



TRIO Programs and Beyond: Integrating Student-Centric Programs and Strategies

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Abstract and Objectives

The Federal TRIO Programs are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) programs provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements, and motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. Using a holistic approach to intrusive advising, SSS programs take participants from students to scholars to professionals, offering first-generation, income-eligible, and disabled students individualized pathways to success.

This presentation explains the objectives of SSS programs, offering best practices that demonstrate how the program increases its cohorts' retention, academic standing, and graduation rates. Collaboration with student affairs and academic affairs become key. It then gives higher education institutions without TRIO programs strategies to include and/or strengthen proactive intervention for students who need it most--first-generation college students and underrepresented students of color or of lower socioeconomic status.






What is TRIO?

The Federal TRIO Programs are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Info: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>



TRIO Programs

- Educational Opportunity Centers
 - Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement
 - Student Support Services
 - Talent Search
 - Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs Staff
 - Upward Bound
 - Upward Bound Math-Science
 - Veterans Upward Bound
- 

Student Support Services (SSS)

provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements, and to motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education

01.

1,149

Total currently-funded programs in the US at \$363M+

02.

17

Programs funded in New Jersey, serving 3,015 students (0.87% of the 346,375 undergraduate students in the state)

15.24%

Percentage of Bloomfield College students served by TRIO SSS in AY21-22

03.

FGLI or Disabled

Eligibility requirements for participants

04.

Services @ Bloomfield

- Academic coaching*
- Personal coaching
- In-house and online tutorial services
- Career counseling
- Financial aid assistance and advocacy with Student Financial Services*
- Financial literacy education*
- Student computer lab
- Assistance in exploration of course offerings*
- Financial aid advising & award letter review
- Graduate school & professional school planning*
- Assistance in completing federal and state financial aid applications*
- Cultural and social events
- Recommendation letters
- Financial assistance through the SSS Grant
- Textbook & Calculator Loans
- Monitoring of academic progress

*legislative requirements



Assessment

Tracking from 2006-2018 yielded these numbers:

- Year-to-Year Retention: **90.9%**
- Good Academic Standing: **95.67%**
- Graduation Rate (6 years): **57%***

*mean from 2010-2018



The image features a decorative terrazzo pattern in the top-left and bottom-left corners. This pattern consists of irregular, multi-colored shapes in shades of light blue, teal, dark blue, and orange, set against a light grey background. The main body of the image is white, containing the text.

So how did we do it?

But, more importantly, how can you do it too?



Best Practices

The following slides are from 10+ years experience as a TRIO professional and from Muraskin (1997) "Best Practices' in Student Support Services: A Study of Five Exemplary Sites. Follow up Study of Student Support Services Programs."



Best Practices and How to Incorporate Them

If you are thinking of creating a program (a Student Success Center, etc)

Campus Visibility


The program needs an important role on campus—if staff can advocate for students (and have it work) and know what's coming down the pipeline, students will come.

Have staff be included on committees (*ex-officio* on Standards, perhaps?).
Utilize Academic Affairs.

Staff Make It Work

Dedicated staff and directors with strong institutional attachments and years of service have knowledge of legs/regs and the college culture.
Look to hiring from within.

Also think of employing students as FWS. It aids in retention. Keep them close.





Best Practices and How to Incorporate Them

If you are thinking of creating a program (a Student Success Center, etc)


Academic Support In-House, Too

A best practice across programs is an emphasis on academic support for developmental and popular freshman courses—keep them in, keep them moving up the ladder.

Offer additional services such as peer tutors. In my program, I served as the English tutor and that was a real game changer in regards to engagement.

Include in Learning Communities and Summer Bridge

Studies show learning communities work. And when the program is involved (either through teaching a class or running a summer bridge program), students have a sense of belonging.





Best Practices and How to Incorporate Them

If you are thinking of creating a program (a Student Success Center, etc)

Sense of Belonging


Students are retained when they have feeling of engagement and group cohesiveness. Many FG or BIPOC students report decreased feelings of academic sense of belonging.

Cultural events are key and are great incentives. We had our own events (team-building escape rooms) and raffled off tickets to events from Student Affairs (Broadway shows). Our computer lab and office became a safe haven for at-risk students.

Use Student Referrals

Students bring other students. Encourage participants to bring classmates.

Also target recruitment. Use Orientation and First Year Seminar sections to your advantage.



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Rise NY



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bc_triouss Fantastic evening at @risenyofficial with our students. Great talks about NYC's history.

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bc_triouss We are ready for "A Soldier's Play"!

March 6, 2020

Best Practices and How to Incorporate Them

If you are thinking of creating a program (a Student Success Center, etc)

Use Interns to Address Additional Student Concerns

Mental health and access to it is a huge concern right now. Graduate interns are excited to learn and work with the population. Let them.

During my time at Bloomfield College, we were working on having an MSW intern work exclusively with our participants. It was a light lift; I collaborated with our Counseling Services to be Site Supervisor.

Recognition is a HUGE (free) motivator

Students love recognition for the big and the small.

- Certificates for a GPA over 3.0 were a hit
- Kudos emails for midterm grades of A or A-
- Social media posts when students aced an exam or something similar

72% of NASPA respondents said overall trajectory of campus mental health (students, faculty, staff) worsened during past year

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bc_trioss So proud of our Jep, who is an assistant coach for the West Orange HS Football team!

wpunj_eof He is amazing! We are proud too!

September 23, 2022

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bc_trioss ECN class...A grade! #triosmarts

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bc_trioss "I feel focused!" Our lab assistant, Kaylah, rocked a test with a 94%!

January 31, 2022



Best Practices and How to Incorporate Them

If you are cross-training staff in proactive advising/coaching or creating a program

Incentivize Participation

Students do not participate without a carrot dangled in front of them. Give them something—swag, free dollars on their IDs, etc.


Get Those Contacts

Extensive contacts with students, multiple times a semester equals engagement and retention

Anti-Silo

Avoid silos. Cross train coaches in all areas; even a little knowledge is good.

One big one—finances. HESAA offers excellent support staff training.





Best Practices and How to Incorporate Them

If you are cross-training staff in proactive advising/coaching or creating a program

Don't Be a Bandaid


Engagement over more than one semester encourages continued student growth.

Students will work long-term with one person, so follow those cohorts.

Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Utilize other departments for programming and information.

It helps to even have a point person in each department that works with your program's population. Again, customized service and incentives.



Questions?

Final Thought

The easiest way to keep students retained is to show them that you see them.
There are compassionate staff in your institution who do so every single day.
Utilize them.