

**MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Program Review**

**TRIO Program for Student Achievement**

\*\*\*\*\*

**SECTION I: PROGRAM PURPOSE, POPULATION, AND CURRICULUM**

**A. Program Purpose**

1. State the mission of the program.

The TRIO Program for Student Achievement encourages and assists people who are traditionally under-represented in post secondary education because of disability, income, and family educational background in the preparation of or, entry to and completion of the post secondary education.

To accomplish this mission, the TRIO Program for Student Achievement:

- Serves as advocate for access to higher education
- Facilitates the educational development of participants to achieve their educational goals by providing support services
- Provides an environment that recognizes the diversity of backgrounds and learning styles of the individuals served
- Develops collaborative relationships with institutions, organizations and communities to promote an environment conducive to the completion of a post secondary education
- Fosters an institutional climate supportive of the success of the individuals served by conveying a helpful, caring attitude which recognizes participants' unique qualities, design experiences appropriate to their development and provide services appropriate to their needs. Inherent in this concept is the commitment to evaluate services and educational experiences we offer.

2. What is the relationship of the program's mission to the College's mission?

Along with the TRIO Program for Student Achievement mission stands the host institution's mission. Middlesex Community College is committed to providing educational programs and services that support personal growth and economic opportunity for a diverse student population. Under the division of Academic and Student Affairs, the TRIO Program for Student Achievement emphasizes a collaborative partnership with various College departments and develops initiatives which support the goals of the College. The following describes the ways in which the TRIO Program for Student Achievement reflects the overall mission of the College as adopted by the Trustees and approved by the Board of Higher Education.

a. The TRIO program for Student Achievement reflects the College's mission to provide a dynamic learning environment through student centered instruction, interactive learning state-of-the art technology. Instructional tutoring is individualized and customized, conducted one-on-one or in a small group, As a program that services students with documented disabilities, The TRIO Program for Student Achievement also maintains a high level of commitment to assistive technology.

b. The MCC Mission Statement focuses on a supportive, caring environment with small classes that can tailor the needs of individual students. The TRIO Program for Student Achievement's foundation for its educational programming is the delivery of services in a customized and coordinated manner. Students receive personal attention and support with the ultimate purpose of improving the students' rate of retention, graduation and transfer.

3. How does the program fulfill a need within the community?

The TRIO Program for Student Achievement reflects Middlesex Community College's mission to provide programs and services that extend to diverse populations. The TRIO Program for Student Achievement is dedicated to servicing students who have been traditionally under represented in post secondary education and who present a wide diversity in their learning styles and needs.

4. Please describe any similar programs in the general geographic area. Please compare the programs and comment on the similarities and differences in our program.

The two programs that will be used for comparative purposes are; **Project Connections**, located at Middlesex County College in Edison, NJ and the **PLAN** Program, located at Massasoit Community College in Brockton, MA. The **PLAN** Program is a traditional SSS/TRIO grant initiative with a strong learning disabilities component. **Project Connections** is a program which services students only with disabilities.

**Project Connections** (New Jersey)

*Similarities*

- Provides services beyond what is required by law
- Receives funding through the U.S. DOE
- Students must be enrolled in mainstream programs at the college
- Summer orientation program
- Support services in; study skills, self-awareness and advocacy, career planning and computer literacy.
- Individual and group tutoring
- Academic advising

## Differences

- Course accommodations\*
- Adapted testing\*
- Priority registration\*
- Diagnosis of learning disabilities through Central Regional Connections
- Staffing pattern includes; learning disabilities teacher-consultant, educational specialist and counselors who provide emotional support.

\*these services are all provided by the Disability Support Services Office at Middlesex Community College, as required by the Americans With Disabilities Act

## **PLAN** (Massasoit CC)

### *Similarities*

- Receive funding from U.S. DOE
- Students must be enrolled at the college and be either low-income, first generation in the family to attend college or have a documented disability (PSA only requires one third of its participants to be low-income, not necessarily first generation, but all must have a documented disability)
- Services are above and beyond what is already available to all students at the college
- Tutorial services
- Academic counseling
- Financial aid assistance and scholarship information
- Career planning
- Use of specialized computer equipment
- Educational workshops
- Transfer counseling
- Program newsletter
- Cultural Events
- Trips to 4 year colleges

### *Differences*

- Provides learning disabilities services; classroom and test accommodations
- Personal counseling
- Staffing pattern includes; learning specialist and two unspecified counselors

The amount of similarities can be attributed to the fact that these activities are the guidelines for TRIO programs according to Federal Regulations (Sec. 402c of the Higher Ed Act, 646.4 TRIO Specific Regulations). The major difference appears to be in services which overlap in what is required by law according to the Americans With Disabilities Act. The Middlesex Community College Program for Student Achievement does not provide any services required by the ADA. Documentation of a disability, determination and provision of an accommodation and issues related to accessibility are all handled through the Office of Disability Support Services.

## **B. Target Population**

5. Describe the population served. In what way is this population unique?

The TRIO Program for Student Achievement services 100 students with documented disabilities, one third of whom must meet low income eligibility according to the Office of Federal TRIO Programs Low Income Levels. All students are enrolled at Middlesex Community College, pursuing an Associate's Degree. Students must also have tested into at least one developmental course. By virtue of this criteria, the students are potentially at risk for academic problems if support systems are not in place.

6. Describe mechanisms used to monitor the program's currency and fit with the needs of the community.

The Program for Student Achievement utilizes both quantitative and qualitative evaluation measure to assess the status and outcomes of the project on an on-going basis in order to determine the extent to which the program is accomplishing its objectives and fits the needs of the MCC community. The on-going nature creates an ideal circumstance for continuous improvement in the program. The Director of Disability Support Services and the Project Director and staff will pay close attention to emerging trends, as there may be indicators of changes and/or developments which may affect the quality of program services and the program's ability to meet new needs among the program participants. Should evaluative measures identify service deficiencies, new service needs, unanticipated results, or any other trends indicating programmatic change, PSA will be in the position to adopt approaches to strengthen the program. Annually, data derived from the Student Access database is reviewed as it is prepared for the Department of Education Annual Performance Report. This information provides an indication of accomplishment in meeting program objectives. Additionally, PSA engaged in an outside evaluation, a "mock site visit," conducted by the TRIO Student Success Program. This information was used to not only to measure accomplishments and to assure compliance with federal regulations, but also as a means to identify needs for staff and program development.

The following is a summary of the plan to use data to examine in specific and measurable ways, the project's success in improving academic achievement, retention, graduation, and four year transfer of project participants.

### ***Improving Academic Achievement***

- Documentation of entering course placements and assessments
- Ongoing review and analysis of grade reports, deficiency notices, academic probation and dismissal notices
- Ongoing monitoring of Student Access reports related to attainment of project academic achievement objectives
- Ongoing review and analysis of Exit Interview recommendations
- Ongoing review and analysis of Prior Participant recommendations
- Outcomes related to academic achievement as reported on DOE Annual Report

### ***Improving Retention***

- Tracking and documentation of persistence among entering enrollees (case management, reporting)
- Ongoing review of CSP (Customized Service Plan) activities to determine results
- Ongoing monitoring of Student Access activity reports related to attainment of project retention objectives
- Outcomes related to academic retention as reported on DOE Annual Performance Report

### ***Improving Graduation and Four Year Transfer Rates***

- Ongoing review of CSP activities to determine student results
- Ongoing monitoring of Student Access activity reports related to attainment of project graduation and transfer objectives
- Documentation of intensive student tracking and intervention to support progress toward graduation and transfer
- Outcomes related to graduation and transfer as reported on DOE Annual Performance Report

### ***Improving Campus Climate***

Ongoing review of results of surveys administered to students, faculty and staff will determine the level of satisfaction that each group has related to such specific areas as access to services through technology, integration into college activities, support from faculty and staff, and understanding of student needs.

7. Describe attempts to review outreach approaches and/or enlarge the program.

The TRIO Program for Student Achievement is a federally funded grant and therefore parameters are set as to the size of the program. Outreach approaches are numerous and under constant evaluation. The Office of Disability Support Services provides the largest pool of potential participants as it is their responsibility to review and accept a student's documentation. Once this process is complete, a referral to the TRIO Program for Student Achievement is made via the DSS Intake Interview. An additional source of outreach can be done through the Office of Financial Aid. Information about the TRIO Program for Student Achievement and the opportunities it can provide to can be disseminated to all potential candidates. Classroom presentations to developmental classes and new student orientations is another source

8. Describe recruiting efforts. Can you suggest any additional recruiting efforts that have not been attempted?

Due to Federal regulations, recruiting of students cannot begin until the students are enrolled at Middlesex Community College.

### **Grant Requirements**

1. By November 15 of each year, PSA will identify, screen and select 100 students with documented disabilities, at least one third of whom will be low-income, and all of whom will score into one or more developmental course.
2. Of the students accepted as participants in the PSA project, 70% of each cohort will persist from the first year to the second; we project continuing persistence as follows: 60% from second year to third year; 50% from third year to fourth.
3. A total of 30% of students from each annual cohort will graduate or transfer within eight semesters.
4. Annually, of all PSA participants, a minimum of 75% will be in good academic standing as defined by the institution as earning a GPA of 2.0 or higher.
5. A total of 70% of students will report that assistive technology is "helpful" or "very helpful" to them by the end of their fourth semester.
6. PSA will promote an institutional climate that demonstrates an increased responsiveness to the needs of students with disabilities and fosters their full integration into the College.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **B. Curriculum**

9. Describe the curriculum or outcomes of the program. What are the service goals and objectives of the program? What are the expected student learning outcomes?

Students who participate in the TRIO Program for Student Achievement:

- Acquire study skills that improve their academic progress.
  - Acquire metacognitive learning strategies.
  - Investigate transfer options
  - Articulate career plans and pathways to that career
10. Describe the strategies, activities, and/or assignments that will enable the students to achieve these goals, objectives, and outcomes?
  11. Describe how these goals, objectives, and outcomes will be assessed.

<b>Student Outcomes/ Competencies</b>	<b>Strategies for Attainment</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria and Methods</b>
Students will acquire a variety of study skills techniques, to include; test taking, time management, completing long term assignments and library usage, which will improve academic progress.	Students will attend introductory workshops in each category. Students will meet on an ongoing basis with a PSA counselor to directly apply learned skills to specific coursework.	Students will evaluate workshops. Students will report on academic progress. Grade reports should reflect success
Students will acquire metacognitive strategies.*	Specific instruction provided by Learning Specialist.	Students report methods to be helpful, monitoring of students reading and note taking, academic progress.
Students will investigate transfer options.	Students will work with their PSA counselor to investigate transfer options. Students will attend college visitations with PSA	Students will successfully transfer to a four year college.
Students will articulate career plans.	Students will work with a PSA counselor to develop a career plan	Transition from MCC graduation to workforce is smooth and complete.
Students will investigate the requirements of their career choices	Student will attend PSA Career Planning Series, including; job searching, resume and cover letter writing, and interviewing skills.	Students will evaluate workshops. Transition from MCC graduation to workforce is smooth and complete.
Students will research the requirements for completing the financial aid process.	Students will work with their PSA counselor when completing the MCC Financial Aid form and FAFSA  Students will attend an informational workshop for financial aid and scholarships  Students will investigate with PSA counselor scholarship availability	Student will be awarded financial aid and reduce indebtedness.

\* Metacognitive strategies are memorable plans or approaches students use to problem solve, which positively impact students with learning problems because they provide an efficient way to acquire, store and retrieve information and skills.

## SECTION II: DATA

12. Provide enrollment and retention data for the last 3-5 years, if possible. Please comment on trends, patterns, and issues that emerge through the data.

The Program for Student Achievement has maintained full enrollment each project year, since its inception in the Fall of 2001. Full enrollment is equivalent to 100 students with documented disabilities. This trend is a direct result from working in conjunction with the Disability Services Office. For the project year 2001-2002, PSA was able to retain 86% of its participants. In 2002-2003, the retention was 49%. For 2003-2004, retention was at 60%. The Department of Education requires the Program for Student Achievement to retain 40% of its participants each year, therefore, PSA has met its retention objective annually. However, project year 2002-2003 was one of national economic difficulty and that could have impacted general student retention. The increase the following year could be attributed to strong case management procedures put in place and firm attention given to evaluative procedures.

13. Provide outcome assessment and/or follow up data. Please comment on significant information that emerges from the data.

The Program for Student Achievement assesses student outcomes by measuring their change in attitude towards or perception of learning. A major method is the use of the Customized Service Plan (CSP). Together, with a counselor, the student identifies overall needs, academic supports and life skills in need of improvement. Goals and steps necessary to achieve those goals are contrived. At each semester's end it is determined if the goal (s) has been met and new goals are formulated. Different steps are applied to goals that have not been achieved. Subjective data is collected from students upon completion of program workshops and events which are designed to have a positive impact on their lives as well as the program's objectives. This data is in the form of post workshop evaluations and questions sheets. Students are asked to specifically identify methods, techniques and/or information they have learned. Examples of these assessments are included in the Appendix.

The Program for Student Achievement utilizes two methods of follow up data, the Exit Interview and Prior Participant information. When a participant is "exiting" the Program for Student achievement, this student is interviewed on some very basic information, which reflects his/her opinion of programs operations. Data derived from the students' recommendations is reviewed and analyzed and programmatic structure could be influenced. The Prior Participant information is gathered from students who have been enrolled in PSA previously, but not in the current project year. Data derived from this communication is utilized to determine the extent to which program participants received appropriate levels of services and to assess the extent to which the program met academic achievement, retention, graduation and transfer goals.

\* \* \* \* \*



**SECTION III: SUMMARY**

14. Describe the strengths of the program.

- Strong commitment to a traditionally under represented population of student in higher education
- Continued support of the College’s mission to provide educational programs to a diverse student population, provide dynamic learning environments through student centered instruction and focus on a supportive, caring environment.
- Continued increase membership to college-wide initiatives and committees in order to foster a positive institutional climate
- Constant evaluation of program’s structure to ensure continued growth
- Continued achievement of performance objective to secure future funding

\*\*\*\*\*

15. Describe program weaknesses or needs for improvement.	16. What suggestions do you have to correct the identified weaknesses and improve the program?	Suggest timelines wherever applicable.
Image, association with PSA carries the stigma of a disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compile alumna portfolio</li> <li>• Showcase where students are and what they have accomplished</li> <li>• Mentor program</li> </ul>	Portfolio begin immediately, and ongoing, introduce showcase and mentors at beginning of each semester
Valuable resource on campus but many staff still unaware of the services PSA provides. There is confusion with DSS and TRIO/SSP Program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations each semester to Division Deans, Department Chairs</li> <li>• Presentations at FSA meetings</li> <li>• Presentations at New Faculty Orientations</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Maintaining enrollment level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major presence at Orientation Programs</li> <li>• Sit in on DSS intake visits</li> <li>• <b>Office in closer proximity to DSS</b></li> <li>• Continued use of developmental classes as resource</li> </ul>	Begin in Fall 05, repeat with each new semester
Increase use of assistive technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student mentors</li> <li>• Target enrollment to students in need of assistive technology</li> </ul>	Begin immediately, ongoing