

Assessment Cycle 2021-2022

Student Support Services

Division or Department: Student Affairs

Prepared by: Frances Welch

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Approved by: Yonna Pasch

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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 met

Stated Objectives	AC 2019-2020	AC 2020-2021	AC 2021-2022
82% or more mentees will persist from one AC to the next (Based upon registration for Fall)	88%	78%	85%
80% of mentees will successfully complete their first year in college with a GPA of 2.0 or above	81%	78%	96%

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021, both targets were not met.

A major/career exploration component was added to the ACSK 1010 curriculum that is taught each fall by SSS Staff. This was implemented to help mentees settle into a major and/or career path quicker which was believed would give mentees more focus and drive. During the 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.

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Students that were confused about their major were encouraged to enroll in OR 1030 and IDS 2000, educational and vocational guidance courses taught by SSS Advisors. Major and career exploration workshops and seminars were conducted during the academic year to increase awareness of the wide variety of majors and careers available to the mentees, and to answer any questions that they may have had. Each mentee was required to take the LASSI assessment. SSS Advisors shared results with mentors with the goal of using the results to develop an action plan to help students improve and to guide them through their first year. If any mentees experienced emotional stressors like home sickness, death or illness of a family member, anxiety, etcetera, mentors and advisors were prepared to assist them in setting up appointments with NSU counselors.

Two assessment tools were developed, one to receive feedback from professors and the other to focus on major choice, curriculum, and career development. The assessment that focused on major choice was utilized, but the Progress Report form for professors to meet with and report on the academic standing of the mentees was not used during the 2021-2022 AC. Even with all the changes implemented, it was not enough to meet both our targets. The implemented changes resulted in a 10-percentage point decrease in the first objective of Measure 1.1 compared to the previous assessment cycle. Seventy-eight percent (78%) persisted from one academic year to the next in AC 2020-2021 compared to 88% persisting in AC 2019-2020. In AC 2020-2021, only 78% of the students ended the academic year with at least a 2.0 or above GPA, while 81% accomplished this objective in AC 2019-2020.

Based upon the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, the following changes were implemented in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of continuous improvement.

- Encouraged all mentees to enroll in face-to-face courses, if possible.
- TRIO SSS tutors intentionally reached out on a weekly basis to mentees taking online classes to help with assignments and coursework.
- Hired a Graduate Assistant to help implement changes and more closely monitor the Mentoring program.
- Although the department had the best of intentions, TRIO SSS staff failed to utilize the Academic Progress Report form for professors to meet with students to discuss their academic progress.

As a result of these changes, in 2021-2022 the target was **met**.

With Covid-19 restrictions lifted, it was easier to recruit mentees into our Peer Mentoring Program. We recruited forty-four (44) incoming first-year students from among our new TRIO SSS participants. We, however, lost seventeen (17) within the first three weeks of the fall semester, leaving us with twenty-seven (27) mentees. TRIO SSS Advisors reviewed all mentee schedules prior to the beginning of the fall semester to ensure proper class placement per the student's major curriculum, and to reduce enrollment in online courses. We were able to engage a graduate assistant (GA) to serve as both our Tutor Coordinator and to assist the Peer Mentor Program Coordinator. The GA collaborated with TRIO SSS tutors to identify mentees that were taking online courses. SSS Tutors reached out to mentees taking online courses to offer tutorial assistance and advice on how to be successful with online courses. The GA collaborated closely with the Peer Mentoring Program Coordinator to plan and implement activities that

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would engage the mentors and mentees. As is our standard operating procedure, TRIO SSS staff reviewed 5-week and mid-term grades with mentees and were able to intervene and assist students that were not making satisfactory academic progress at those intervals. With these positive changes put in place, 96% of the mentees made satisfactory academic progress (earned a 2.0 or above) and 85% will return for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Decision, Action, or Recommendations: In AC 2021-2022 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, TRIO SSS will implement the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement:

- Implement monthly group study sessions for mentors and mentees in the SSS lab, utilizing tutors and Advisors, as needed. Healthy snacks will be provided.
- Plan a Teams meeting with professors of mentees to tell them about our SSS program, reintroduce the *Academic Progress Report*, and discuss with them the merits of the report (retention) and how it could conveniently fit into their busy schedules.

These changes will improve the mentee's chances of remaining in good academic standing and persisting 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 not met.

Stated Objectives	AC 2019-2020	AC 2020-2021	AC 2021-2022
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.	55%	94%	50%

Analysis: In AC 2020-2021 the target was met.

In accordance with the plan of action, all mentees were given the *LASSI* during the second week of the fall semester, rather than the third week which allowed the staff to begin the evaluation and intervention process earlier. Staff and mentors connected more with mentees virtually or through text messages, rather than face-to-face. Although face-to-face activities were planned, students could also attend many activities virtually. Activities like karaoke and study skills workshops were delivered virtually.

The results of the *LASSI* were made known to the mentees and mentors by the SSS Advisors,

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and that information was then used to plan and facilitate one-on-one mentor/mentee meetings. TRIO SSS staff conducted one-on-one meetings with mentees and used the results of the LASSI to provide educational and social activities and interventions to promote growth. In AC 2020-2021, ninety-eight percent (98%) of the mentees took the LASSI post-test in April of the spring semester. The results from the respondents showed a 94% improvement in coping with the non-cognitive challenges of college life.

Based on the analysis of the results in 2020-2021, The TRIO SSS staff implemented the following changes in 2021-2022 to drive continuous improvement.

- Incorporated the LASSI workbook into the ACSK 1010 curriculum.
- Brought in outside motivational speakers.
- Provided 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.
- Utilized the graduate assistant to help coordinate activities and interact with mentees.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met.

One of the changes implemented was to incorporate the LASSI workbook into the curriculum of the ACSK 1010 class. This allowed SSS instructors to weave activities related to a particular item on the LASSI scale into the lesson plan. For instance, to strengthen students that scored low on the *Using Academic Resources* scale, students were provided a list of both on and off campus resources. Students were given scenarios and asked to list which resources would they select to resolve the issue described in the scenario. The list of resources was discussed, and questions answered.

During AC 2021-2022, TRIO SSS contracted with a motivational speaker and on other occasions, invited TRIO Alumni to talk on several topics such as career and major choices, staying motivated, starting your own business while in college, and how to overcome obstacles. These topics were well received by our students.

A Graduate Assistant was hired as the Tutor Coordinator and to collaborate with the Peer Mentor Program Coordinator. The GA planned and implemented meetings and activities to bring mentors and mentees together. Even with all the strategic planning, it was a struggle getting mentees to complete the LASSI post-test. Only four (4) of the twenty-seven (27) mentees took the post-test. This could have been attributed to two key SSS employees leaving in mid-April. Without the results of the post-test, an accurate measurement of improvement on the LASSI scales could not be ascertained. Of the four students that did complete the LASSI post-test, a 50% improvement in non-cognitive attributes was recorded.

Decision, Recommendation or Action: In 2021-2022 the target was **not met**.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, the TRIO SSS Staff will implement the following changes in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement.

- Have targeted sessions each month to address one or two of the ten scales of the LASSI. These sessions will be facilitated by the mentors and GA and supervised by SSS Staff. For each of the ten categories, information and skills will be presented and discussed to

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- help mentees reach specific learning goals and objectives.
- Since this initiative relies so heavily on the results of the LASSI Post-Test and since Mentors have, in most cases, established a good relationship with their mentees, mentors will be asked to meet with their mentees in April and have them take the LASSI post-test. This will be done either on a one-on-one basis, or at a planned end of semester event for both Mentors and 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.

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 2019-2020	AC 2020-2021	AC 2021-2022
90% of mentees will regularly participate in campus activities and/or join at least one student organization.	96%	89%	96%

Analysis: In 2020-2021 the target was **not met**.

SSS Advisors, along with mentors and tutors, helped mentees plan and organize their schedules to ease anxiety over academic obligations and work schedules, to allow scheduling for extracurricular activities. Each mentee was asked to take the Strong Interest Inventory which was used to identify basic interest areas to assist staff and mentors in guiding mentees to organizations and activities of interest and benefit to them. Mentees attended Demon Days activities with their mentees to help them feel more comfortable attending activities and meeting new people. Mentors were more actively involved in planning group events/activities for the mentoring program. With this buy-in, they were eager to have their mentees attend the activities. Data collected through individual meetings with mentees and the Satisfaction Survey, indicated that 89% of the mentees either joined an organization or participated in multiple campus activities.

Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, the TRIO SSS staff made the following changes in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement.

- Encouraged mentors to invite their mentees to join organizations and attend activities with them.
- Offered prizes to encourage participation in activities and organizations.

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- Promoted group outings where all mentors/mentees and SSS Staff attended a particular event/activity or organization meeting, with a meal or snacks following.
- Brought in speakers (face-to-face and virtual) to stress the importance of joining organizations for career readiness (resume boosters)
- Graduate Assistant monitored participation of mentees and mentors in activities/meetings to determine if changes or modifications were needed.

As a result of these changes, in 2021-2022 the target was met.

Mentors made every effort to regularly communicate with their mentees and to invite them to campus activities. Most of the mentors were members of the RSO Helping Hands. As a result, a substantial percentage of the mentees came to the Helping Hands meetings with their mentors and became members themselves. SSS sponsored a virtual workshop where TRIO SSS alumni told those in attendance about how they were encouraged to join organizations and become involved in campus activities. For those who heeded the advice, they shared how being involved built their leadership skills and brought them out of their shyness, and in some cases, helped lead them to their career. Others that did not participate in organizations or go to campus activities stated that in hindsight they now understand why they were encouraged to get involved and regret that they did not.

The Graduate Assistant collaborated diligently with the mentors to plan and conduct activities for the mentees. For each activity/meeting, the GA created an evaluation form for mentees and mentors to assess the activities they attended. These evaluations were analyzed by SSS staff, and the outcomes were used to plan future activities.

These changes produced positive results with ninety-six percent (96%) of the mentees joining organizations and/or attending multiple campus activities.

Decision/Action: In 2021-2022 the target was **met**.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results the TRIO SSS staff will implement the following changes in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement.

- Host a speed dating event where representatives from Student Organizations will be invited to speed date with mentees to learn more about individual student organizations. Will serve refreshments to promote attendance.
- Throughout the fall semester, RSO representatives will be invited to SSS ACSK 1010 classes to give a brief overview of their organization and answer questions.
- Peer Mentoring Coordinator will host a Vision Board Session and incorporate RSO participation into the project.

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

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

As incoming first-year students, all mentees were encouraged to enroll in face-to-face courses, where feasible.

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

A Graduate Assistant was hired to assist in developing activities, monitoring the program, and implementing changes. The GA was responsible for developing activities using platforms like Kahoot! which were shown to increase participation and engagement. Other apps and websites were researched by the GA to determine usability by the PMP and incorporated into the programming. The expected outcome was that the GA would have a better perspective on the types of activities that would interest our student population, because of the closeness in age resulting in a higher participation and retention rate.

The Academic Progress Report form was not utilized this AC. The Peer Mentoring Program Coordinator has revised her plan and will introduce the form in AC 2022-2023.

The LASSI workbook was incorporated into the ACSK 1010 curriculum. This workbook provided activities and exercises to help students improve in the ten categories of the LASSI scale.

Arrangements were made to have TRIO SSS alumni hold virtual sessions/forums for the mentees and other SSS participants. In these sessions, TRIO alumni discussed their experiences at NSU and how they overcame obstacles. There were also sessions on creating and branding your own business while in college. In one session, alumni talked about how being involved in extracurricular activities helped guide the alum to a satisfying career and boosted his resume.

Mentors invited their mentees to accompany them to activities and organizational meetings. Door prizes were given to encourage participation in organizations and activities. During the fall semester, a group outing was planned where all mentors, mentees and SSS Staff attended. Refreshments were served during the activity. SSS contracted with a professional speaker to address the importance of joining organizations as it pertains to career readiness and boosting their resumes.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

Monthly group study sessions for mentors and mentees will be implemented in the SSS lab. Tutors and SSS advisors will be utilized as needed. Healthy snacks will be provided.

To promote the use of the Academic Progress Report, a Microsoft Teams meeting will be planned with professors and SSS Staff to familiarize professors with the SSS Mentoring Program and discuss the merits of the report (retention) and ways that it could conveniently be worked into their busy schedules.

Targeted sessions will be coordinated each month to address one or two of the ten scales of the

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LASSI. Sessions will be planned by the SSS Staff, GA, and Mentors. The sessions will be facilitated by the mentors. For each of the ten scales, information and skills will be presented and discussed to help mentees reach specific learning goals and objectives.

Mentors will be responsible for meeting with mentees in April for the purpose of administering the LASSI post-test. This will take place either on a one-on-one basis, or at a planned end of semester event for mentors and mentees.

To expose mentees to student organizations on the NSU campus, TRIO SSS will host a speed dating event where representatives from student organizations will interact with mentees to learn more about the individual organizations. Refreshments will be served to promote attendance.

During the fall semester, RSO representatives will be invited to the SSS ACSK 1010 classes to give a brief overview of their organization and answer questions.

The Peer Mentoring Coordinator will host a Vision Board session and incorporate RSO participation and campus activities into the project.