Student Support Services

Division or Department: Student Affairs

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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 provide equal access for education to potential students throughout the state and region and promote 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.

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 mentees 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.

Finding. Target was **met.**

Analysis:

Stated Objectives	AC 2020-2021	AC 2021-2022	AC 2022-2023
82% or more mentees will persist from one AC to the next (Based upon registration for Fall)	78%	85%	87%
80% of mentees will successfully complete their first year in college with a GPA of 2.0 or above	78%	96%	87%

In AC 2021-2022 the target was **met**.

The staff 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. We 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. 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 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.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, TRIO SSS implemented the following changes in AC 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. The staff implemented monthly group study sessions for mentors and mentees in the SSS lab, utilizing tutors and Advisors, as needed. Healthy snacks were provided. The staff planned a Teams meeting with professors of mentees to tell them about our SSS program, reintroduced the *Academic Progress Report*, and discussed with them the merits of the report (retention) and how it could conveniently fit into their busy schedules. These changes will improve the mentees' 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.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2022-2023 the target was **met**.

The Peer Mentoring Program started out with forty-four (49) mentees, however, by the end of the first semester, there were only twenty-three (23) active mentees participating in the program. All prior initiatives were being utilized, along with the new initiative of conducting monthly group study sessions for mentors and mentees. Although the group study sessions were well received and embraced by the mentees, the PMP Coordinator received suggestions from both mentors and mentees to improve upon the sessions. The common complaint was that the sessions should not be general study sessions, but should focus on a specific subject, such as math or biology. For this reason, some mentors conducted individual study/tutor sessions with their mentees. The goal to have Teams meeting with the professors of the mentees did not go well. There was not much interest, nor cooperation with meeting and discussing the mentee's progress, or lack of progress. Despite this setback, we were still able to meet the target, due in large part to the dedication and involvement of the mentors. The mentors worked hard to build genuine and meaningful relationships with their mentees and to encourage them to reach their academic goals. TRIO SSS staff, through the monitoring of 5-week and mid-term grades, were able to intervene and help those students that were not performing up to standards. With these interventions and positive changes, 87% of the mentees made satisfactory academic progress (earned a 2.0 or above) and 87% will return for the 2023-2024 academic year.

Decision:
In AC 2022-2023 the target was **met.**

Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement.

- Implement bi-weekly course/subject specific study sessions for core classes such as Math 1020, 1060, Chemistry 1070, etcetera.
- Implement bi-weekly homework nights to reinforce good study habits and teach study skills and strategies. This will also promote a sense of belonging and form better connections between mentors and mentees.
- Ensure that mentees are aware of how to request tutoring services. When tutoring services are utilized, tutors will inform PMP Coordinator and the mentee's SSS Advisor on the results of the tutoring session(s) for further action, if needed.
- As the mentee progresses through the first academic year, an open line of communication will be maintained between the mentor, mentee, tutor, and TRIO SSS advisor, forming a hub of support.

These changes will improve the student's ability to remain 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 the *LASSI* post-test.

Finding. Target was **not met**.

Analysis:

Stated Objectives	AC 2020-2021	AC 2021-2022	AC 2022-2023
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.	94%	50%	90%

In 2021-2022 the target was **met.**

The TRIO SSS staff implemented the following changes in 2021-2022 to drive continuous improvement. We 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. 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.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results, the TRIO SSS Staff implemented the following changes in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. Targeted sessions each month to address one or two of the ten scales of the LASSI. These sessions were facilitated by the mentors and GA and supervised by SSS Staff. For each of the ten categories, information and skills were presented and discussed to 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 were 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. Social Engagement will no longer be addressed in this measure because it is extensively addressed in Measure 1.3.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2022-2023 the target was **met.**

The PMP Coordinator and GA scheduled sessions throughout the academic year to address the non-cognitive attributes covered on the LASSI scales. These sessions were not well attended and in the second semester (spring) were phased out. The scales were, however, covered and discussed during the first semester (fall) in the TRIO SSS taught ACSK 1010 classes. TRIO SSS advisors also discussed with mentees during scheduled meetings items on the LASSI scales where the mentee scored low. As planned the LASSI Post-test was administered during the month of April. The PMP Coordinator emailed and texted mentees in GroupMe to ask them to take the LASSI post-test. Reminders were sent out each week, Mentors encouraged mentees to take the post-test. At the final mentor/mentee activity in April, mentees attending the activity were asked to complete the post-test before leaving the activity. Of the twenty-three active mentees, 16 (70%) took the LASSI Post-test. Of the sixteen mentees taking the post-test, improvement was shown on seven of the eight scales being measured which resulted in a ninety percent (90%) improvement.

Decision:
In AC 2022-2023 the target was **met.**

Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, the staff will implement the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. Mentees, along with Mentors, will be required to attend the Mentoring Retreat the weekend before classes start in the fall. During the retreat,

mentees will learn the purpose of the program, how mentoring can help them be more successful, and to begin to build rapport with their Mentor and the TRIO SSS staff. Mentors will be assigned mentees prior to the beginning of the academic year and will be present to assist their mentees' move into the resident halls. Mentors will invite mentees on a personalized tour of the campus, preview their fall schedule of classes to show mentees where the classes are located, and to answer any questions. Mentors will host at least two activities per month to address both non-cognitive and social issues. Activities will be presented in a relaxed, fun environment, rather than in a classroom-type setting. Non-cognitive attributes to be addressed in this measure on the LASSI scale are motivation and self-regulation. The following attributes fall under self-regulation: anxiety, attitude, concentration, self-testing, time management, and using academic resources. These changes will improve the student's ability to non-cognitive attributes thus enabling the student to better cope with the challenges of college life and further enhance the student's comfort in asking questions and expressing 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 an elevated 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.

Finding. Target was **met.**

Analysis:

Stated Objectives	AC 2020-2021	AC 2021-2022	AC 2022-2023
90% of mentees will regularly participate in campus activities and/or join at least one student organization.	89%	96%	91%

In 2021-2022 the target was **met.**

The TRIO SSS staff encouraged mentors to invite their mentees to join organizations and attend activities with them. Offered prizes to encourage participation in activities and organizations. 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. Mentors made every effort to regularly communicate with their mentees and to invite them to campus activities. A substantial percentage 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.

Based on the analysis of the 2021-2022 results the TRIO SSS staff implemented the following changes in 2022-2023 to drive the cycle of improvement. Hosted a speed dating event where representatives from Student Organizations were invited to speed date with mentees to learn more about individual student organizations. Serve refreshments to promote attendance. Throughout the fall semester, RSO representatives were invited to SSS ACSK 1010 classes to give a brief overview of their organization and answer questions. Peer Mentoring Coordinator hosted a Vision Board Session and incorporated RSO participation into the project. These changes improved the student's level of socialization, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2022-2023 the target was **met**. PMP Coordinator and mentors planned a speed dating event, but due to unforeseen circumstances, the event was cancelled and never rescheduled. In lieu of RSO representatives being invited to SSS ACSK 1010 classes, the ACSK 1010 instructors provided information on several RSO's and answered questions. Students were told about the benefits of joining an RSO, given tips on selecting an RSO, and encouraged to join an RSO. The PMP Coordinator planned a Vision Board Session that was well attended. Students were asked to select an RSO that they were interested in either joining or gathering more information on and put that RSO on their vision board. Mentors invited mentees to accompany them to various RSO meetings. During meetings with mentees, TRIO SSS Advisors encouraged mentees to join an RSO, or at least attend an interest meeting.

Decision:
In AC 2022-2023 the target was **met.**

Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, the following changes will be implemented in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. The Presence platform will be introduced during the mentor/mentee retreat. Presence will be incorporated into the ACSK 1010 curriculum as a follow-up measure to the introduction during the retreat. The end of year exit questionnaire will be revised and utilized both semesters to determine if mentees are participating in campus activities and joining RSO's. The PMP Coordinator will create an *Engagement Report* form to be used by mentors within the first four weeks of each semester. Mentors will submit the results to the PMP Coordinator, who in turn will meet with TRIO SSS staff to analyze results and determine what type of action should be taken.

These changes will improve the student's ability to become more easily involved in campus activities and organizations, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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

1.1: Implemented monthly group study sessions for mentors and mentees in the SSS lab, utilizing tutors and Advisors, as needed. Healthy snacks were provided. Planned a Teams meeting with professors of mentees to tell them about our SSS program, reintroduced the *Academic Progress Report,* and discussed with them the merits of the report (retention) and how it could conveniently fit into their busy schedules.

1.2: Targeted sessions each month to address one or two of the ten scales of the LASSI. For each of the ten categories, information and skills were presented and discussed to help mentees reach specific learning goals and objectives. Established a good relationship with their mentees, mentors were asked to meet with their mentees in April and have them take the LASSI post-test. Social Engagement will no longer be addressed in this measure because it is extensively addressed in Measure 1.3.

1.3: Hosted a speed dating event where representatives from Student Organizations were invited to speed date with mentees to learn more about individual student organizations. Serve refreshments to promote attendance. Throughout the fall semester, RSO representatives were invited to SSS ACSK 1010 classes to give a brief overview of their organization and answer questions. Peer Mentoring Coordinator hosted a Vision Board Session and incorporated RSO participation into the project.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

1.1: Implement bi-weekly course/subject specific study sessions for core classes such as Math 1020, 1060, Chemistry 1070, etcetera. Implement bi-weekly homework nights to reinforce good study habits and teach study skills and strategies. This will also promote a sense of belonging and form better connections between mentors and mentees. Ensure that mentees are aware of how to request tutoring services. When tutoring services are utilized, tutors will inform PMP Coordinator and the mentee's SSS Advisor on the results of the tutoring session(s) for further action, if needed. As the mentee progresses through the first academic year, an open line of communication will be maintained between the mentor, mentee, tutor, and TRIO SSS advisor, forming a hub of support.

1.2: Mentees, along with Mentors, will be required to attend the Mentoring Retreat the weekend before classes start in the fall. Mentees will learn the purpose of the program, how mentoring can help them be more successful, and to begin to build rapport with their Mentor and the TRIO SSS staff. Mentors will be assigned mentees prior to the beginning of the academic year and will be present to assist their mentees' move into the resident halls. Mentors will invite mentees on a personalized tour of the campus, preview their fall schedule of classes to show mentee's where the classes are located, and to answer any questions. Mentors will host at least two activities per month to address both non-cognitive and social issues. Non-cognitive attributes to be addressed in this measure on the LASSI scale are motivation and self-regulation. The following attributes fall under self-regulation: anxiety, attitude, concentration, self-testing, time management, and using academic resources.

1.3: The Presence platform will be introduced during the mentor/mentee retreat. Presence will be incorporated into the ACSK 1010 curriculum as a follow-up measure to the introduction during the retreat. The end of year exit questionnaire will be revised and utilized both semesters to determine if mentees are participating in campus activities and joining RSO's. The PMP Coordinator will create an *Engagement Report* form to be used by mentors within the first four weeks of each semester. Mentors will submit the results to the PMP Coordinator, who in turn will meet with TRIO SSS staff to analyze results and determine what type of action should be taken.