community to ensure graduates have the capability to promote economic development and improvements in the region.

Student Affairs Mission:

The Division of Student Affairs prepares students to be productive members of society and to improve the quality of life of students. Student Affairs provides support services in career development and placement, advocacy and accountability, academic support, mental and physical health, disability accommodations, student activities and organizations, student union life, and opportunities in leadership, community service, and programs for new students. Through hands on involvement in programs and services, Student Affairs promotes personal development in a student-centered environment, which delivers innovative practices in an environment of respect. Student Affairs encourages integrity, diversity and collaboration with all members of the university community.

Student Support Services:

Student Support Services seeks to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds that are either first generation, low income, or students with disabilities who have potential to meet the challenges of higher education by strengthening and developing their academic and self-management skills. Its focus is to insure that participants in the program have a realistic chance to persist in school with good grades, and to graduate from Northwestern State University with a

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baccalaureate degree within six years. To accomplish these objectives Student Support Services provides services to enhance students' academic success, personal skills, social skills, and financial literacy. Providing services in these areas corresponds to the University's mission to support students' intellectual development, personal growth, and community advancement.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) will be collected and returned to the director;
- (2) The director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes were met;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with staff as required to determine actions required;
- (5) The director, in consultation with the staff, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and where needed, service changes.
- (6) The director, along with the staff, will use quantitative data to formulate an Annual Performance Report for the US Department of Education to determine if SLOs have been achieved, and for modifying, as needed, services offered by SSS Department.

Service Outcome.

SO 1. The Student Support Services **Peer Mentoring Program (PMP)** will promote student success by helping first year students become socially and academically integrated into the NSU community. Mentees will be recruited from the three sections of ACSK1010 being taught by SSS Instructors. Junior/Senior SSS Project participants will serve as mentors.

Measure 1.1 Mentors will help mentees access the necessary resources, such as tutoring, academic advising, study groups, and meeting with instructors, to increase academic achievement. Success will be defined as 1) 82% or more mentee's will persist from one academic year to the next; and 2) 80% of the mentees will successfully complete their first year in college with a GPA of 2.0 or above.

Findings:

AY 2017-2018: Target 1 not met. Only 75% (12/16) of mentees persisted from 2017-2018 to 2018-2019.

AY 2017-2018: Target 2 Not Met. 75% (12/16) of students (mentees) enrolled in the PMP completed their first year at NSU with at least a 2.0 or above.

Non-mentored student findings:

AY 2017-2018 65% (34/52) persisted from 2017-2018 to 2018 – 2019.

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AY 2017-2018: 71% (37/52) were in good academic standing at the end of 2017-18

Analysis: Unlike the PMP for 2016-2017 which had its first peer mentor meeting in August and first mentor/mentee activity the second week in September, the Peer Mentoring program for 2017-2018 did not officially kick off until the latter part of September – one whole month after the start of the semester. New mentors had to be recruited, because the previous mentors who were seniors, had graduated. Once mentors were identified, they went through training and were paired with their mentees.

Based upon recommendations from the last assessment cycle, an effort was made to match mentees to mentors based upon majors and demographic information with the hope of forming a better connection between the two. With quick decline in participation of mentees (and in some cases mentors), there was no evidence of recommendation having a direct impact upon the program this assessment cycle.

It was also recommended in the 2016-2017 assessment cycle that there be more activities planned throughout the semester that would allow the mentors and mentees to be together more and form a stronger bond. Due to the delay in kicking off the program and the difficulty in finding dates that would accommodate participants' schedules, this did not happen. Mentors became too busy to fulfill the needs of the program and some mentees, after the first month, declined to fully participate in the program. It became apparent that time management, interest, and follow through were crucial elements that were missing, thus causing a sharp decline in participation of both mentors and mentees.

Target 1 of Measure 1.1 was not met because four of the mentees decided not to return to NSU in fall of 2018. Reasons for not returning are 1) two of the mentees dropped out of college after the first semester due to homesickness, and 2) Two mentees were suspended for academic reasons after completion of the spring semester.

Target 2 was not met with only 75% (12 of the 16 mentees) completing the academic year with a 2.0 or above. Upon analysis of data and comparison of data from AY2016-17, we found that not only did the mentees not fully utilize the resources available to them like tutoring services, meeting with their instructors, etc., but they also did not regularly attend the Mentor Program activities as did the mentees from AY2016-17.

Action: The director and the coordinator of the PMP program have met and based upon the analysis of this year's assessment the following decisions/modifications are being made.

- Mentors will be identified and selected during the months of May through July.
- Mentors will be required to participate in a day long training prior to the beginning of the semester.
- Since we had a difficult time keeping the mentors on task, a monetary incentive will be given to mentors who continue with the program and remain engaged.
- Dates for various activities will be established with the mentors during training, with the goal of conducting at least 2 to 3 events/activities per month.
- The goal is to select at least 20 mentors, rather than 10, so that all SSS ACSK1010 students can be a part of the Peer Mentoring Program.

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- Mentors must attend a monthly staff meeting.
- Mentees will be matched up with a mentor prior to the start of the semester, this way mentors can introduce themselves and communicate with their mentees prior to them arriving on campus. We feel this will strengthen the connection between mentors and mentees. Also, with the task of matching up mentors with mentees completed prior to the beginning of the semester, PMP activities can kick off during the second week of the semester, rather than having to wait a month as way the case of this assessment cycle.
- The decision was made to tie part of the mentee's grade in ACSK1010 to their participation in the PM. It is believed that this incentive will stop the decline in participation that was experienced in AY2017-2018.
- To help meet the target of at least 82% of the mentees completing the academic year with at least a 2.0 or above, a couple of initiatives will be instituted. First, as part of the ACSK1010 curriculum, mentees will be required to participate in at least two tutoring sessions which will be part of the grading rubric. After 5-week grades are posted, each mentee must meet with their SSS Advisor/Instructor to review 5-week grades. If mentee earned a C or below, they would be required to participate in tutoring. The same would hold true when mid-term grades were reviewed.

Measure 1.2 Through relationship building with mentors, one-on-one and group meetings/activities, 90% of mentees will have an enhanced ability to cope with the challenges of college life (non-cognitive attributes), and will become comfortable in expressing questions and concerns in a safe environment. Pre and Post-test, using the *ACT Engage* will measure mentee's motivation, social engagement, and self-regulation. Success will be defined as 90% of mentees showing improvement based upon ACT Engage post-test.

Findings: Target Not Met.

Analysis: The ACT Engage was not purchased prior to the beginning of the academic year, thus we were not able to conduct a pre/post-test to measure progress. SSS staff did not monitor or test for coping abilities in the non-mentored group. This target was also not met in AY2016-2017, because an assessment was not available for use. As pointed out in the above analysis of Measure 1.1, several of the mentors were not actively engaged with their mentees and as a result, overall participation declined. Steps have been taken that should result in both better participation and relationships between mentors and mentees.

SSS Staff evaluated the ACT Engage and determined that it was not the best assessment for the type of information we were seeking, plus it was very costly. We also determined that at the cost of the ACT Engage, it's use could not be sustained. Therefore, the search for a suitable assessment began after the start of the semester and was not completed until November of the assessment year. As a result, we did not have an assessment tool to evaluate Measure 1.2.

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Action:

- An exhaustive search was initiated to find an instrument that would accomplish the goal of 1) measuring, 2) monitoring, and 3) assisting the mentee in overcoming obstacles in both their cognitive and non-cognitive ability to cope with the challenges of college life. The SSS Staff found and purchased the LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory) which is a 10-scale, 60-item assessment of students' awareness about and use of learning and study strategies. The focus is on both covert and overt thoughts, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs that relate to successful learning and that can be altered through educational interventions. This assessment will be administered to all mentees in August and will be part of the ACSK1010 curriculum.
- SSS Staff and Mentors will use the LASSI to plan Mentor facilitated meetings to help address some of the identified challenges.
- Mentors will be made aware of the results of their mentee's LASSI and in conjunction with advice from SSS Staff, the mentor will use that information to help the mentee overcome obstacles. This will be done in one-on-one meetings and in group settings. The desired outcomes will include relationship building, mentees learning how to express themselves and ask questions, which will ultimately lead to the mentee overcoming the non-cognitive challenges he/she was facing.
- SSS Staff will use results of LASSI to provide educational interventions, such as learning and study skills workshops, or one-on-one interventions for mentees.
- All mentees will take a post test at the end of the academic year to set a baseline for analyzing data.

Measure 1.3 Students participating in the SSS Peer Mentoring Program will have a high level of socialization, as evidenced by their participation in campus activities and/or student organizations. Questionnaires on campus involvement, OrgSync, as well as reports from mentors, and meetings with SSS Advisors will be utilized to determine if target is met. Success will be defined as 90% of mentees regularly participating in campus activities and/or joining at least one student organization.

Findings: Target Not Met.

Analysis: Per information obtained through one-on-one meetings with SSS Advisors, data from OrgSync, and visual observation of mentees at campus events, it was determined that only 75% (12/16) of mentees joined a student organization and/or participated in campus activities. Per the recommendation from AY2016-2017, data was collected on non-mentored ACSK1010 students. Only 60% (31/52) of the non-mentored group joined organizations and participated in campus activities. Because it was important and desirable to get accurate information on socialization, both mentees and non-mentored students were required to have face-to-face meetings with their SSS advisor. During these required meetings, mentees were asked if they had joined an RSO and what activities/events they had attended during the semester/academic year. Data

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collection showed that only 12 out of the 16 mentees or 75% were motivated enough to either join a student organization or to regularly attend student/campus activities. This was a decrease from AY2016-2017, where 93% of the mentees regularly participated in campus activities and/or joined an RSO.

The mentored students were slightly more involved than the non-mentored students, but neither group met the target of 90%.

The director of SSS met with the PMP Coordinator and other staff members to discuss these findings and to come up with recommendations to motivate both mentored and non-mentored ACSK1010 students in becoming more involved in campus life.

Action:

- During the planning session with Mentors that will take place prior to the beginning of the academic year, Mentors will review the Demon Days 2018 schedule to select several activities/events during that month-long period. Once activities/events are selected, Mentors will discuss these selected items with their mentees and offer to attend these selected activities/events with the mentee. With so many activities available to choose from, mentors and mentees should be able to select several activities to participate in. This will help in getting the mentees out and will also begin building the desired bond between mentor/mentee.
- Mentors and mentees will be given a list of SSS sponsored activities and encouraged to attend activities planned by the SSS Staff. In particular, PMP participants will be invited to tailgate at a home football game with SSS. Mentors and Mentees would wear their PMP shirts and sit together at the home game. This will foster mentor/mentee communication, campus activity involvement, and contribute to relationship building.
- Campus involvement and membership in recognized student organizations (RSO) will be discussed as part of the ACSK1010 curriculum, and in face-to-face meetings with SSS Advisors. Students will be given extra credit for going to RSO meetings and reporting on attended meetings. This will also be covered in mentor/mentee meetings/seminars.
- The PMP Coordinator is working on securing either t-shirts or polo shirts for mentors and mentees. Mentors and Mentees will work together to come up with a design for shirts. This will foster community and enrich the bond between mentors and mentees. These shirts would be worn to events and certain activities.
- Mentors and SSS Staff will utilize the LASSI as a diagnostic measure to help identify areas that may be preventing mentees from socializing. Possible obstacles could be lack of motivation, anxiety, or even self-discipline, which are all measured by the LASSI. From this information, educational interventions would be developed for each mentee, to help them overcome the identified weakness with the goal of significantly contributing to the mentee's success in college.
- Mentees will be required to connect with SSS on social media (FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter) as part of their grade in ACSK1010. This assignment will

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take place in class, so that instructors can monitor the successful connection. Throughout the semester, students will be asked to logon to SSS's FaceBook page while in class to view upcoming activities, post comments and pictures. This will also apply to SSS Twitter and Instagram.

- A minimum of at least one cultural diversity/enrichment trip will be planned for PMP participants each semester. These trips will be at no cost to PMP participants. Benefits of these trips would be increased attachment and involvement in the PMP program, exposure to cultural events and programs not usually available to disadvantaged students, and to breakdown social barriers.
- PMP Coordinator, SSS Director and SSS Staff will develop evaluations to be utilized for each PMP and SSS sponsored activity. A satisfaction survey will also be developed and utilized at the end of each semester. Modifications to the PMP program will be made based upon the results of the evaluations and surveys.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results:

- Identified mentors prior to the beginning of the semester to ensure that mentors were in place, trained and ready to go by the second week of classes.
- Improved strategy for pairing mentees with mentors was implemented. The new method was based upon majors and other demographic information.
- The PMP coordinator teamed with SSS Staff to develop and provide more activities for mentees and mentors.
- Hosted an end of semester appreciation luncheon for mentors and mentees
- Implemented a pre and post-test for mentees. A comprehensive assessment, the LASSI, was procured to measure motivation, social engagement, and self-regulation. Although this assessment was not in place for the total assessment cycle, it will be available at the beginning of the next cycle.
- The PMP coordinator and SSS staff have been trained on how to administer and interpret the LASSI. Additionally, the Staff has been trained and certified in how to administer and interpret the Strong Interest Inventory which was used to assist mentees in selecting a major and/or a career path.
- A full spectrum of resources was made available to mentees to promote student success. Resources included calculators, textbooks, scantrons, tutoring services, workshops, and one-on-one assistance.

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Plan of Action Moving Forward:

We are basically revamping our program to build stronger bonds between our mentor and mentees with the goal of increasing engagement and participation. Mentors will be selected during the summer months and trained prior to the beginning of the academic year. Mentors will be required to communicate with their mentees prior to the beginning of the academic year, either by email, phone or text to start the bonding process. In hopes of decreasing the lack of participation and engagement experienced in the last cycle, mentors will be given a stipend based upon attendance, and mentees participation will be tied to a grade in ACSK1010.

The SSS Staff will work more closely with the PMP Coordinator to assist in planning and implementing activities. Since SSS Staff serve as both advisors and instructors to the mentees, the staff will work with mentees to develop an academic plan which will be monitored and modified as necessary. This plan will be used throughout the academic year to track grades and to keep students on track towards graduation.