

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

Student Support Services

Division or Department: The Student Experience

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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 Mission:

TRIO Student Support Services (TRIO SSS) supports students who are first-generation, low-income students, or students with disabilities who have potential to meet the challenges of higher education by strengthening and developing their academic and self-management skills. The program's goal is to graduate participants with a baccalaureate degree within four to six years.

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

TRIO Student Support Services provides resources to enhance students' academic success, financial literacy, and personal and social skills in support of the University's mission to develop productive members of society.

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 TRIO SSS Department.

Service Outcome:

SO 1. The TRIO 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 taught by TRIO SSS Instructors. Junior/Senior TRIO 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 mentees will successfully complete their first year in college with a GPA of 2.0 or above.

Findings:

Target 1 was Met. 88% (24/27) of mentees persisted from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020.
(this was determined by students registered for fall 2020 classes)

Target 2 was Met. 81% (22/27) of mentees enrolled in the PMP completed their first year at NSU with at cumulative GPA of at least a 2.0 or above.

Analysis: In AC 2018-2019 Target 1 was met, while Target 2 was not met. Based upon the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the following changes were implemented in 2019-2020 according to the plan of action from 2018-2019. 1) Mentor and mentees, as much as possible, were matched by major. This was implemented to give the mentors credibility with the mentees

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

and provide an element of commonality amongst the pairings. It was believed that the mentees would better relate to the mentor and would feel a degree of comfort in knowing that the mentor understood their major, were familiar with their major professors, and could properly give them sound advice and guidance.

2) A weekly study group/session would be established. Both mentor and mentees were to attend said sessions. The study group was to be led by either the mentor or by a TRIO SSS tutor. This was to accomplish two things: 1) it would be a way to monitor mentee's academic progress and provide regular interventions, if needed. 2) build cohesiveness and a stronger relationship of mutual trust and respect between mentor and mentees with the goal of the mentees returning in the fall and completing their degree program.

Based on these changes, in 2019-2020 both targets were met. Those mentees that actively participated in the program, built a strong relationship with their mentors. Through this relationship, it was easier to discuss concerns and mentors were able to facilitate getting their mentees to the appropriate resources to help them academically, socially, and emotionally. These elements all play an essential part in the overall wellbeing of a student and their retainability.

Through one-on-one meetings between the mentees their mentors and the SSS Advisors it was found that several of the students that did not earn at least a 2.0 GPA were extremely dissatisfied with their majors. Once they changed majors, their grades begin to improve, but it was too late to make a significant difference by the end of the semester. Other factors affecting GPA was the fact that some of the mentees were not academically prepared for college level work, some were just not motivated and engaged, while two mentees were experiencing emotional problems.

Decision, Action, or Recommendations: Based on the analysis of the results in 2019-2020, in 2020-2021 the following changes will be implemented to drive continuous improvement.

A major/career exploration component will be added to the ACSK1010 classes being taught each fall. During individual advising sessions and meetings between mentors and mentees, probing questions will be asked to determine if mentees are in the right major or pursuing the correct career path. Students that are confused about their major, will be encouraged to enroll in OR1030, an educational and vocational guidance course taught by an SSS Advisor. Additionally, major and career exploration workshops and seminars will be planned throughout the academic year with the goal of increasing awareness of the wide variety of majors and careers available to the mentees.

To address the non-cognitive attributes that may hinder a student's progress in college, the results of the LASSI assessment will be more intensively addressed by both the SSS advisors and mentors. Students lacking the required motivation, time management skills, et cetera to succeed in college, as indicated by the results of the LASSI, will be required to develop an action plan to help students improve, and to guide them through their first year.

The LASSI will also be utilized as a starting point to assist those students that appear to be academically underprepared for college level work. The results will be used as a basis for

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

planning individual prescriptions for both remediation and enrichment.

For those mentees experiencing emotional stressors like home sickness, death or illness of a family member, anxiety, etc., Advisors will intervene by setting up appointments with counselors and if necessary, walking mentees over to the Counseling Center to ensure intervention.

Develop a mid-term assessment tool (Academic Progress Report) to be used to receive direct feedback from mentee's professors.

Develop an Individualized Advisement Plan (IAP) that will focus on major choice, curriculum adherence, and career development.

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 *LASSI* will measure mentee's motivation, social engagement, and self-regulation. Success will be defined as 90% of mentees showing improvement based upon *LASSI* post-test.

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In 2018-2019 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results the following changes were implemented in 2019-2020 according to the plan of action from 2018-2019.

In accordance with the 2018-2019 plan of action, all mentees were given the *LASSI* during the third week of the fall semester. The results of the *LASSI* were made known to the mentees and mentors and that information was used to plan and facilitate mentor/mentee meetings, both in one-on-one meetings and in group settings. TRIO SSS staff conducted several one-on-one meetings with mentees and used the results to provide educational and social interventions. Per this plan, all mentees were in fact administered the *LASSI* in the fall and the results were being used to plan activities and other interventions to promote growth.

The plan called for all incoming mentees in AC 2019-2020 to take the *LASSI* post-test in April of the spring semester. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and all students, faculty and staff being required to work from home, only eleven (11) of the twenty-seven mentees participated in the pos-test, even with the deadline being extended to May 8, 2020. However, of the eleven respondents, we saw major improvements. Additionally, during SSS virtual advising sessions, advisors observed an improvement in the mentee's motivation, anxiety, time management, and self-regulation.

Decision, Recommendation or Action: Based on the analysis of the results in 2019-2020, in 2020-2021 the following changes will be implemented to drive continuous improvement.

The *LASSI* will be administered during the second week of the fall semester, instead of the third week, which would allow TRIO SSS staff to begin the evaluation and intervention process much

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

earlier.

The PMP Coordinator, along with the TRIO SSS staff will employ more innovative ways to connect with our Generation Z mentees, because studies have shown that this generation prefers to be alone, they have an affinity for texting, messaging on mobile apps or online platforms over in-person, face-to-face communication. During AC 2020-2021, explainer videos, and other forms of visualization will be used as a means of connecting, educating, and enhancing mentees coping abilities. Virtual meetings between mentees, mentors and advisors will be utilized which will allow the mentee to remain in their respective domains, but still have meaningful interactions with mentors and SSS staff. SSS will employ a graduate assistant to work with the Mentor Program with the desired outcome of this individual being more in tune to the characteristics and motivational factors of the current generation.

Measure 1.3 Students participating in the TRIO 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, Presence, as well as reports from mentors, and meetings with TRIO 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 Met.

Analysis: In 2018-2019 the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results the following changes were implemented in 2019-2020 according to the plan of action from 2018-2019.

Mentors and mentees would select several activities and/or events and attend those selected activities together. Based on the analysis of the SSS Advisors and mentors, and per the analysis data from the mid-term report, the mentees were attending campus events, meetings, and activities at a high rate. During the fall semester, eighty-six percent (86%) of the mentees (were actively engaged in campus activities and 30% of the mentees had joined a student organization. From fall 2019 to end of Spring 2020 semester, we saw an increase in the number of students that joined an organization move from nine to fourteen. Taking into consideration that three students did not return to NSU in the spring, dropping our total number of mentees down to 27, 41% of this cohort joined an organization. This equated to ninety-six percent (96%) of the mentees participating in campus activities and/or joining student organizations.

Data collected from the SSS Peer Mentoring Program fall satisfaction/evaluation survey and individual interviews in the spring, indicated that most of the incoming mentees were more interested in adjusting to the academic side of college life, rather than in the social aspect. Mentees confided that they were reluctant to join an organization, because they wanted to focus on their studies, or they were too busy working to pay for college expenses, or they did not find any organization of interest or value to them at the time.

Action: Based on the analysis of the 2019-2020, the PMP Coordinator will work with mentors and TRIO SSS staff to help mentees plan and organize their schedules in a way to promote confidence and reassurance that they will be able to fulfill their academic obligations, and still

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

have time to participate in extracurricular activities. This planning will include reviewing the mentee's academic schedule, work schedule and any other obligations, then assisting them in determining when and what activities can feasibly be added to their schedule without causing anxiety. In addition, SSS Staff will administer the Strong Interest Inventory to assist mentee in identifying basis interest areas which will help to identify organizations and activities that would be both beneficial and of interest to the student.

Comprehensive Summary of Key evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of results:

Based on the analysis of the 2018-2019 results, the following changes were implemented in 2019-2020 to drive continuous improvement:

Mentors and Mentees were matched up by major and the match up was made prior to students starting the fall semester.

A retreat was also held for participants prior to the beginning of the academic year to start relationship building.

Mentees and Mentors selected and attended activities and events together during the first month of the semester.

A major/career component was added to the fall ACSK1010 curriculum and students were encouraged to enroll in OR 1030 during the spring semesters if they were still confused or undecided about their major and or career options.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

The PMP Coordinator and TRIO SSS Staff will develop an Individualized Advisement Plan (IAP) form that will focus on major choice, curriculum requirements/adherence, and career development. The IAP will be used throughout the academic year to track grades, progress towards completion of major, and to keep students on track towards graduation. The IAP will be used in conjunction with the *LASSI* Action Plan which addresses non-cognitive areas in which students could benefit most from educational interventions. The *LASSI* will be administered within the first two weeks of the semester rather than the first three weeks.

TRIO SSS Staff will take an intensive and intrusive approach to working with those mentees that show a lack of motivation, academic preparedness, and/or emotional stress. This intensive and intrusive approach will involve utilizing available campus and community resources such as the Counseling Center, the Academic Success Center, workshops, tutoring, and one-on-one meetings.

Going forward, major and career exploration workshops/seminars will be planned and offered each semester with the goal of increasing awareness of the wide variety of majors and careers available to the mentees. The sessions will be conducted by SSS Staff and through collaborations with community partners.

SSS will develop an early warning mid-term assessment tool (Academic Progress Report) to be used to receive direct feedback from the mentee's professors. This assessment tool will also be

Assessment Cycle 2019-2020

used to development interventions to help keep the mentee focused and on track towards graduation.

SSS will seek to employ a Graduate Assistant to work alongside the PMP Coordinator to assist in creating activities, both face-to-face and virtual. The GA will be responsible for developing activities using platforms like Kahoot! which have been shown to increase participation and engagement. Other apps and websites will be researched by the GA to determine usability by the PMP. The desired outcome is that the GA will have a better perspective on the types of activities that would interest our generation Z students, which would result in a higher participation and retention rate.