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Latino Student Perceptions Of Trio/Sss Program Effectiveness At Eastern Illinois University

Kristin K. Flores

Eastern Illinois University

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LATINO STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF TRiO/SS PROGRAM
EFFECTIVENESS AT EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

FLORES

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Latino Student Perceptions of TRiO/SSS Program

Effectiveness at Eastern Illinois University

(TITLE)

BY

Kristin K. Flores

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2008

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

April 28, 2008

DATE

Charles J. Eberly

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4-28-08

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DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL HEAD

**Latino Student Perceptions of TRiO/SSS Program Effectiveness
at Eastern Illinois University**

By

Kristin Flores

B.A., Western Illinois University, 2004

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Science in
College Student Affairs Degree

Department of Counseling and Student Development
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL

Spring, 2008

I hereby recommend that this thesis be accepted as fulfilling this part of the
graduate degree above.

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, this thesis is dedicated to my parents, Joel and Marion Flores. Thank you for all of your love and support and believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. Secondly, this thesis is dedicated to my brothers Joel and Ricky Flores. Thank you for being my rock and getting me through tough times and new beginnings. Also, to my nephew Miguel Flores, thank you for showing me how to smile again. I cannot thank my brothers and my nephew without thanking my sister-in-laws, Charity and Christa Flores. I could not have asked for two better sisters-in-law than the both of you. You both have been there to support me through all of my joys and pains. You have done a phenomenal job as wives, daughter-in-laws, sisters and now a mother (Charity). I know my parents could not have been more proud to call you two daughters-in-law. I could not have done this without all of you in my life.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to dedicate this to Isaiah Collier. Thank you for being my main support system at Eastern. We have had a lot of joys and sorrows, laughs and arguments, moments we will always remember and other moments we wish we could forget. No matter what, I know we will be friends forever.

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To the best supervisor and Director of TRiO Programs, Maggie Burkhead, thank you so much for everything! Thank you for your guidance, support, understanding, trust, passion and wisdom. I seriously cannot thank you enough for all that you have done for me and shown me. I am truly blessed to have worked under your supervision and direction.

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ABSTRACT

TRiO Programs are completely grant funded through the Federal Government's Department of Education. These programs are constantly under review for continued funding. There are a total of 8 TRiO Programs and Eastern Illinois University (EIU) receives funding for one, Student Support Services. TRiO Programs were created for first- generation, low- income students; many Latino college students meet both criteria. First-generation college students have unique needs and concerns. TRiO/SSS provides assistance for these students to guide them throughout the college career and prepare them for graduate school and a career after graduation. This qualitative thesis describes the interaction of EIU TRiO/SSS staff members as perceived by four Latino students. Based on the students' "voices", TRiO/SSS program strengths and areas for development were identified. All of the student participants expressed their gratitude for the program because TRiO gave them guidance and support they did not receive elsewhere. While the participants felt Student Support Services programming was effective, they felt that the program needed more counselors to serve more students. Additionally, they mentioned that it was helpful for the counselors to be persons of color.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

First-generation students represent a high proportion of all students enrolled in college. Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak and Terenzini (2004) noted that 34% of students entering the nation's four-year institutions and 53% of students starting at two-year colleges were first-generation students. Among those, Latinos represent a large portion of the total. In 2003-2004, 49% of Latino college students were first-generation. Furthermore, 47% of Latino students were from families with annual incomes of less than \$20,000, and 60% came from families in the lowest socioeconomic status bracket (White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans [WHIEEHA], 2003).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic Americans are the largest minority group in the nation. Their population totals more than 37 million (WHIEEHA, 2003). Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States and they are also the most poorly educated major population group in the United States (Fry, 2002). Santiago (2007) noted that in 2005, Hispanic students represented 11% of the total student enrollment in college, up from 6% in 1990. Fry (2004) said that less than one-quarter of Latinos enrolled in college completed a bachelor's degree and nearly two-thirds held no postsecondary credential at all. This low college completion rate may be because many college and university staff

members working with Latino students are unsure how to meet these students' unique needs. Fry identified six major obstacles Latinos have said are reasons they either do not enroll in college or fail to finish; these include the cost of tuition, a need to work and earn money, the consequences of a poor high school education, the feeling a degree is unnecessary to be successful, discrimination and pressure to stay physically close to their family.

The Hispanic community is very diverse, and Hispanics demand diverse solutions to meet the needs of their diverse culture. There is no "one size fits all" solution to intervention strategies (WHIEEHA, 2003) nor is there a specific Latino identity development model to facilitate serving this population. Instead, Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) have identified six Latino Identity Orientations (p. 50-54).

- Orientation Latino-integrated. Latino-integrated persons understand and are able to deal with the full complexity of Latino identity. They are aware of their own subgroup background and culture as well as how these relate to those of other Latino subgroups. Their Latino identity is fully integrated with their other social identities.... Latino-integrated individuals see themselves and other Latinos as one of many groups coexisting in the United States. Whites and members of other

groups are seen broadly as well, and the complexity of their cultural and individual orientations is recognized and accepted....

- Orientation: Latino-identified.... Many Latinos of this orientation define themselves as "*La Raza*" They view Whites as constituting a distinctly different racial group, whose members can be potential barriers or allies, depending on their behavior. They see systemic factors and institutional racism as quite real and therefore actively value the fight against discrimination....
- Orientation Subgroup Identified. Subgroup Identified Latinos think of themselves primarily in terms of their own ethnic or national-origin subgroup, which is the focus of their identification. They view themselves as distinct from Whites but do not necessarily identify with other Latinos or people of color.... They prefer to identify almost exclusively with their own particular subgroup, which they view positively, and they may view other groups, including other Latino subgroups, as deficient or inferior. Whites are not central to their thinking though they are conscious that Whites can be barriers to their full inclusion....
- Orientation: Latino as "Other." Individuals with the orientation of Latino as "Other" are not very aware of their specific Latino background, history and culture, but because of mixed background,

phenotype, prevailing racial constructions, and other factors simply see themselves in a generic fashion as “persons of color” without distinguishing themselves from other subgroups.... They do not adhere to Latino cultural values or norms but do not identify with the White cultural values or norms either. They see Whites as distinct and frame race as White or not White....

- **Orientation: Undifferentiated....** They prefer to identify themselves and others as “just people,” often claiming to be color-blind and promoting this orientation to others of all groups.... They accept the dominant norms of our society without question and when they encounter barriers to their inclusion, they attribute these setbacks to individual behavior rather than intergroup dynamics. They do not seek any particular association with other Latinos, since they prefer to view each person as distinct from his or her racial or ethnic group.
- **Orientation: White- Identified.** White-identified Latinos are those who are likely to see themselves as racially White, and as distinct from, and generally superior to, people of color. This orientation includes individuals who value and prefer “Whiteness” and all that it connotes. Such persons can be assimilated to White culture and society and quite disconnected from other Latinos, or alternately can be connected to a particular Latino subgroup (for example, Cuban refugees) while

denying or not seeing any connection to other subgroups.... Latinos who are White-identified see the world through a White- tinted lens, preferring Whites and White culture over Latinos and Latino culture. (pp. 50 - 54).

Which ever group the student identifies with may either help or hinder their experience when they arrive on the college campus. It is possible for a student to take on characteristics across several different orientations. A student may feel lost and unsupported through their transition to their new college community whatever their Latino orientation.

On campus, first- generation college students, particularly those from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, often describe themselves as unprepared for the isolation and alienation they felt upon entering college. First-generation college students are more likely to view the campus environment, particularly the faculty, as less supportive and less concerned about them, and they are more likely to report having experienced discrimination on campus.... First-generation students not only face barriers to their academic and social integration, they also confront obstacles with respect to cultural adaptation due to discontinuities between the culture of their families and communities and the culture that exists on college campuses.... At home, first-generation students report that relationships with family and friends who did not go to

college often become strained and difficult to maintain as they are perceived as changing and separating from them, which causes intense stress for these students (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006, p. 18).

The Council for Opportunity in Education (<http://www.coenet.us>, retrieved January 19, 2007) described first-generation college students as students whose parents either have not gone to college at all, or if they did enroll in college, they did not graduate. Parents who are unfamiliar with the normative expectations of higher education do not realize the amount of support their child needs to be successful in their college endeavors. The parents of first-generation students have less influence on their children's education decisions than do parents who have obtained a postsecondary education. Making productive decisions and choices about college requires some basic knowledge about the experience, resources, costs and advantages (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002). Many non-college educated parents want a better life for their children, but they are not aware of the human and financial resources to guide their children through the process of matriculating and graduating from college. Students benefit from the social connection they establish with teachers, counselors, and school officials (Saunders & Serna, 2004). For that reason the Federal Government established a series of programs to help low-income Americans enter college, graduate and move on to participate more fully in America's economic and social life funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. These

Programs are referred to as the TRiO programs and originally consisted of three programs, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and Talent Search.

Today, TRiO Programs include eight sub-programs which include Upward Bound, Talent Search, Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement, Upward Bound Math-Science, Educational Opportunity Centers, TRiO Dissemination Partnership Program, Training Program for Federal TRiO Programs and Student Support Services (SSS). TRiO programs help students overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education. As mandated by Congress, two-thirds of the students served must come from families with incomes under \$28,000, where neither parent graduated from college. More than 2,700 TRiO Programs currently serve nearly 866,000 low-income Americans (<http://www.coenet.us>, retrieved January 19, 2007). Unfortunately, Hispanics are underrepresented in these programs (WHIEEHA, 2003). The value of these federal programs to support minority and first-generation student success has been called into question much by the Administration of President George W. Bush. The Administration has been quoted to say that “those programs aren’t producing as much for low- income students as they could” (Burd, 2005). President Bush has created an initiative named American Competitiveness Initiative. This initiative was created to support No Child Left Behind, which is not structured with diversity in mind (Rogers, 2006).

President George W. Bush appointed the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans in 2001 to develop an action plan to close the educational achievement gap for Hispanic Americans. On January 8, 2003 President Bush proclaimed that "We look forward to the day that no child in this country is left behind" (WHIEEHA, 2003, p. 7). He asserted that

as Americans, we should all work as a nation to reach out to our children at risk and provide them an opportunity. We witnessed an incredible vitality, desire, ambition, and determination in the hearts and minds of Hispanic Americans everywhere.

In President Bush's budget request for the 2006 fiscal year, Congress approved a U.S. Department of Education funding bill that instituted funding freezes for work/study, supplemental grants, TRiO programs and other services which actually translated into small cuts based on the previous year's budget (Dervarics, 2006). "About 150 programs in all would be shuttered or radically cut back to help meet Bush's goal of shaving the budget deficit in half by 2009. One out of every three targeted programs concerns education" (Allen & Baker, 2005, p. A01). Nearly all of the 48 programs that Bush intended to eliminate were to help educate children, young adults and college students who are disabled, economically disadvantaged, with limited English proficiency and / or illiterate (White, 2006). The programs for low- income students that would be eliminated

under the president's spending plan were Upward Bound and Talent Search, which have been part of the federal TRiO programs for disadvantaged students since 1965, and Gear Up, which has concentrated on helping financially needy middle-school students since 1999 (Burd, 2005). Further reduction in TRiO funding will lower the number of programs which in turn will decrease the number of students being served and ultimately negatively effect college enrollment numbers.

As described by the U.S. Department of Education (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>, retrieved January 22, 2007), Student Support Services (SSS) is the second largest funded TRiO program. It provides opportunities for academic development, assists students with basic college requirements, and serves to motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. SSS projects also may provide grant aid to current Student Support Services participants who are receiving Federal Pell Grants.

In comparison to college freshman norms, SSS participants tended to be older, were members of a minority group, had lower prior academic achievement and had dependant children (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>, retrieved January 22, 2007). The goal of Student Support Services is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants, increase the transfer rates of eligible students from two-to-four year institutions and to foster a supportive environment

(Thomas, 1998). Thomas (1998) noted that academic advising as well as personal, financial aid and career counseling are key components of the Student Support Services Program. Focusing on academic issues alone means that 50 % of what students need to adjust successfully to the demands of college, such as career and financial aid counseling, and new student orientation, is going to be entirely lost. Providing personal counseling as well as academic advice creates a more holistic support service for participating students (Morgan, 2002).

The purpose of the present study was to examine the perceived effectiveness of the Student Support Services TRiO program for Latino Students at Eastern Illinois University. This study will also examine the perceptions of Latino students toward the Student Support Services program. Is the Eastern Illinois University TRiO program in compliance with national TRiO program guidelines that define effectiveness, and increase participation and completion rates of low- income, first-generation individuals in the academic pipeline (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html> retrieved January 22, 2007).

Research Questions

1. What are Latino student perceptions of the SSS Program at EIU?
2. In what ways does TRiO/SSS support Latino student retention at Eastern Illinois University?

3. In what ways do Latino students who participate in Student Support Services at EIU feel that their college experience would be different without the TRiO Program?

Significance of the Study

The rationale for this proposed study is that campus-based TRiO Program administrators are constantly contesting with the Federal Government bureaucracy to maintain and increase funding. The Bush administration has called these programs "ineffective" although there is a lack of information on what ineffective means to the administration (Ortiz, 2005). As a result, I hope to determine if the TRiO/SSS Program as administered on Eastern Illinois University's campus is effective as perceived by Latino students involved in the program.

Definition of Terms

Effective- For the purposes of the present study, an effective program has increased participation and completion rates among low- income, first- generation individuals in the academic pipeline

(<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/AnnualPlan2001/091-red.pdf>, retrieved October 20, 2007).

First- Generation students- First-generation students are those whose parents either never went to or never graduated from college. These students generally persist at lower rates than other students, earn lower GPAs in college, and appear to be less academically and socially involved in college life than students who are not first- generation
(<http://www.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html> retrieved January 22, 2007).

High- Risk Students- Students are considered high risk if they exhibit several factors that are shown to jeopardize education persistence and attainment. The risk factors are: being academically unprepared for college-level work, not entering college directly after high school, attending college part- time, being a single parent, being financially independent, caring for children at home, working more than 30 hours per week, and being a first- generation college student (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2005).

Latino/Hispanic- People who identify with the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are those who classify themselves within the specific Hispanic or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 or American Community Survey (ACS) questionnaire – "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," or "Cuban." It also includes people who indicate that they are "other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino." Origin can be considered as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United

States. People who identify their origin as "Spanish," "Hispanic," or "Latino" may be of any race (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/meta/long_68188.htm retrieved March 12, 2007).

Low-Income- Low-income status is defined as earning less than \$25,000 per year household income, as per the federal rules for Title IV Recipient status (Filkins & Doyle, 2002).

Student Support Services (SSS) - Student Support Services is a federally funded program designed to help low-income and/ or disabled students to stay in college until they earn their degrees. Participants receive tutoring, counseling and remedial instruction (<http://www.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>, retrieved January 22, 2007). The terms SSS, Student Support Services, and TRiO/SSS will be used interchangeably throughout the present document.

TRiO- The TRiO program is a federally funded educational opportunity program for low income, first-generation and disabled Americans. In support of this commitment, Congress established a series of programs to help low-income Americans enter college, graduate and move on to participate more fully in America's economic and social life. These Programs were originally funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. They help students overcome class, social and cultural barriers to higher education. As mandated by Congress, two-thirds of the students served must come from families with incomes under

\$28,000, where neither parent graduated from college (<http://www.coenet.us>,
retrieved January 19, 2007).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

TRiO Programs were created as a result of increasing numbers of first-generation students enrolling in college. To understand these programs, it is necessary to first understand first-generation students. In 1992, 27% of high school graduates in the United States were first-generation students (Gibbons & Shoffner, 2004, p. 91). The literature defines first-generation as students whose parents either have not gone to college at all, or if they did enroll in college, they did not graduate. First-generation college students tend to come from working-class families or are ethnic minorities (Hsian, 1992). In the late 1990's, 1.3 million Latinos went to college. They were the third largest group following whites and African Americans. However, Latinos were more likely to enroll in two-year colleges and to be part time students (Fry, 2002). Of the Latino students who were enrolled in college, 53% were first-generation (Nomi, 2005).

First-generation students typically earn lower GPAs in college and appear to be less academically and socially involved in college life than other students (Nuñez, 2005). First-generation college students are more likely to have lower college retention rates than their counterparts and are less likely to complete their four-year programs in a timely manner (Ishitani, 2006). While a high percentage of Latinos are enrolling in college, they lag behind every other group in attaining bachelor's degrees (Nomi, 2005). High school class rank and high school

academic intensity had significant effects on college attrition behavior. Students who were lower on their class rank were more likely to drop out of college. Ishitani (2006) applied "event history modeling" (p. 866) to examine attrition and degree completion behaviors of first- generation college students. His study derived from national data sets sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics. Predictors of college success for first- generation students were both pre-college attributes of students and the quality of their interactions with institutions of higher education. The author found that students from lower high school class rank quintiles were more likely to drop out of college. First-generation students showed higher risks of leaving the higher education system than did students of college-educated parents in years one through four. First-generation students with parents who had some college education were slightly more likely to graduate in a timely manner than were first- generation students whose parents never attended college. The author concluded that being a first-generation student reduced the odds of graduating in 4 years by 51% and in 5 years by 32%. Latinos were projected to have the lowest percent of college graduation by ethnicity by the year 2015 (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002).

Latinos have the added pressure of contributing to the family welfare as soon as they become old enough to work. One characteristic shared by many Latinos is the expectation that the children will live at home with their parents until they marry (Fry, 2002). Many Latinos come from low- skilled and low-

income immigrant families. For this reason, 44% of Latinos enrolled in college attend a two- year school and more than 55 % of those are over 35 years old.

Two- year colleges fit the Latino lifestyle because the cost of tuition is lower than that of a four- year institution. These schools are also closer to home and accommodate part- time students by offering classes in the evenings. Evening classes are helpful because most Latino students work a full-time day job.

Another reason why Latinos attend community colleges is because of programs that focus on developing job and language skills. Unfortunately, more than half of those who enroll in a two- year school will not obtain a degree (Fry, 2002).

Fry (2002) stated that while it is more unlikely for Latinos to attend a four- year institution, those who do are six times more likely to complete a postsecondary degree than those who attend a two-year college. At times, attending school away from the family home could be difficult for a Latino student because they worry about the wellbeing of their families. Separation from home is a problem that all first- generation students face.

Separation involves the individual distancing him/herself from past associations with members of the family, high school, or work community. Transition entails entering college, interacting with new members of this environment, and learning how to participate as a member of the new community. Incorporation consists of becoming a full member

of the college community by adapting behavioral patterns appropriate to the college setting (Nuñez, 2005, p. 89).

Nuñez explained that first-generation students struggle with unique pressures to stay connected with the family, fulfill parents' wishes by doing well at college, and to continue education without adequate parental financial and emotional support. The students also described an awareness of the sacrifices their parents made for them to go to college and the necessity to give back to their parents.

Nuñez (2005) stated that lower retention rates of first-generation students correlated with the parents having less education and being less likely to provide their children with the knowledge of various resources useful to succeed in college. She suggested that parents' lack of involvement in their children's education may be because they have not gone to college and may not understand or support their children's desire to go to college. Byrd and MacDonald (2005) described reactions from research participants in their study on college readiness.

Knowledge of the college system and having personal support were all mentioned as important factors for success in college. All participants reported that they lacked sufficient guidance and support from family or high school counselors to help prepare them for understanding the college system (p.27).

High-risk students have a major impact on both institutions of higher education and society in general. Academically, it appears that all students do not

receive equal preparation in elementary and secondary schools (Jones and Watson, 1990). The lack of support and preparation may be a cause for the higher school drop out rates for Latinos compared to other groups. However, it is unclear as to how many Latinos do not finish high school. Poor retention rates and high drop out rates create an added pressure on high school administrators and teachers. Negative rates will have an adverse effect on the funding that the school receives from government coffers. [No Child Left Behind consequence – make mention of NCLB] President Bush's biggest education reform initiative is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. There are many problems with this Act. First, NCLB replaces decision making by those who know the students best with strict control by the Federal Government. Teachers, parents, school boards, and site-based councils no longer have freedom with the teaching practices they feel would work best for their students. Also, by NCLB solely focusing on test scores and constantly increasing the scores, it fails to address the needs of a child to become a strong contributing member of our society. Things like critical and creative thinking, problem solving, effective and persuasive communication, respect and appreciation for diversity are no longer learned skills and behaviors in America's school. No Child Left Behind goals focus on once-a-year, multiple choice tests, and actually work against such a learning empowering approach (McKim, 2007).

The best available data indicate that almost 30% of Hispanic students fail to complete high school.... Why has it been so difficult to accurately account for Hispanic students?... School administrators know that having a high dropout rate reflects poorly on them. Schools do not benefit from accurately reporting how many or why students do not continue their education. (31) ...Hispanic immigrant youth are seven times more likely to drop out than their native-born peers, and 30 % live in poverty-- more than twice as many as non- Hispanic white children (16-17)..... Too many Hispanic American families lack the knowledge to fulfill the high expectations they have for their children. And, tragically, too many Americans set low expectations for Hispanic American children (viii)..... Additionally, two- thirds of Hispanic and African American parents report that they do not have sufficient information about how to finance their children's college education. Meanwhile, the average tuition for public four-year universities is up 9.6 % from the 2001-2002 academic year (40)..... For Hispanic parents, these problems can be complicated by language and cultural difference and by unfamiliarity with the educational process (5). (WHIEEHA, 2003).

Preparation for college from high school is a difficult task in itself. In general, Latinos are unique in that they are overrepresented in special education and underrepresented in advanced placement (AP) courses compared to their

white counterparts. Saunders and Serna (2004) stated that less than 43% of Hispanic high school students were qualified to enroll in a four- year institution. Of the students in 2000 who took AP exams, only 9% were Latino (Fry, 2002). The White House Commission recommended U.S. high schools to encourage Hispanics to take AP exams, as they are a correlating factor of a challenging and high- quality educational experience (WHIEEHA, 2003). Other factors that contribute to a lack of college preparedness among Hispanics include the fact that many attended high-poverty schools where resources were scarce and teachers were under qualified. Most colleges and universities require students to take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT) as part of the admission application. These tests are designed to provide college admissions officers with a predictor of first-year academic achievement in college, and a common yardstick to use in comparing students from a wide range of educational backgrounds (<http://www.gearupchicago.org/college/SAT-ACT/SAT-ACT.html>, retrieved December 16, 2007). Placement testing is a central component of the college admission process. The problem with placement tests is that first-generation students generally score poorly. Byrd and MacDonald (2005) described the importance that college admission officers put on placement exams. They stated that colleges use standardized testing as a measurement to predict students' readiness for college; yet, the predictive value of standardized placement tests is questionable. Byrd and MacDonald (2005) said that there is

little or no relationship between placement test scores and students' performance in class. Standardized test-based admissions may overlook first-generation students' historical and cultural backgrounds that might include strengths as well as deficits related to readiness for college.

Other issues that first-generation college students face have to do with enrollment policies and deadlines. Many are unaware of such deadlines and all the paperwork that needs to be completed by the deadline. The authors mentioned that while some colleges have historically maintained open- enrollment policies that allowed first-generation students to enter the system, that policy is changing. Subsequent to being accepted into college, students go to the campus and are immediately lost; teachers in high school typically do not prepare students for what to expect in a college classroom. Byrd and Macdonald (2005) said that many students in regular classes, as well as in developmental education classes, failed to understand the unwritten norms of college culture. They also found that students lacked the basic social intelligence required for success in college; this knowledge included things such as attending class, being prepared, using course materials, and collaborating with classmates. These authors recommended explicit teaching of the practical skills needed for college.

After being away at college for some time, students experience new frustrations as they go home for vacations in the neighborhoods where they were raised. Hsiao (1992) explained that parents, siblings, and friends who have no

experience with college may be non- supportive or even attempt to obstruct their goals. Nuñez (2005) mentioned studies that found first- generation students faced conflict as they pursued college opportunities, as a result of forming an identity different from that of their family members. In order to help formulate a new identity, Clemons, McKelfresh & Banning (2005) included the residence hall assistant (RA) as a key player in developing the social and academic networks that ease the student's transition into college. These authors described why they feel that residence halls are an essential component to first- year student success. While the residence hall is a key component, some students described their residence hall room as a "hotel" room, just a place to sleep rather than a place to stay connected with roommates and friends or arrange personal items (Nuñez , 2005, p.102). Clemons, Mckelfresh & Banning (2005) stated that "if students feel at 'home' on campus, they are less likely to leave" (p. 73). The authors concluded that students developed a sense of belonging as a result of many and varied interactions with the campus environment. One important student/campus interaction for the student is the residential living experience. The authors found research that indicated how first- year students living on campus experienced higher levels of peer support and increased academic performance compared to those who did not stay in a residence hall their first year of college. The needs of today's student have changed, and many of the residence halls are not up-to-date to accommodate the millennial student (students who have entered college since

the year 2000). This is especially important for first-generation college students who may have a lack of support at home. According to the authors, it is important to have a strong Resident Assistant (RA). The RA plays a vital role in the development of students' needs. The RA is there to encourage the student to get involved and introduce them to student organizations and various campus resources. Students develop a sense of belonging and school pride through involvement in campus activities and having the added responsibility of group membership (Nuñez, 2005). Students have identified various ways to feel settled into the institution including knowing their way around campus, knowing people, and knowing whom to consult. Those who did not feel as connected to campus life attributed it to not being involved in as many activities.

Saunders and Serna (2004) studied first-generation Latino college students and identified three types of students, (1) those who created new networks and maintained old ones, (2) those who relied only on old networks, and (3) those who were all alone.

Type 1: The Creation of New Networks and Maintain the Old.

Although these students have worked to make new friends and networks, they maintain strong ties with each other.... [They] demonstrated the ability to deal with issues by seeking assistance from their new networks and reconfiguring old relationships. In addition, these students continue to acknowledge [their peers] for the development of valuable skills leading

into current opportunities.... Finally, some members of this group have actively participated in the creation of new networks with an emphasis on social justice issues....

Type 2: Relying on Old Networks. These students continue to rely heavily on their old networks and resources to deal with current problems and issues [...] to confront current issues.... These Latino first-generation students claim to have knowledge of available resources available to them in the college environment.... Students demonstrating this mode of behavior rely on constant contact via telephone and/or email communication with their old network.... Unlike students who demonstrate the first type of behavior, Type 2 students do not tend to view [their peers] as resources [...]. They do not seek the companionship, advice, and/or guidance of their [...] peers....

Type 3: All Alone. [These students are] unable to maintain old or create new networks [...]... [They demonstrate] no capacity or want to mobilize a new source of assistance (pp. 152 – 158).

Knowing how to access institutional knowledge and resources influences students' transitional outcomes. A seemingly simple question may be logical to most but for those who have no college background within their families, the question may represent an insurmountable hurdle. Nuñez (2005) stated that in addition to the campus's large scale, the size of the community, and their lack of

familiarity with the rigor of college work, students also described relatively distant relationships with professors and teaching assistants as among the most difficult aspects of adjusting to college.

While several students sought out their professors during office hours, they still struggled to make connections with them. One student Nuñez interviewed stated that

The teachers [in high school] know your name... they point out stuff that you need to do, kind of baby you. But in college they... don't know your name, they might see your face, but it means nothing to them unless you make yourself known (p. 96).

Another student commented that

professors here... come to class and they leave. They don't really care if you learn or anything. During office hours, there are so many people in there, you don't have the chance to ask your own questions. So I've established almost no kind of relationship with my teachers (Nuñez , 2005, p. 96).

With so many special needs required for the advancement of first-generation college students, TRiO programs, both pre-college and during college, are crucial. The services these programs offer include academic, social, professional and financial guidance. Also, "for many students, [these programs] becomes an extended family" (Becker, 1996, p. 3). Peer and staff counselors

could serve as a guide to navigate the large and impersonal scale of the university, while providing familiarity. Mentors are vital in the success of students because they help students make decisions about what classes to enroll in, how to choose a major, and how to handle the work in their classes. She also found in her observations of students' sessions with staff counselors from specific academic support programs detailed discussions of choosing courses and course loads that would be manageable and meet the requirements of the students' majors; this was not done with their assigned academic advisors. All students spoke about the importance of having someone that they could talk to about their academic decisions and challenges. Often, it was their support counselors that served this role because they were approachable, knowledgeable, and their constant presence was critical (Nuñez, 2005). "Good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Tutoring is also a large aspect of TRiO Programs. Tutors "provide students with guideposts to the instructional content of the lectures and the exams, an opportunity to review course content, and a place for students to learn the material at their own pace and ask questions" (Nuñez 2005, p. 106). TRiO Programs play an important role in the development of America. Without these programs students may not have the opportunity to attend an institution of higher education. Latinos are continuously overrepresented in low- skill and service sector jobs in the United States. According to the U.S. Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission, Hispanics accounted for 61% of employees in U.S. agricultural production in 2002. Only 2 % of Hispanics earned more than \$75,000 a year compared to 11% of non- Hispanic Whites (WHIEEHA, 2003).

Contributing factors for the jobs Latinos occupy included low high school graduation rates, college completion rates, and substandard schooling conditions (Zarate, 2007). President Lyndon B. Johnson stated in his “War on Poverty” speech in 1964 that there is a need for more higher education opportunities for lower and middle income families, program assistance for small and less developed colleges, additional and improved library resources at higher education institutions, and utilization of college and university resources to help deal with national problems like poverty and community development (<http://www.pellinstitute.org/Clearinghouse/shared/DYKHistoryofthe1965HEA03.doc>, retrieved November 14,2007). These programs were initially created to break down class and cultural barriers to higher education (Filkins & Doyle, 2002). President Johnson projected that if the annual earnings of the poor were raised that would raise the amount in the national output. Raising the annual income of the poor would also reduce the cost of the money provided in public assistance programs (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-91116920>, retrieved March 28, 2007).

Upward mobility of Hispanics into white-collar positions continues to lag behind the rest of the country despite lower employment rates. For

instance, in 1998, [...] only 37.5 % of Hispanics held white collar jobs.... While [...] 63.5 % of Hispanics hold blue-collar jobs. If the employment picture does not change, the economic consequences of an uneducated workforce will strain the economy of the United States. Hispanics are not maximizing their income potential or developing financial security. This leads to lower tax revenues, lower rates of consumer spending, reduced per capita savings and increased social cost. An uneducated workforce will also have substantial impact on important domestic programs such as Social Security (WHIEEHA, 2003, p. 3).

In 2006, Congressman Tom Cole (R, Oklahoma) stated that Congress has once again redirected funding from TRiO to new programs that have not proven their effectiveness. TRiO/SSS is rated at performing at a moderately effective rate; which means that the program has ambitious goals and is managed well. The program has shown to increase Bachelor Degree completion rates by eight to 15% (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/expectmore/summary/10000208.2005.html>, 2007). It is estimated that nearly two million TRiO participants have graduated from college since the inception of the first program in 1965 (Blake, 2004). Thomas (1998) described a study of the six year graduation rates of four diverse SSS Programs. This study found that the rates ranged from 32% to 63%, which is

useful data to provide insight into completion rates for first- generation, low-income college students.

Latinos received the lowest average amount of financial aid of any ethnic group. Financial concerns create anxiety for Latino students. They tend to experience greater levels of stress associated with financial aid concerns compared to White students (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). The increasing cost of tuition and declining share of grants for financial aid contribute to the decline in Latinos obtaining degrees. In 2002, approximately 11% of the Latinos in the US over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree. Those results present a large gap when comparing them with whites with 29% over the age of 25 having a bachelor's and 25% of other non- Hispanics (Santiago & Brown 2002). Eastern Illinois University statistics for bachelor degree attainment do not come close to meeting the national data. In 2002 91% of all bachelors awarded at Eastern were earned by White non- Hispanic students. Hispanics earned 1.5% of the bachelors degrees awarded, and other non- Hispanics earned 7.5% (<http://www.eiu.edu/~planning/institutional/degree.php>, retrieved November 21 2007).

For first- generation college students, walking onto a college campus is like visiting a foreign country. Students are then approached by college personnel talking in academic jargon and they do not have a translation manual. This is where staff members from Student Support Services can intervene. SSS advisors

provide intensive academic planning. This attention ensures that the student is taking the appropriate courses in order to obtain a degree. Additionally, advisors must make sure that the student stays on track by maintaining a good G.P.A. If the student falls below a C, they must meet with their advisor weekly to develop strategies in order to raise the grade. Such strategies include initiating conversation between the student and the faculty member, securing a tutor, or withdrawing from the course. TRiO/SSS programs also lead school visits for students looking into transferring to a four- year institution, or those who are applying to a graduate school. These visits assist the students to have a clear understanding of what to expect if they attend another institution. Workshops in academic and social skills, financial aid, and life coping skills are another integral part of a SSS program. These workshops increase the students' knowledge of resources and cultures, build better study skills and guide the students in professional development (Walsh, 2000).

Nationally, SSS participants' GPAs compared to non-participants were increased by a mean of .15 in the first year, resulting in a GPA of 2.29 on a 4.0 scale. Additionally, the number of semester credits earned their first year was increased by a mean of 1.25 (total of 20.91), 2.25 their first three years to 73.38 credits and retention was increased by seven percentage points. Contributing factors to these increases include participation through SSS workshops, cultural events, peer tutoring and instructional courses

(<http://www.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html>, retrieved January 22, 2007). Evaluations of TRiO/ SSS programs show that these programs significantly improve the academic preparation of Latino participants. Furthermore, a national evaluation showed that Latinos routinely gained more course credits than participants from different ethnic groups (Santiago & Brown, 2004). Student Support Services on Eastern's campus is funded to serve 175 students. A program statistics sheet from the fall 2006 to spring 2007 academic year showed that the average GPA for Hispanic/Latino students was a 2.90. The average GPA for all ethnicities served was 2.61, and for ethnic minorities the average GPA was 2.48. As a whole with EIU's SSS program, at the end of the Spring 2007 semester, 85% of all of the participants were in good standing, 25% received a 3.0 cumulative GPA or higher and another 60% received between a 2.0 to a 2.99 cumulative GPA. Among the 2006 graduates of Eastern's SSS program, 93% graduated within 6 years, and 28% enrolled in graduate and professional school. (TRiO Staff, 2007).

Summary

The review of literature regarding the Latino student perceptions of the TRiO/SSS Program at Eastern Illinois University outlines issues and concerns faced by TRiO Programs, first- generation college students and Latino students. It provides insight on a historical perspective of challenges those students and programs must overcome in order to succeed. The subsequent chapters will

contain the method of research conducted for this study, the researcher's findings, discussion about the findings and recommendations from the researcher.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is used when searching for a deeper understanding of a social process or human interaction, or to identify patterns, recurrent themes, or describe events over time. Qualitative methodology is based on direct observations of behavior as it occurs. The naturalistic approach was chosen for this present study since it is used to record the development of everyday events (Cherry, 2000). Specifically, a qualitative life history approach was used to identify themes emerging from the interviews (Karen, 1993).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to understand Latino student perceptions of the effectiveness of the TRIO program, Student Support Services at Eastern Illinois University, in order to improve the delivery of support services to a historically underserved student population. In 2003-2004, 49% of Latino college students were first-generation. Furthermore, 47 % of Latino students were from families with annual incomes of less than \$20,000, and 60 % came from families in the lowest socioeconomic status bracket. TRiO Programs were designed to support first-generation and low-income college students. Yet, Latinos are underrepresented in these programs (WHIEEHA, 2003). Three research questions guided the present study.

1. What are Latino student perceptions of the SSS Program at EIU?

2. In what ways does TRiO/SSS support Latino student retention at Eastern Illinois University?
3. In what ways do Latino students who participate in Student Support Services at EIU feel that their college experience would be different without the TRiO Program?

Site

The site for this study was Eastern Illinois University because of the researcher's familiarity with the campus and the TRiO/SSS Program available at Eastern. Eastern Illinois University is located in Charleston, Illinois, a small town in central Illinois with a population of approximately 23,000. The student population at Eastern in 2006 was comprised of 12,349 students, of which 10,592 were undergraduates. Minority students represented 1,401 (11.35%) of the total student population and a total of 284 (2.3%) self-identified as Latinos.

Researcher Self-Disclosure

The researcher is a self-identified Latino. She is of mixed race, White and Mexican, but identifies more with her Mexican heritage. If she were to place herself in one of the Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) Latino Identity Orientations she would select Latino-identified. The Latino-identified Orientation is for those who view the Latino population very broadly and very positively. Whites are looked at as a complex race that could either be an ally or a barrier. Latino-

identified individuals tend to be the ones involved in demonstrations against discrimination. The researcher is a graduate assistant advisor in the TRiO/SSS Program as well as a volunteer advisor for the colony of Sigma Lambda Gamma National Sorority, Inc. Sigma Lambda Gamma is a Latina-based sorority with a multi-cultural emphasis. Many of the students interviewed interact with the researcher either through TRiO, the sorority, both, or they sought her out as a mentor because they recognized she was also Latino.

Research Participants

Research participants for this study were four Latino students who were accepted into the TRiO/SSS Program at Eastern Illinois University. The year the study was carried out (2008), only seven Latino self-identified students were served by the TRiO/SSS program. All seven students were asked to participate in the study. Potential research participants received a cover letter introducing the study. Those who responded were provided a statement of informed consent in the beginning of the first interview.

Methodology

The present qualitative life history study (Karen, 1993) was conducted in two parts with current Latino students who were active in the TRiO/SSS Program at Eastern Illinois University. First, individual one-on-one interviews were audio

recorded in the researcher's office located in 9th Street Hall. This location was chosen because of the subjects' familiarity with the location, the rapport that has been formed by the researcher and the research participants in the facility, and the ease in the enclosed area to speak candidly. Semi-structured interviews were designed to discuss the students' personal stories, feelings and reactions to the Student Support Services program at Eastern. The interview protocol (Appendix A) included an opportunity for each participant to identify the depth of their Latino Identity Development (Ferdman and Gallegos, 2001). Interviews were transcribed and then member checked for accuracy by each research participant prior to qualitative coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of conducting the individual life history interviews was to provide the students' the opportunity to discuss anything they might not feel comfortable discussing amongst their peers. Also, emerging issues from the interviews provided topics for the follow-up focus group.

The focus group took place in a relaxed atmosphere in the computer lab of 9th Street Hall which is property of the TRiO/SSS Program. That location was chosen because of the guaranteed availability for use of the facility. Discussion was based on reoccurring themes, ideas, and issues that emerged during the individual one-on-one interviews.

Data Analysis

Qualitative naturalistic methodology is used to record activities in real time that occur and develop daily. One goal of qualitative methods is to develop grounded theory. "The purpose of the grounded theory is to systemically observe a phenomenon to identify trends and patterns that suggest a tentative theory about the patterns" (41). Data were analyzed using constant comparative analysis in which each new case is compared to previous cases until the data analysis yields no new information (Cherry, 2000).

Limitations

One limitation for this study was that the students may not feel comfortable expressing their feelings about their TRiO advisor because the researcher was an advisor to several of the subjects. Other limitations are that the study was being conducted at only one campus with one program. Results are specific to the campus and not generalizable to other TRiO programs or university campuses.

Summary

Chapter III outlines the qualitative design and research questions used to guide the present study. Four participants for the study were currently involved with the Student Support Services program at Eastern. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with each participant. The individual interviews were

transcribed and member-checked with the participants. A follow-up focus group was conducted to discuss similar themes identified through the individual interviews. Chapter IV presents the findings of the research while Chapter V contains the findings compared with published literature on first-generation college students and Latinos. Recommendations for student affairs practitioners and researchers conclude the final chapter.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

A brief background of the participants' life will be outlined. These histories will help gain a deeper understanding of the research participants as students and Latinos. Each participant chose a pseudonym that is used throughout Chapters IV and V.

Angel

Angel is a 19 year- old sophomore from Chicago, Illinois. He identified himself as Ecuadorian and Colombian. Angel's parents are still together and he is their only child. Angel was born in Chicago, Illinois but lived in Colombia for part of his childhood. He identified very strongly with the Latino culture. When the researcher asked him to choose one of Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) Latino Identity Orientations he chose Latino-identified. The Latino-identified Orientation is for those who view the Latino population very broadly and very positively. Whites are looked at as a complex race that could either be an ally or a barrier. Latino-identified individuals tend to be the ones involved in demonstrations against discrimination.

Ana

Ana is a 20 year- old sophomore from Kankakee, Illinois, who transferred to Eastern Illinois University from Kankakee Community College. Ana was born in Guanajuato, Mexico and moved to the United States when she was six years old. Ana has a twin brother and a younger sister and her parents are still married. Ana identified herself as Mexican.

She chose Latino- integrated as her choice of Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) Latino Identity Orientations. Latino-integrated individuals see themselves and other Latinos as one of many groups coexisting in the United States

Sally

Sally is a 20 year- old junior. She was born in Chicago, Illinois but raised in Puerto Rico until she was nine years old. Sally and her parents then moved to Kankakee, Illinois where she currently resides. Sally is the only child of her parents who are still married. Sally identified herself as Puerto Rican. She is very adamant about not saying she is American. Sally chose Subgroup Identified as her orientation from Ferdman and Gallegos. Members of Subgroup- identified tend to only associate themselves with people from their own country and other Latinos are not always looked at positively.

Erica

Erica is a 21 year- old junior from Chicago, Illinois and she still resides in Chicago. Erica has a younger brother. Her parents are “on-again, off-again” but they both remain very much part of her life. Erica is Puerto Rican and identifies strongly with her heritage. Like Ana, Erica chose Latino- integrated as the orientation that closest matched her views on Latinos.

FINDINGS

Chapter IV summarizes findings of the interviews conducted for this sample. All seven of the Latino TRiO participants were asked to participate in this study and four responded. The four participants were interviewed using qualitative methods regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the TRiO/SSS program at Eastern Illinois University. All of the students were current students at Eastern and in the TRiO program. All of the participants first had individual interviews that were audiotape recorded and then transcribed by the Principle Investigator. The transcriptions were examined to help find emerging themes from the participants, similar feelings or concerns shared by all of the participants, and topics that required further discussion for the focus group. All four participants agreed to be a part of a focus group. Participants' self-selected pseudonyms were used in the findings. Three research questions guided the present study.

2. In what ways does TRiO/SSS support Latino student retention at Eastern Illinois University?

3. In what ways do Latino students who participate in Student Support Services at EIU feel that their college experience would be different without the TRiO Program?

The participants have very unique backgrounds but similar experiences in their perceptions of the TRiO/SSS program. The responses are presented in two major themes as Personal Background and Academic Career. In the Personal Background the sub-themes included, How do the participants' identify with the Latino culture, and In what ways do the participants' families support them. In the Academic Career the sub-themes included Participants' uses for the TRiO/SSS program, Where the participants feel they would be without the TRiO program, What the participants feel are qualities of a good advisor, and Does the nationality of their TRiO advisor matter.

Personal Background

How do the participants identify with the Latino culture

All of the participants were given a chart created by Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) which outlines the six orientations of Latino Racial Identity. When asked to choose one, or a combination of several, all of the participants chose ones that were strongly identified with the Latino culture. Angel expressed

why he chose the orientation he did, "I would have to say pretty strong because I've been raised in inner-city life and I've been around mostly Hispanics. Minorities in general not only Hispanics, but mostly Hispanic." Erica said, "I'm proud of my Culture (Puerto Rican) but I think we (Latinos) all are important together." All of the participants felt that they identified more with the Latino culture, then the other Latinos on Eastern's campus as a whole. The participants expanded on their comments in the focus group. They agreed with each other, but with minor variations. Angel said it depends on where they were raised that makes a difference in how strongly Latinos identify with their culture. Ana said it depends on the parents.

Let's say for example you have a parent that's Hispanic and another one that's not, some Hispanic parents forget about their culture and rather raise their children as the other culture and not the Hispanic side, therefore their kids, that's raised, never know about, you know, when is the flag day in Mexico, or you know, what types of foods are eaten in certain parts of the state, or things like that, so... I guess, it depends on the parents.

Erica expanded on Angels comment and stated, "It doesn't only depend on where you were raised it depends on how proud you are of it and if you're willing to show it, and not avoid what you really are."

A sense of frustration filled the room of the focus group when the participants were asked how they felt the other Latinos on campus identified with the Latino culture. Sally said, "I think they (Latinos at Eastern) only say they're Hispanic to get into a school." The other participants strongly agreed with Sally's comment.

In what ways do the participants' families support them

Family is a very important part of the Latino culture. To all of the participants, family is what motivates them to do well. Angel described a conversation he had with his parents,

When I was little my parents always told me that the most things they want me, the thing

the want most for my life is to go to college, get an education, they think a lot of, in general, Hispanic/ Latino families tend to do that. Cause they always say "oh we came to this country to provide you a better future."

He went on to further explain what else motivates him.

I think I'm pressured by myself, just thinking I don't want waste my parents money and make school a joke, also just because I am the first one out of my, my family, my side, not all the family, but like my mom and my dad's side, going to college, so you don't want to disappoint them, and

me, myself, I'm very ambitious, I don't want to be working in factories when I'm old, I like money.

Ana described how her parents support her getting her education.

Even when we have financial aid, like, financial problems, they're like you know, if you can't go back to Eastern you can always come home and go to a smaller school, but you know we want you to finish school, because we didn't have the chance and that was the purpose of us, for you to have a better life. So I think that they have always been supportive. They've never put me down, even when I tell them you know I don't think I'm doing too good, they've always, they're like.. no, they don't get mad, they're like, you know, don't get frustrated, just work on it, and you'll be better at it.

Sally explained why it is important to her parents for her to get an education.

I think that no matter what, like where you go, as long as you're making the effort to actually go somewhere and get an education and become a professional, your parents are going to be supportive no matter what. Especially when they didn't get the chance to do it, cause I know, like my mom, she always tells me that she feels that, everything I'm doing, she's doing it too, just cause she didn't get a chance to do it.

Erica described why she said her parents give her encouragement. "Cause they know it's hard and they know sometimes I just need to hear it, cause at times I

just want to go crazy.” She went on to describe how her little brother motivates her to stay in school and to do well.

Well my brother is 13 and I guess it’s more like I want him to follow the right steps. And if he was to look up to my cousin, he wouldn’t be where he is at today, so that just pushes me harder to do better, so he could do even better than what I’ll do.

Ana has two siblings who are of college age but are not in college. She said that the fact that they are not in college pushes her even more to get an education.

I think its just my sister, she got pregnant, and therefore she couldn’t go to school and I think that umm... that pushed me even more to get an education and then my brother he dropped out of high school, didn’t want to go no more, so... he’s in the work force and he’s not doing as well as, like if he would have stayed in college, so I think that’s like once again, like I say, it was family that pushes you to do better. That’s what I think.

Ana went on to describe he parent’s current employment situation.

I think its just like, seeing your parents, like, when they didn’t get their education, just seeing them like you know work at a factory or work long 12 hour days, since my mom, my mom does it all the time. I think that pushes you more, encourages you even more, like to better yourself, and like, once you better yourself, you can know that you can help your,

umm.. Help your family, whether it be financially, or any other type of situation. I think it's all the family that pushes you to be a better person.

Academic Career

Participants' uses for the TRiO/SSS program

Eastern Illinois University is funded for one out of the eight TRiO programs, which is Student Support Services. TRiO/SSS provides students with laptop rental, tutoring, career counseling, study skill workshops, cultural enrichment activities and graduate school visits. Ana was in TRiO Upward Bound at Kankakee Community College and she is now a part of Student Support Services at Eastern Illinois University. She explained what she uses the TRiO program for, "I use uhh... lets see, computer labs, when they have like programs to help out with financial aid or how to study for a test, or umm... like, for other events." Angel's biggest resource he uses the TRiO/SSS program for is his advisor.

I use it more for guidance and reassurance that I am actually doing something good in college. Sometimes you feel lost and you need someone to re-put you into place. And the [TRiO] advisors are more easier to contact than your regular advisor [because] you have to make appointments, and then I get, I get fatigued cause I have to work around their schedule.

Angel went on to describe other reasons he uses TRiO, "I got a scholarship my first semester freshman year, that helped me out a lot. [He also uses TRiO to help find] internships [and] random stuff that college students need."

Similar to Angel, Erica's advisor and mentor that the program provided her with are her greatest resources.

I come to the computer lab and I do my homework there, because when I do it by myself I get distracted. Umm.. I do go to some of the activities that are given and I go to see my advisor, she gives me encouragement, and I have a mentor, and he's very, into his work too. He loves... everything, he sees me he stops me to ask me how's everything going, what can I do to help you? I don't want to say just depend on people for advice, but when I am struggling, I do like the encouragement, and I know TRiO would give me that. And then sometimes I do need my tutoring for here and there and I know TRiO has people who can tutor me, like, last year I used to go to one of the tutors for Spanish.

Erica takes advantage of the workshops that TRiO offers. "I like workshops, I love workshops, because then it just gives you more, like, what's going on, what could you do to better yourself. And then I do like social events also, get to know who is around you. "

Similar to Ana, Sally was also a previous TRiO student. She was in Upward Bound while in high school at Kankakee. Her response is like that of the rest. She uses the TRiO program

Basically just, like all the resources, the scholarships and the computer lab and meeting with my advisor. Maybe kind of like a support group too, and to get tickets to go to current events.

Where the participants feel they would be without the TRiO program

When the researcher asked the participants where they felt they would be without the TRiO program, Ana said,

Lost. [Because] like even when I started, I really didn't know nothing about the whole school, or what's going on, or financial aid, or scholarships, and then once you go to your trio counselor and they tell you what's going on in school, what type of financial aid, and all the programs that Eastern can offer you.

Angel said, "I don't think lost, but not as well guided, my freshman year. I would not have known about LASO, I wouldn't have known about all of the Hispanics on campus, that's for sure, well, the ones that I know." Erica added, "Not organized, I love my planner."

What the participants feel are qualities of a good advisor

When the researcher asked the participants at the focus group what they felt were qualities in a good advisor, they were bouncing adjectives off of each other. The participants' body language was relaxed and playful. They were being humorous because, "Hey, we're all very comfortable with each other." Sally said, "a good listener, funny and helpful." She also added that a good advisor is "somebody who's always there, like, somebody that you can count on. Erica said, "open- minded." Angel added that a good advisor must be "down to Earth" and "can take jokes." Angel continued his thought by adding easy on the eyes, single and hasn't had a partner in a while as qualities he looks for in a good advisor. The entire room erupted in laughter. Ana said, "I think that's something, something that like important, is like, an advisor that can help you in school, but also help you personally, I think you need those."

Does the nationality of their TRiO advisor matter

The researcher was curious if it was enough to have a minority as a TRiO advisor, or if the nationality of the advisor made a difference in the type of advisement for the students. All of the participants gave reasons on why it was important for them to have an advisor who is from the Latino culture. Sally said,

I think that I can, since [my advisor is] Hispanic, I can connect better with [her], then I can with somebody else. [Because] like my freshman year I

had umm.. an African American, and even though we're all still

minorities, I think there are some issues that we can relate to.

Erica agreed by stating,

Well I like it because, for one, one main reason, [my advisor] came to LASO before, [she] knows what LASO is, and when I try to invite other people, since they weren't Latino, they thought they couldn't come, or Hispanic, whatever. So, since [my advisor] have been there, [she] knows what's going on and I could talk to [her] about, anything about it. Like what I'm doing crazy and what I'm doing good. [She's] my motivation through tough times.

Angel said, "its easy to talk to, to talk to someone that, especially freshman year, when you think you're the only Hispanic on campus, its always good to have motivation." Ana was in agreement with the rest of the group when she said, "you can be able to relate more, and I guess, just have a better... to be able to relate more."

Summary

Chapter VI outlined the findings of the research according to the views, perceptions and opinions of the participants. Many related themes emerged from the participants' experiences with the TRiO program. Each participant showed a sense of pride when speaking about their families because they were doing something that would inevitability help their families. They all recognized that

their parents immigrated to America or put in long hours at work to give their children the life the parents never had and wanted for their offspring. The participants showed in their answers that their families do not know of resources to help their child pursue a college education, but they do not lack in support and encouragement. All of the participants expressed in their dialogue, that TRiO is a vital resource in their college career to learn about all of the resources on campus, take advantage of the resources that TRiO specifically provides for them, and to use their TRiO advisor for support and guidance when their parents may not understand.

Three of the four whose TRiO advisor is from the Latino culture, showed an appreciation because there was a better sense of understanding. However, they all showed a genuine appreciation for the TRiO advisor, no matter what race they were, when it came time to talk about their academic advisor. All four participants stated how their academic advisor is of no help, shows no concern for their feelings and does not do an adequate job of advising. When asked about their academic advisors, an all-around uproar broke out. Ana said,

He's not like, what class do you feel like, what class do you want to take?

Like, do you still want to be in your major that you're in right now? Or

what do you want help in? Do you need anything? He's just like, ok, your

class is this, this and that, bye!

The other students said very similar statements.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to understand Latino student perceptions of the effectiveness of the TRIO program, Student Support Services at Eastern Illinois University, in order to improve the delivery of support services to a historically underserved student population. The focus of this study was to understand the students' needs, and how the TRiO/SSS program at Eastern Illinois University met those needs.

Research Question #1: What are Latino student perceptions of the SSS Program at EIU?

The participants in this study expressed a sincere appreciation for the TRiO program without directly saying it. Thus, the students have a positive perception of the program and understand it works when they use it, and it is constantly available for their utilization. Erica said,

I've been in TRiO for a semester and a half, and I have gotten the encouragement when I am down and they have been meeting all of the expectations that I have. [...] I just need to start taking more advantage of it more myself. But they're giving me everything I ask for.

Sally said that the “scholarships and being able to come to the lab and print out papers” has been helpful to her and thus meeting her expectations. Ana uses the program for academic and social reasons. She stated, “well, I had signed up for financial aid workshops, uhh... what else, how to study for a test and other like meet-and-greet other people in the TRiO program.” Angel’s expectations have been met. He explained, “I got a scholarship my first semester freshman year, that helped me out a lot. Umm... internships. I don’t know, random stuff that college students need.”

The students interviewed were highly involved on campus. They were all part of leadership organizations and many held roles on executive boards. TRiO is an important resource on campus that provides student participants with many coping tools. However, because all of the students were so involved, they all commented that they did not use the program as much as they could have done. The great thing about Student Support Services is that once students are accepted into the program, they are included for the remainder of their college career. Thus, if students came less often to the office, counselors could still pick up where they left off with that student and provide referrals to resources they needed. Through the interviews, it seemed that while the students appreciated the scholarships, workshops and tutors, they really relied on their TRiO Advisor for personal guidance and instruction in coping skills not otherwise available to first generation college students. These students came from tough, lower to middle

class backgrounds. They had various barriers in their life that affected their progress at school. They relied a lot on their advisor for personal counseling and as someone to vent to who would understand the underlying issues impacting their immediate issues. Their advisor understood the cultural and economic roots of their issues and subsequently could assist students to manage their challenges so they were able to focus on their academic progress.

Research Question #2: In what ways does TRiO/SSS support Latino student retention at Eastern Illinois University?

Only part of a students' collegiate experience is academic. Students, primarily first- generation college students, need personal, emotional and social support. Focusing on academic issues alone means that 50 % of what students need to adjust successfully to the demands of college, such as career and financial aid counseling, and new student orientation, is going to be entirely lost. Providing personal counseling as well as academic advice creates a more holistic student (Morgan, 2002). Without all of those factors a student may not feel connected to the school and may decide to transfer to somewhere else where they will get needed support and guidance.

TRiO aids in the retention of first-generation low income students by showing them care and concern for their productivity and success. TRiO gives

these students the resources they need in order to be successful while in college and after graduation. These resources include: lap top rental, financial aid counseling, career counseling, academic advisement, workshops and tutors. Yet, some of the most important resources are the ones that are not tangible such as their advisors compassionate heart, open ears and arms, sympathetic eyes, and endless time. Students can not deal with the “white heat” of cognitive learning until they can overcome the “red heart” of daily life challenges within their families, their neighborhoods, and their campus environment. Many faculty members seem to provide attention to students only above the neck. TRiO counselors provide holistic care to the entire student for personal, cognitive, and social development consistent with the founding principles of the student affairs profession (SPPV, 1937).

Erica explained how important it is for an advisor to focus on other stuff besides academics.

I mean we did say this, but we do need somebody we can laugh with, someone that is there to talk to, like she said, academically, socially, but then at the same time we need a joke here and there. And somebody who's actually going to like, laugh with us and not look at us like why you laughing? Hello? Like, we had our awkward moments of silence. You know, just having fun, that's it, someone we can joke with.

Angel shared a story of why he chose Eastern.

The one person that called me [out of the other schools he was accepted to], to congratulate me that I got accepted was [name of director of minority affairs]. And she invited me to come down [...] to the debut program that was only one day. She invited me to an over night one, and she was like “don’t worry,” [because] I didn’t have no way to come to Eastern, my parents worked, so she actually picked me up from, not from my house, but somewhere close.

Getting Latino students to campus is an easier task than retaining them once they get there. Compared to all other racial and ethnic groups, Latinos are the least likely to persist in college (Hernandez, 2000). Latino students need to feel like they are going to get that family support on campus similar to that of family units back at home. It is important that Latino students feel they are connected to the campus. For students who identify strongly with the Latino culture they have to get connected with other on-campus Latinos. All of the students confirmed this belief at the focus group.

Angel stated, “I would not have known about LASO, I wouldn’t have known about all of the Hispanics on campus, that’s for sure. It’s easy to talk to, to talk to someone that, especially freshman year, when you think you’re the only Hispanic on campus, its always good to have motivation.” Sally expressed her need for a Latino advisor, “since [my advisor is] Hispanic, I can connect better with [her], then I can with somebody else. [Because] like my freshman year I had

umm.. an African American, and even though we're all still minorities, I think there are some issues that we can relate to." Ana and Erica nodded their heads in agreement when Angel and Sally spoke. These students showed that while Latinos vary in backgrounds and histories that, at times, could divide the diverse group, on a small campus that has few Latinos, it is more important to unite and advocate than to divide in rivalry.

Research Questions #3: In what ways do Latino students who participate in Student Support Services at EIU feel that their college experience would be different without the TRiO Program?

For first- generation college students, walking onto a college campus is like visiting a foreign country. Students are then approached with academic jargon and they do not have a translation manual (Walsh, 2000). An indirect result of college is to increase social class status and fit in with the predominant social class on the campus. Latinos and first- generation college students may not come from the same social class of that as their peers. First-generation college students from a low socio-economic class background must understand that their new surroundings will require much more from them than just getting good scores (Oldfield, 2007). Student Support Services attempts to break down the economic and class barriers that separate first- generation college students from the majority

on campus. TRiO works to reduce social and economic barriers by introducing participants to a new set of social norms through conversations, workshops, and cultural activities. The object of TRiO is not to assimilate the student into a new culture, but to embrace their current cultures and backgrounds as the same time they become bi-culturally skilled with other cultural norms.

All of the students expressed during the focus group that they would feel lost, not as well guided or organized without the TRiO program. Making productive decisions and choices about college requires some basic knowledge about the experience, resources, cost and advantages (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002). Many non-college educated parents want a better life for their children, but they are not aware of the resources to guide their children through the process of matriculating and graduating from college (Saunders & Serna, 2004). While the parents of the Latino participants may lack in finances or knowledge of the education system, they do not lack in love. Angel stated that his parents told him they came to America to provide a better future for him. Ana agreed with Angel and said that her parents told her, "we want you to finish school, because we didn't have the chance and that was the purpose of us, for you to have a better life." Ana's parents didn't get an education and she now watches her mom support the family by working in a factory for 12 hour shifts because her father cannot work due to a disability. Angel recognizes that by doing well in college he will be able to be in a higher social class than his parents. He said "I don't want to

be working in factories when I'm old, I like money." Money is something his family does not have a lot of and he doesn't want to waste the little money his family does have and works so hard for. He commented about an observation with his friends "[My friend] always uses her parent's credit card without thinking about how much she is spending. Whenever she gets a bill she just charges it and says 'Oh, my parents will pay for it.'" The other students said they all have seen similar instances with their friends and peers.

Students who participate and utilize the program the way it is set up for them become aware of campus resources, offices and functions. The participants praised the quality and the content of the workshops that TRiO provides for its students. Erica said that she loves the workshops that TRiO provides. By attending these workshops she learns what she can do to better herself. TRiO participants also meet other students who understand what its like to be the first in their family to go to college, so these students use each other as peer support. TRiO becomes a safe haven to ask questions, get support and receive benefits that many of their peers already had prior to entering college. Without TRiO programs, these students may not have graduated from high school or gone to college. It is crucial that TRiO programs continue to receive funding and increases in funding to be able to provide more services to more students.

Recommendations for students participating in the TRiO/SSS Program, TRiO staff and future researchers conclude the final chapter. These have been developed by the researcher from her study of TRiO Programs.

Recommendations for TRiO Students

1. Utilize your TRiO Advisor for everything they have to offer. If they do not know the answer to your question, they will point you in the direction to someone who does.
2. Take advantage of the workshops that TRiO sets up for their students. These workshops are geared towards issues that many students face. They will benefit your academic career.
3. Speak up about things you would like to see to be added to the TRiO program. We want to make sure you are as successful as you can be. We can find a way to incorporate most ideas that students suggest to us.

Recommendations for TRiO/SSS program and staff

1. Hire staff that reflects the student body. While it is important to have competent, hard-working individuals on staff, it is just as important to have a staff member that students from various races and nationalities could relate to personally.

2. Work to obtain funding to hire more staff. The more staff the TRiO office has, the more students it can serve and the quality of the service may improve as well.
3. Have more diverse programming that caters to different nationalities. It is important to show TRiO students that staff cares about them, and part of doing that is showing an interest in each student's unique culture.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

1. Future research should include an alumni follow-up of the TRiO program. Sometimes a student may not understand the total number of benefits from TRiO until they begin a career or a graduate program.
2. Future research should interview a more diverse range of TRiO participants and have a comparative analysis among Latinos, African Americans and Caucasian participants of their specific satisfaction with programming elements and staff assistance.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present qualitative study was to understand Latino student perceptions of the effectiveness of the TRiO program, Student Support Services at Eastern Illinois University, in order to improve the delivery of support services to a historically underserved student population. The focus of this

study was to understand the students' needs, and how the TRiO/SSS program at Eastern Illinois University met those needs. This study shows that student needs are being met and in fact, exceeding their expectations. It shows that sometimes all students need is an ear to listen to them or a hand to pick them up. Based on the participants interviewed for this study, students go to their TRiO advisor for that support more than any other location on campus. What is of little importance to their more privileged counterparts, means everything to a TRiO student.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval

February 14, 2008

Kristin Flores
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled "Latino Student Perceptions of TRIO/SSS Program Effectiveness at Eastern Illinois University" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has Approved this research protocol following an Expedited Review procedure. IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 08-011. You may proceed with this study from 2/14/2008 to 2/13/2009. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 12/31/2008 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiurb@www.eiu.edu

Upon completion of your research project, please submit Form G, Completion of Research Activities, to the IRB, c/o the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

John Best, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 581-6412
Email: jbbest@eiu.edu

APPENDIX B

Minority Affairs Approval

Minority Affairs Research Request Form Gateway/TRiO/Peer Helper Program

Contact Information

Name Kristin Flores
 Street Address 21e prairie Ave
 City/State/Zip Code Mattoon, IL 61938
 Graduate Major College Student Affairs
 Home Phone (cell) 847-894-0238
 Work Phone 217-581-7950
 E-Mail Address KKFlores@eiu.edu

Research Information

Research Topic Is SSS effective for Latino students at EIU
 Student Population for Research EIU, TRiO/SSS, Latino Students


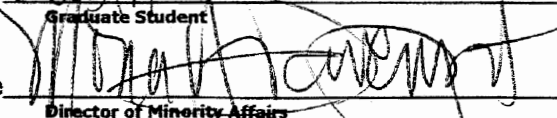
Checklist: Please attach a copy of the following

- IRB from Eastern Illinois University
- Research Questions
- Release of Information for students interviewed

How will students be contacted?

The students will be contacted personally via phone or face-to-face contact as well as a mailed document

After research thesis has been completed, the Office of Minority Affairs should receive a copy of Results and Analysis:

Signature  Date 12-17-07
Graduate Student
 Signature  Date: 12-27-07
Director of Minority Affairs

Please return with supporting documents to the following:

Mona Y. Davenport
 Office of Minority Affairs
 1122 Blair Hall
 Charleston, IL 61920
 217-581-6690

APPENDIX C

Consent to Participate in Research

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Latino Student Perceptions of TRiO/SSS Program Effectiveness at Eastern Illinois University

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study conducted by Kristin Flores, college student affairs graduate students from the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a participant in the TRiO/SSS Program at Eastern Illinois and you have identified yourself as Latino/Hispanic.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the proposed study is to understand the perceptions of Latino students and their impressions of the effectiveness of the Student Support Services TRiO program for Latino Students.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. The interviews will last approximately one hour depending on the depth of the answers. Following the one-on-one interview, you will be asked to member-check the transcribed interview for accuracy, and participate in a focus group with the other volunteers. The focus group will last approximately one hour and a half. Food will be provided. The one-on-one interview as well as the focus group will be audio recorded.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The researcher will ask you about your experiences with the TRiO/SSS program at EIU. None of the questions are foreseeable to cause any personal discomfort. If at anytime you wish to terminate your participation in this research, you may do so without any question.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There is no direct benefit from this research to the interviewee except to be more aware of one's personal educational experiences. However, this study may change the way TRiO/SSS serves the future Latino student population at Eastern Illinois University.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms in place of names. Your name will not be used for any reason and will not be released to any other party for any reason. The researcher will have sole access to the audiotapes used to record the interview sessions, and they will be kept under lock and key. These audiotapes will be used for educational purposes to complete this study. One year after concluding the study, the audiotapes will be destroyed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Kristin Flores, Principal Investigator, 847-894-0238, kkflores@eiu.edu, 3018 Ninth Street Hall, EIU; Charles G. Eberly, Ph.D., 217-581-7235, cgeberly@eiu.edu, 2107 Buzzard Hall, EIU.

APPENDIX D

Rights of the Research Subjects

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

Participation Mailer

Your Participation is Needed!!!

You have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kristin Flores, a Masters student in the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University.

To participate in the study or if you have any questions please contact Kristin at 581-7950 or kkflores@eiu.edu

APPENDIX F

Individual Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

1. Background: age, gender, year in school, ethnic identification
2. How do you identify yourself?
3. How strongly do you identify with the Latino culture?
4. Why did you decided to go to college?
5. Why did you choose Eastern Illinois University?
6. How did you learn about TRiO/SSS?
7. What were your expectations for the TRiO/SSS Program?
8. Are your expectations being met by the TRiO/SSS Program?
9. How has TRiO/SSS supported you thus far in your college career?
10. What are your goals after college?
11. How long have you been involved in TRiO programs?
12. How often do you meet with your TRiO/SSS advisor?
13. What do you use the TRiO/SSS program for?
14. Do you participate in TRiO events and activities?
15. How does TRiO/SSS support your cultural heritage?
16. How does your family pressure you (if at all) to get a degree?
17. What, if anything, would you change about TRiO/SSS to better serve and support your academic endeavors?

APPENDIX G

Focus Group Protocol

1. Do you feel that your fellow Latino peers identify as much, about the same or less than you, with the Latino culture? Why or why not?
2. Where do you think you would be without the TRiO Program?
3. Would your families be as supportive or accepting of your college education if you were a lot further from home?
4. How often do your parents come down to visit you?
5. How often do you go home to be with your families?
6. For those of you with sisters or brothers:
 - a. Are they of college age?
 - b. Are they in college?
 - c. What role did they play in your developmental process?
 - d. What role do you play in their developmental process?
7. Do you encourage your friends to sign-up to be in TRiO?
8. Are your parents aware that you are in a TRiO program?
 - a. Have they had any thoughts on the program or your progress?
9. How does the nationality of your advisor play a role in your participation?
10. What are your plans for after graduation?
11. What do you feel are qualities of a good advisor?
12. How does your TRiO Advisor compare with your Academic Advisor?
13. Do you interact with the other TRiO Advisors?

APPENDIX H

TRiO Program Policies, Procedures, and Agreement Forms

TRIO Program
Student Agreement Contract

I accept the offer to participate in the TRIO Program. I understand the benefits of being selected into this program include: 1) Individual tutoring and counseling 2) Study skills enhancement. 3.) Cultural opportunities 4) Career Counseling 5) Leadership development training 6) Mentoring 7) Scholarship opportunities. I understand that being selected for the TRIO Program is privilege and that I am expected to satisfy the following program criteria:

- Attend a **minimum of 2** educational/cultural/workshop activities per semester.
- Meet **twice monthly** with my TRIO advisor and keep all appointments for coordinated services according to my Individual Student Plan (ISP).
- Contact my TRIO advisor if I am in need of tutorial services.
- Keep my TRIO advisor informed of my academic progress and meet with advisor before withdrawing from a course.
- Schedule weekly appointments with my TRIO advisor if I am receiving a **D or F at mid-term or if my grade point average falls below a 2.1** to develop a plan of action.
- Check the TRIO web site at www.eiu.edu at least once per week.
- Cooperate with data collection and surveys related to the TRIO Program for the purpose of meeting federal regulations.
- I understand that students who exceed the minimum requirements of the TRIO Program will be given priority ranking in determining **scholarship recipients, attendance at leadership conferences and cultural events.**
- I understand that if I do not actively participate in the TRIO Program that I will be placed on the inactive list and my slot will be filled. After being placed on the inactive list, students may be reapply to the program.

I have read and understand the requirements for participation in the TRIO Program and I agree to abide by the regulations of this program.

Participant's Signature & Date

Advisor's Signature & Date

TRiO/STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
Eastern Illinois University

RELEASE OF INFORMATION AUTHORIZATION

I, _____, hereby authorize the TRiO/Student Support Services (SSS) program permission to obtain information, which is relevant to my academic success, from personnel at Eastern Illinois University including departmental faculty, administration, and staff in the following departments: Academic Assessment and Testing, Registration, Admissions, Records, Academic Advising, Reading Center, Writing Center, Career Services, Counseling Center, Disability Services, Financial Aid, Health Services and Judicial Affairs. Information released will be that which is pertinent to academic performance, including factors affecting said performance, for the purpose of retention, graduation and tracking as required by the U.S. Department of Education

I understand that all information is confidential. This release will be valid during my tenure as an enrolled student at Eastern Illinois University.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRiO/ Student Support Services Program
Eastern Illinois University

AUTHORIZATION TO EXCHANGE OR REQUEST INFORMATION

Student information is confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232g. Therefore, your authorization is necessary to permit (a) the release of information concerning your academic progress to your parent(s), guardian(s), or designee and (b) to seek information about your academic progress from teachers and/or other university officials.

The Authorization to Exchange/Request Information is for the above stated purpose.

I, _____ hereby authorize the TRiO/SSS Program at Eastern Illinois University to contact either or both of my parent(s), guardian(s), or designee and/or teachers to exchange/request academic information including, but not limited to, grades, test scores, and progress reports.

I understand that this authorization is being used to allow the TRiO/SSS Program staff and parent(s), guardian(s), designee and/or teachers to communicate and work together on your behalf.

I understand that I have a right to be told what information was exchanged.

I understand this authorization will be valid until I am formally exited from the TRiO/SSS Program

I affirm that I am eighteen (18) years of age or older.

Signature of Student

Date

Indicate Name(s) of Parent(s), Guardian(s) or Designee

Date

Signature of TRiO Staff

Date