

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

Early Outreach and Support Programs

TRiO

Student Support Services



A Division of Student Affairs
California State University, Chico

TRIO/STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Note: Student Support Services is a TRiO program funded by the United States Department of Education to provide academic support services to low-income, first generation college students. The mission statement and program goals (objectives in the U.S. Department of Education framework) are specified by federal regulations and policies and cannot be altered without approval from a program officer at the U.S. Department of Education.

I. Mission Statement

The mission of Student Support Services (SSS) is to improve the academic standing, retention, graduation, and graduate and professional school enrollment rates of eligible students who are receiving project services.

Department Goals (Performance Objectives required by the U.S. Department of Education)

1. Persistence: 69% of all students served by the SSS Project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or graduate.
2. Good Academic Standing: 91% of all enrolled participants served by the SSS Project will meet the performance of good academic standing (2.0 or above).
3. Graduation: 59% of new participants served each year will graduate within six years.
 - These performance objectives are in alignment with division goals to increase the **retention and graduation** of students.
 - The services offered by SSS also contribute to **recruitment** efforts by reassuring students and their families that individualized support is available to students from disadvantaged backgrounds at CSU, Chico.
 - The **date of last review** was December 4, 2015 when the project submitted the TRIO Student Support Services Annual Performance Report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education.

II. Departmental Accomplishments

- Implemented new financial literacy curriculum
- Implemented new “coaching” approach to student advising
- Implemented new menu-style contracts for all participants at all levels
- Implemented “Difference Education” panel discussion and video project
- Piloted a REACH “study jam” experience for 11 SSS freshmen participants
- Piloted an optional “First Year Experience, Part 2” course for freshmen

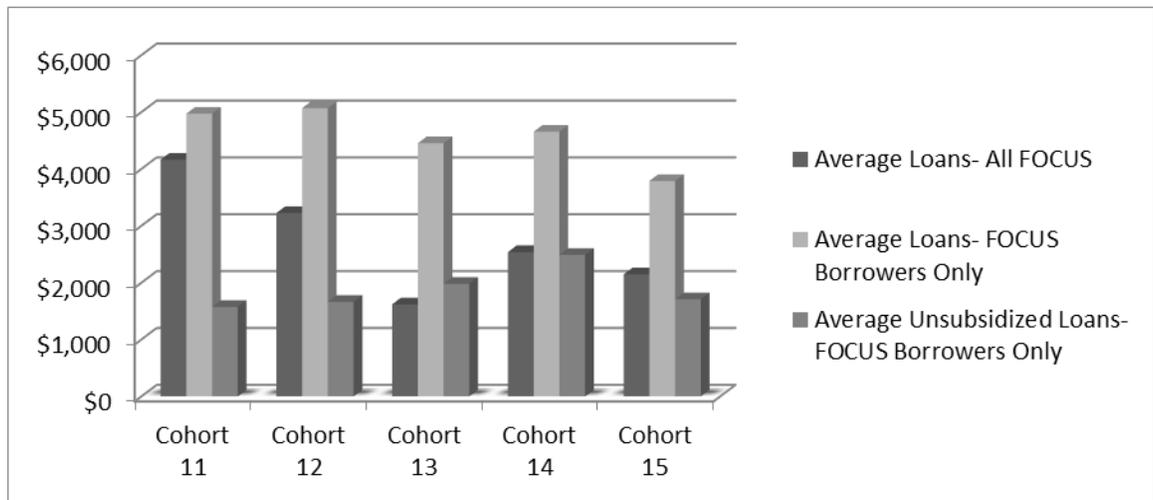
- Piloted an eight week SSS Student Transfer Enrichment Program (STEP)
- Piloted a new approach to SSS Freshman Orientation Centered on University Success (FOCUS), running it alongside Wildcat Welcome Week.
- Offered two field school experiences to freshmen participants
- Offered a “Choose Your Major” brown bag workshop series in collaboration with the Career Center.
- Offered a spring graduate school tour
- Offered a one-day “Life After College” workshop for graduating seniors

Highlights:

- **Financial literacy program** – All new and continuing participants were required to work one-on-one with a financial literacy coach in 2015-16. This is the first year the project has fully implemented this program. Freshmen participants who began receiving services in the summer of 2015 (FOCUS) received more comprehensive and intrusive programming than other participants—they had two required phone coaching sessions over the summer and attended eight financial literacy workshops in 2015-16.

Analysis of financial aid records indicate that fewer freshmen participants of FOCUS 2015-16 took out student loans than in previous years, and those who took out loans borrowed less. Student evaluations also indicate an increase in financial self-confidence and budgeting skills. All freshmen successfully completed and paid for their first year of college, with zero stop-outs.

Figure 1: Average Debt Acquired by Freshmen Participants in FOCUS 2011 - 2016



- New “coaching” approach designed to improve academic performance** – The project moved from a traditional advising model to a coaching model, using research-driven approaches designed to “nudge” students toward academic self-confidence and success. Student assistants who were previously “peer advisors” became “peer coaches,” project staff began requiring phone coaching sessions for all newly admitted freshmen and transfer students prior to attendance, and menu-style contracts were fully implemented for all participants beginning in fall of 2015.

At the end of 2015-16, new freshmen (FOCUS) and transfer students (STEP) indicated SSS services helped them increase their academic self-confidence. A comprehensive analysis of student transcripts indicates an overall increase in academic performance for participants at all levels over the previous year (2.87 average cumulative in 2015-16 versus 2.76 in 2014-15), and a 50% decrease in the number of students on academic probation. FOCUS participants showed even greater improvement (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Academic Performance – Freshmen Participating in FOCUS 2011-2016

FOCUS Cohort	Average Cumulative GPA All FOCUS Participants	Average Cumulative GPA Early Start Required	AP Spring
Cohort 11	2.62	2.66	19%
Cohort 12	2.81	2.84	5%
Cohort 13	2.76	2.59	0%
Cohort 14	2.65	2.40	18%
Cohort 15	2.98	3.08	8%

- REACH/SSS Pilot** – SSS participated in a 2015-16 pilot project in collaboration with the Chico Student Success Center (CSSC), co-enrolling 11 freshmen in the CSSC's REACH first year experience program. REACH requirements were modified for SSS participants in order to avoid duplication of services –the only additional services enjoyed by co-enrolled students were: (1) enrollment in U-courses and (2) weekly structured group study sessions with faculty and student mentors. SSS provided all other services.

At the end of the academic year, the average cumulative GPA for co-enrolled students was higher (3.16) than for other participants (2.98), and the standard deviation indicates more consistency in academic performance for REACH versus non-REACH (.43 versus .77, respectively). The lessons learned from this pilot will be incorporated into the 2016-17 SSS freshman year program (see VII. Analysis).

Diversity Efforts:

- Diversity trainings required of SSS interns** – Interns were required to attend a diversity training offered by the CCLC prior to beginning their fall 2015 internship.
- Inclusion efforts - male participants** – The project director modified internship requirements to ensure gender diversity among project staff so that male participants will see themselves reflected in the leadership of our team in 2016-17. Also, in 2015-16, student interest was gauged before

- scheduling project activities to ensure male voices were included in programming. Male participation in optional project activities increased.
- **Inclusion efforts - Latinx students** – Culturally inclusive approaches were incorporated into FOCUS, including Spanish speaking staff and a welcome event for family. Latinx students are contacted in advance and encouraged to bring their parents to meet project staff. The project director also joined two subcommittees of the Chicano Latino Counsel (CLC): (1) Hispanic Heritage Month planning committee and (2) Spanish Summer Orientation planning and implementation team.
 - **Inclusion efforts - Hmong students** – The FOCUS welcome team now includes at least one Hmong speaker, and Hmong students are contacted in advance and encouraged to bring their parents to meet project staff.
 - **Inclusion efforts - LGBTQ students** – The project director has joined GSEC’s Queer Week planning committee. We also changed the wording of the gender question on our application. It now reads: “What is your *legal* Gender?”
 - **First Gen & Proud!** – In collaboration with the director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the project director spearheaded the campus-wide initiative, “First Gen and Proud!” By the end of the 2015-16 academic year, (1) a student organization and faculty/staff affinity organization were established, and (2) placards, stickers, and buttons were disbursed to students, faculty, and staff. Also, first generation faculty and staff from the affinity organization gave a panel presentation to SSS freshmen during their First Year Enrichment seminar in spring 2016. Springing from this engagement, the project director presented on best practices in support of first generation students to the professional and student staff of the CSU, Chico Academic Advising office in the summer of 2016.

III. Changes in Policies and Procedures

N/A

IV. Resources Summary

Resource Allocation:

• SSS allocation for 2015-2016	\$247,583
• Rollover from 2014-2015	0
• Total allocation for 2015-2016	247,583
• Projected expenses*	(239,607)
• Projected carryover balance	\$7,976

***Note: Fiscal year is based on a September 1, 2015-August 31, 2016 timeline.**

Human Resources:

N/A

Facilities/Equipment:

N/A

V. Program Assessment of Past Year

Program Objectives (Performance Objectives required by the U.S. Department of Education):

1. Persistence: 69% of all students served by the SSS Project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or graduate.

Met - Of the 141* participants enrolled in 2015-16, 136 students or 96% either graduated or have registered for the fall 2016 semester

2. Good Academic Standing: 91% of all enrolled participants served by the SSS Project will meet the performance of good academic standing (2.0 or above).

Met - Of the 141* participants enrolled in 2015-16, 134 or 95% of them were in good academic standing (GPA above 2.0) by the end of the academic year.

3. Graduation: 59% of new participants served each year will graduate within six years.

Unmet - Of the participants admitted into cohort 2010, 33 or 58% graduated within six years of their point of entry into the program.

*This does not include new freshmen or transfer participants admitted summer 2016.

Annual Objectives for 2015-2016

1. Create new website using university platform that (1) converts, reorganizes, and enhances information from existing website to new website; and (2) is user-friendly and incorporates information and resources for applicants, as well as new and continuing participants.
Unfinished – New website has been created and will go live in September 2016.
2. Create, pilot, and evaluate two new social media tools to assist with communication with current participants.

Modified and Completed – The project director attended two social media trainings for higher education professionals in 2015-16, and also conducted two focus groups with project participants in order to determine which social media tools to develop. Based on the information collected, it was decided to develop only one social media tool. The project selected Facebook, which went live in January 2016.

3. Implement new semester participant contracts in fall 2015 and spring 2016 and evaluated their effectiveness using both qualitative and quantitative measures at the end of the academic year.

Completed – Participant contracts were implemented both semesters and were evaluated for their effectiveness through a comprehensive analysis of participants' academic transcripts, student loan packages, one-on-one interviews, and program evaluations. 2016-17 participant contracts have been revised accordingly.

Ongoing Assessment Efforts

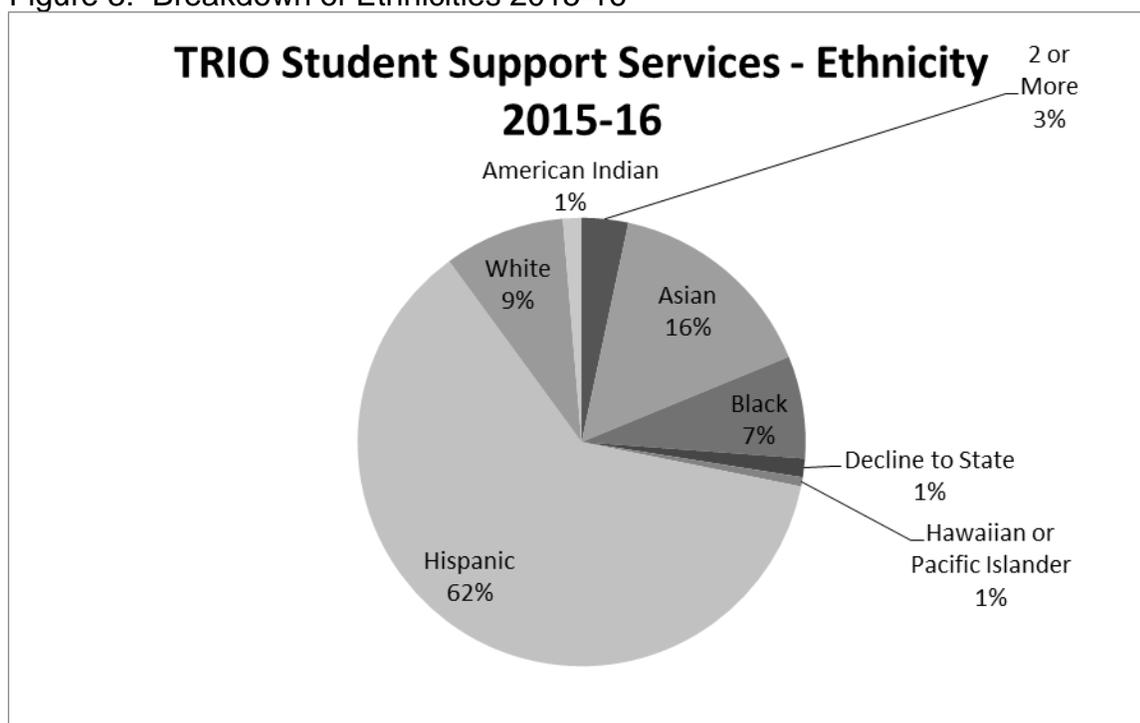
Demographic Reporting:

First Generation and Low Income – Federal legislation requires that SSS participants must be first generation college students (neither parent has a four year degree), come from a low-income background, and/or have a documented disability. Two-thirds of students must be both low-income and first generation. SSS met these demographic requirements in 2015-16.

Gender – Female: 67% Male: 33%

Ethnicity – Please see the chart below for a breakdown.

Figure 3: Breakdown of Ethnicities 2015-16



Statistics on Program Usage

Figure 4: SSS Individual Advising/ Coaching 2015-16 – Number of Participants Served	
Total number of active participants during fall and spring semesters	141
Received individualized non-cognitive skills coaching	127
Received advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection	47
Received education/counseling to improve financial aid literacy	95
Received information in applying for Federal Student Aid	29
Received assistance in completing and applying for Federal Student Aid	25
Received assistance in applying for admission to Graduate School	2
Received Study abroad or National Student Exchange advising	5
Received Career and professional development advising/coaching	13
Total number of individual advising/coaching sessions 2015-16	896

Figure 5: SSS Group Advising/Coaching 2015-16 – Number of Participants Served	
STEP (new transfer students)—eight week seminar including these topics: course selections, financial literacy, non-cognitive skill development	5
FOCUS (new freshmen) – yearlong seminar including these topics: financial literacy, non-cognitive skill development, and course selection	29
Field School (RECR 399)	33
TRiO SSS leadership activities	20
Graduate school preparation activities	5

Professional development and career-oriented activities	22
Life After College workshop	6
Cultural events (e.g. theater, lectures, concerts, etc.)	41
Total number of participants in group advising/coaching sessions in 2014-15	62

Student Assessment of Satisfaction, Quality, and Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcome #1: Increased participation in project services

As a result of participants creating their own contract each semester in combination with increased communication and monitoring of student progress by project staff (at least one contact per month), student participation in project services will increase over that of the previous year.

- 2015-16 Outcome: The total number of individual advising sessions increased from 301 in 2014-15 to 896 in 2015-16. The number of group advising sessions, went down slightly from 105 in 2014-15 to 62 in 2015-16, due to an intentional increase in intrusive one-on-one programming, and subsequent decrease in group advising sessions. See Figure 4 (above) for a breakdown of individual and group sessions.

Student Learning Outcome #2: Increased academic self-confidence (first year students)

As a result of the yearlong First Year Enrichment Seminar, freshmen students will express increased academic self-confidence in the following areas: (1) ability to identify various resources on campus that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds; (2) willingness to utilize campus resources; (3) knowledge that research has proven that intelligence can increase over time; and (4) ability to identify various opportunities for connecting with the campus community during their academic career.

- 2015-16 Outcome: Student evaluations indicate that new freshmen and transfer participants increased their academic self-confidence greatly in all areas pre-identified as crucial (see Figures 6 & 7 below). In addition, cumulative GPAs improved for these participants over the previous year (see Figure 2 above).

Student Learning Outcome #3: Increased financial literacy (freshmen)

As a result of four individualized coaching sessions and four group advising sessions over the course of an academic year with the financial literacy coach, first year students will be able to (1) find, read, and understand their financial aid award, (2) explain the value of reducing dependence upon student loans, (3) compare their financial aid award to their anticipated expenses in order to identify and plan for unmet need, (4) identify strategies and resources to bridge the gap

between academic expenses and financial aid awarded, and (5) create a realistic annual budget that will stretch their financial aid dollars.

- 2015-16 Outcome: Student evaluations indicate that new freshmen and transfer participants, as well as graduating seniors who participated in the “Life After College” workshop increased their financial literacy greatly in all areas pre-identified as crucial (see Figures 6, 7, & 8 below). Further, quantitative data collected through financial aid records indicates that students took out fewer loans than in previous years (see Figure 1 above).

Figure 6: 2015-16 FOCUS Participant Evaluations – Highlights

FOCUS 2015-16 Programming - Intended Participant Outcomes	Perceived Level of Impact
Adjusting to and feeling successful in college	100%
Overcoming challenges in college	100%
Increased academic self-confidence	89%
Ability to identify, locate, and use campus resources	92%
Improved study skills	84%
Improved time management	85%
Improved budgeting skills	90%
Better understanding of financial aid package	93%
Increased desire to decrease, avoid, or eliminate debt	85%
Able to make a budget-driven decision on how much to work	69%
Overall satisfaction with FOCUS yearlong programming	100%

Figure 7: 2015-16 STEP Participant Evaluations – Highlights

STEP 2015-16 Programming - Intended Participant Outcomes	Perceived Level of Impact
Increased academic self-confidence	100%
Increased ability to overcome challenges in college	100%
Ability to identify, locate, and use campus resources	100%
Improved study skills	100%
Improved time management	33%
Improved budgeting skills	100%
Found a community of like-minded people on campus	100%
Better understanding of financial aid package	66%
Increased desire to decrease, avoid, or eliminate debt	100%
Able to make a budget-driven decision on how much to work	100%
Overall satisfaction with STEP eight week program	100%

Figure 8: 2015-16 Life After College Seminar Participant Evaluations – Highlights

Life After College Seminar - Intended Participant Outcomes	Perceived Level of Impact
Lessened anxiety about life after college	100%
Increased confidence - managing loans and debt	100%
Increased confidence - budgeting	83%
Increased confidence - saving for retirement	83%
Increased confidence - dressing professionally	83%
Increased confidence - resume and cover letter	83%
Overall satisfaction with Life After College seminar	100%

VI. Analysis

- Increase participation of juniors and non-graduating seniors** – The lowest participation levels in project services and activities in 2015-16 were seen in juniors and non-graduating seniors. New interventions, approaches, and activities need to be sought that will encourage these students to participate more rigorously in project activities and services.
- Increase recruitment efforts toward underrepresented groups** – The number of SSS applications received from males and black students (both genders) is low compared with other populations. New and innovative approaches need to be sought that will encourage these students to apply.
- Seek and obtain supplemental funds** – The U.S Department of education imposes strict guidelines governing the use of project funds to pay for food and hospitality. This presents a challenge when scheduling overnight field trips, as well as daylong workshops and trainings for project participants from low-income backgrounds who cannot afford to supply their own meals/accommodations. The project should seek additional funds for purchase of items not allowable by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Incorporate lessons learned from REACH/SSS 2015-16 Pilot Project** – After analyzing and comparing data between participants in the REACH/SSS pilot versus those receiving only SSS services, it is clear that REACH participants academically outperformed non-REACH by a significant margin. Further, students with developmental needs in English who enrolled in U-courses in 2015-16 outperformed all other participants, including those without developmental need (3.27 cumulative GPA versus 2.86, respectively). In accordance, SSS will incorporate U-courses and structured group study into mandatory freshmen project activities. Data from 2015-16 and 2016-17 will be compared in the summer of 2016 to determine the efficacy of these new interventions by SSS project staff (rather than REACH faculty and staff), and to determine if additional interventions should be incorporated.
- Continue to offer comprehensive and intrusive financial literacy programming** – Analysis of data collected in 2015-16, including both qualitative (participant surveys) and quantitative (financial aid records),

indicates that the project's financial literacy programming is making a positive impact on new freshmen and transfer participants' ability to (1) "right size" their student loan package and (2) create a realistic budget to make their financial aid dollars stretch throughout the academic year. Accordingly, FOCUS programming in 2016-17 will mirror 2015-16, and will expand to STEP participants, sophomores receiving grant aid, juniors and seniors on "Career Track" contracts, and graduating seniors (Life After College).

- **Continue to offer yearlong First Year Experience seminar to freshmen –** Analysis of data collected in 2015-16 participant surveys and evaluations indicates that the project's non-cognitive skill building activities offered via the First Year Experience seminar successfully increased participants' academic self-confidence in the following areas: (1) ability to identify various resources on campus that support students from disadvantaged backgrounds; (2) willingness to utilize campus resources; (3) knowledge that research has proven that intelligence can increase over time; and (4) ability to identify various opportunities for connecting with the campus community during their academic career. Further, qualitative analysis of freshmen participants' academic transcripts over a five year period (2011 – 2016) indicate an increase of .33 in average cumulative GPA's and a 44% decrease in the number of freshmen on academic probation from the previous year. Accordingly, the project will continue to offer a second semester of the First Year Experience seminar.

VII. Program Objectives for the next academic year

Program Objectives for 2016-2017

1. Go live with the new project website in fall 2016. Use participant evaluations and focus groups (freshmen, transfer students, student leadership team, and graduating seniors) to assess the effectiveness of the website in the following areas: (1) appeal to diverse populations, including those with historically low enrollment in the project, (2) accurate description of project services and requirements, (3) ease of use, and (4) perceived helpfulness and relevance of information included, particularly for juniors and above. Implement changes in early spring to coincide with the 2017 recruitment cycle.
2. Implement new freshman participant requirements to model high impact practices offered by the Chico State Success Center's REACH program, as per lessons learned during the 2015-16 pilot project. These include (1) mandatory U-course enrollment for all participants in the fall semester of 2016, and (2) three hours of structured and monitored group study each week.

3. Develop and pilot a new budgeting tool to complement financial literacy programming. Require that all freshmen, sophomores, and upperclassmen on “Career Track” contracts utilize the spreadsheet twice during the academic year. These participants will also be asked to provide feedback on the tools’ helpfulness. Project staff will rely on student feedback to evaluate and improve the budgeting tool in preparation for the 2017-18 academic year.