

## Assessment Cycle 2020-2021

### Student Support Services

**Division or Department:** Student Affairs

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**Date:** May 13, 2021

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**Date:** June 9, 2021

**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

#### **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.

#### **TRIO Student Support Services Mission:**

TRIO Student Support Services (TRIO SSS) empowers first-generation, modest income students, and students with disabilities to develop the skills, knowledge, and attributes to overcome the cultural, academic, economic, and social barriers to success in higher education. TRIO Student Support Services provides resources to enhance students' maximum academic achievement and career readiness to become contributing members of the global community.

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**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 necessary.
- (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 was **Not Met**

Stated Objectives	AC 2018-2019	AC 2019-2020	AC 2020-2021
82% or more mentees will persist from one AY to the next (based upon registration for Fall)	85%	88%	78%
80% of mentees will successfully complete their first year in college with a GPA of 2.0 or above	75%	81%	78%

**Analysis:** In AC 2019-2020, both targets were met. Mentors and mentees were matched by major to provide more commonalities. This type of pairing resulted in mentees having a more meaningful relationship with their mentors. Mentees were able to easily relate to their mentors

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and felt a greater degree of comfort in knowing that their mentor understood their major, were familiar with the major professors, and respected the advice and guidance given. Weekly mentor/mentee sessions were implemented to allow mentors to closely monitor the academic progress of mentees and provide regular interventions. Although these sessions ended in late March due to the pandemic, data reflected that the implemented changes resulted in a 3 and 8 percentage point increase in the objectives of Measure 1.1 compared to the previous assessment cycle. Eighty-eight percent (88%) persisted from one academic year to the next in AC 2019-2020 compared to 85% persisting in AC 2018-19. In AC 2019-2020, 81% of the students (11/27) ended the academic year with at least a 2.0 or above GPA, while only 75% accomplished this objective in AC 2018-2019.

Based upon the analysis of the 2019-2020 results, the following changes were implemented in 2020-2021 to drive continuous improvement.

- A major/career exploration component was added to the ACSK1010 classes taught each fall.
- During individual advising sessions and meetings between mentors and mentees, targeted, probing questions were asked mentees to determine if they were in the right major or pursuing the best career path. Students that were confused about their major were encouraged to enroll in OR1030 and IDS 2000, educational and vocational guidance course taught by an SSS Advisor.
- Major and career exploration workshops and seminars were conducted during the semester to increase awareness of the wide variety of majors and careers available to the mentees.
- The results of the LASSI assessment were addressed by both the SSS advisors and mentors. Students that lacked the required motivation, time management skills, et cetera to succeed in college, as indicated by the results of the LASSI, were required to develop an action plan to help students improve, and to guide them through their first year. The LASSI was also utilized as a starting point to assist those students that appeared to be academically underprepared for college level work.
- Mentees that experienced emotional stressors like home sickness, death or illness of a family member, anxiety, etc., were assisted in setting up appointments with counselors.
- Developed a mid-term assessment tool (Academic Progress Report) to receive direct feedback from mentee's professors.
- Developed an Individualized Advisement Plan (IAP) that focused on major choice, curriculum adherence, and career development.

As a result of these changes, in 2020-2021 the target was still **not met**. With Covid-19 restrictions still in place, enrolling mentees into our Peer Mentoring Program was a challenge. We were able to enroll 23 incoming freshmen from among our new TRIO SSS participants, losing 4 throughout the course of the academic year.

Many of the mentees chose to take online or hybrid classes to avoid direct interaction with large numbers of people in hopes of not contracting COVID-19. At least 8 or 44% of the mentees lived at home, rather than on campus.

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Due to mentees living at home and social distancing guidelines in place, Mentors and TRIO SSS Advisors mostly met with mentees virtually, as well as conducted most activities and events virtually. Our tutoring services also transitioned to an online platform with limited face-to-face sessions. Very few participants attended the virtual activities, even when they were labeled as mandatory.

Mentees were instructed to give the *Academic Progress Report* form to their professors at mid-semester. Not one mentee completed this assignment. By completing this assignment, mentees would have initiated a relationship with their professors and opened the door for productive dialogue with the hopes of producing better grades. TRIO SSS staff were able to access and evaluate mid-term grades and advise interventions. Despite all our efforts, 22% of the mentees both failed to make satisfactory academic progress (earn a 2.0 or above) and to register for the 2021-2022 academic year.

**Decision, Action, or Recommendations:** In AC 2020-2021 the target was **not met**. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, TRIO SSS will implement the following changes in AC 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement:

- Encourage all mentees to enroll in face-to-face courses, if possible.
- TRIO SSS tutors will intentionally reach out on a weekly basis to students taking online classes to assist with assignments and coursework.
- Hire a Graduate Assistant to help implement changes and more closely monitor program.
- To ensure that mentees meet with their professors, TRIO SSS will send the *Academic Progress Report form to professors and ask professors to meet with students to discuss their academic progress.*

These changes will improve the mentee's ability to stay in good academic standing and persist from one academic year to the next, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

**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 met.

Stated Objectives	AC 2018-2019	AC 2019-2020	AC 2020-2021
90% of mentees will have an enhanced ability to cope with challenges of college life (non-cognitive attributes) and will be comfortable in expressing questions and concerns in a safe environment.	100%	55%	94%

**Analysis:** In 2019-2020 the target was not met.

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In accordance with the 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 activities and 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. The results from the eleven respondents showed improvement in coping with the non-cognitive challenges of college life. SSS staff also observed and documented improvements in mentee motivation, anxiety level, time management, and self-regulation.

Based on the analysis of the results in 2019-2020, in 2020-2021 the following changes were implemented to drive continuous improvement.

- LASSI assessment was administered during the second week of the fall semester rather than the third week, allowing staff to begin the evaluation and intervention process earlier.
- Staff, mentors, and tutors devised more innovative ways to connect with Gen Z mentees, using apps, videos, and other online platforms, rather than all face-to-face communications. This became even more necessary due to covid-19 pandemic guidelines. Explainer videos were created and used as a means of connecting, educating, and enhancing mentees coping abilities. Virtual meetings between mentees, mentors and advisors were utilized throughout the assessment year. Fun activities were also offered virtually, during and after normal business hours.
- The department was not able to hire a graduate assistant to help facilitate activities.
- Virtual meetings were utilized on a regular basis.

As a result of these changes, in 2020-2021 the target was **met**.

**Decision, Recommendation or Action:** In 2020-2021 the target was **met**. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, the TRIO SSS Staff will implement the following changes in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement.....

- Incorporate the LASSI workbook into the ACSK 1010 curriculum.
- Bring in outside motivational speakers.
- Provide sessions with TRIO SSS Alumni to talk about their experiences and how they overcame obstacles and to talk about their path to graduation and a career.
- Utilize the graduate assistant to help coordinate activities and interact with mentees.

These changes will improve the student's non-cognitive attributes thus enabling the student to better cope with the challenges of college life and further enhance the student's comfort in expressing questions and concerns to others, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement further.

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**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 was **not met**.

Stated Objectives	AC 2018- 2019	AC 2019- 2020	AC 2020- 2021
90% of mentees will regularly participate in campus activities and/or join at least one student organization.	88%	96%	89%

**Analysis:** In 2019-2020 the target was met.

Mentors and mentees attended several mutually selected activities/events together. Data collected indicated that 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 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, for a variety of reasons with these three voiced most: 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. This was coupled with all students having to leave campus in March due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Students became so focused on adjusting to the switch from face to face to online classes, they had little interest in joining organizations and attending activities that were now all virtual.

Based on the analysis of the 2019-2020 results, the TRIO SSS staff made the following changes in 2020-2021 to drive the cycle of improvement.

- SSS Advisors, along with mentors and tutors, helped mentees plan and organize their schedules to ease anxiety over academic obligations, work schedules, and extracurricular activities.
- SSS Staff administered the Strong Interest Inventory to assist mentees in identifying basic interest areas which helped to identify organizations and activities that would be both beneficial and of interest to the student.

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As a result of these changes, in 2020-2021 the target was **not met**.

**Decision/Action:** In 2020-2021 the target was **not met**. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results the TRIO SSS staff will implement the following changes in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement.

- Encourage mentors to invite their mentees to join organizations and attend activities with them.
- Offer prizes to encourage participation in activities and organizations.
- Promote group outings where all mentors/mentees and SSS Staff attend a particular event/activity or organization meeting, with a meal to follow.
- Bring in speakers to stress the importance of joining organizations for career readiness (resume boosters)
- Graduate Assistant will monitor participation of mentees and mentors in activities/meetings to determine if changes/modification of implemented changes is needed.

These changes will improve the student's level of socialization, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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

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

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

Major and career exploration workshops/seminars were planned and offered each semester with the goal of increasing awareness of the wide variety of majors and careers available to the mentees. These sessions were conducted by SSS Staff and collaborations with community partners.

SSS developed an early warning mid-term assessment tool (Academic Progress Report) used to receive direct feedback from the mentee's professors. This assessment tool was developed as an intervention to help keep the mentee focused and on track towards graduation.

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SSS planned to have a Graduate Assistant to work alongside the TRIO SSS Staff to assist in creating activities, both face-to-face and virtual, but one was not available for this academic year.

### Plan of Action Moving Forward:

As incoming freshmen, all mentees be encouraged to enroll in face-to-face courses, where feasible.

Trio SSS tutors will, on a weekly basis, intentionally reach out to mentees taking online classes to assist with assignments and coursework.

A Graduate Assistant will be hired to assist in developing activities, monitoring program, and implementing changes. 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 students, which would result in a higher participation and retention rate.

To make sure that the Academic Progress Report form is utilized and that mentees meet with their professors, TRIO SSS will send form to professors and ask that professors meet with students to discuss their academic progress in their class.

The LASSI workbook will be incorporated into the ACSK 1010 curriculum. Outside motivational speakers will be brought in, along with the provision of sessions with TRIO SSS alumni to talk about their experiences at NSU and how they overcame obstacles and to talk about their path to graduation and a satisfying career.

Mentors will be encouraged to invite their mentees to accompany them to activities and organizational meetings. Prizes will be offered to encourage participation in organizations and activities. Group outings will be promoted where all mentors, mentees and SSS Staff attend a particular event/activity with a meal to follow.

Bring in speakers to stress the importance of joining organizations as it pertains to career readiness (resume boosters)