



# TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

TRIO Student Support Services  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2014**



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO  
*TRIO Student Support Services*

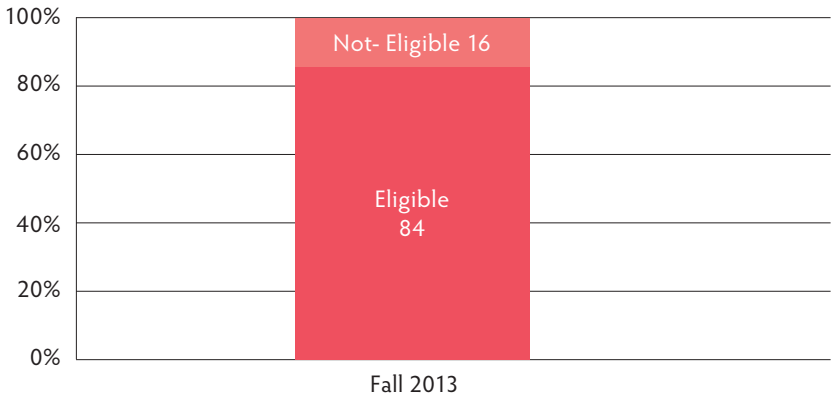
TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) is one of the oldest retention programs at The University of Toledo. Student Support Services promotes the academic success of a select group of students by providing support in academic skills, counseling, mentoring, and tutoring. SSS seeks to maximize graduation rates by creating strong and independent learners. SSS believes that all students can be successful given the proper support, and works to define, recognize, and respect each student's individual abilities. SSS improves the student experience by creating "moments of truth" in which students are helped to understand their uniqueness, are made to feel special, and come away knowing that SSS cares for their success.

The TRiO programs were instituted by the federal government in 1965 to ensure equal educational opportunity for all Americans, regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstance. At The University of Toledo, Student Support Services has been in existence since 2001. Since then, more than 1,000 students have utilized the services of TRiO SSS during their academic careers.

The low-income, first-generation students who enroll at The University of Toledo can arrive at college underprepared for the required level and amount of work they need to complete in order to reach their goals. However, as a result of the proactive advising services and retention programming provided by the Student Support Services program, hundreds such UT students exceed expectations every year. The SSS services that support them include academic tutoring and assistance with study skills, note-taking and course-selection, financial aid and financial literacy workshops, and career development and graduate school preparation, to name just a few. Last year, 75 percent of the participants in our Student Support Services program either persisted to the next academic year or achieved graduation.

### SSS OFFERS ONE-ON-ONE SERVICES

In the fall of 2013, more than 13,600 UT students were eligible for the TRiO SSS program. In other words, more than 84 percent of the total student population qualified for the services offered by Student Support Services, yet only 152 or 1.1 percent are reported and served by the project. The SSS project employs three professional staff members, two SSS advisors, six student mentors, and tutor mentors. All SSS staff share socioeconomic backgrounds similar to those of our target population.



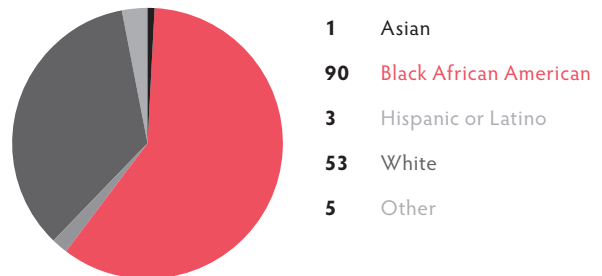
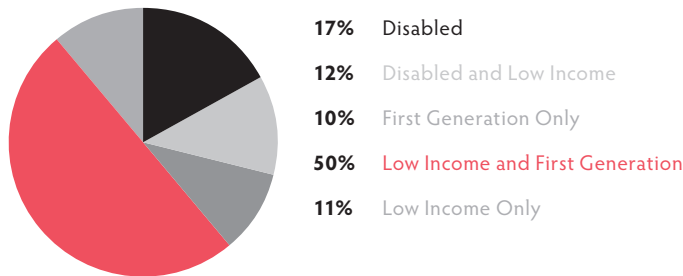
## TRiO SCHOLARS

- The TRiO Student Support Services program was funded to serve a minimum of 152 participants in AY14.
- 14 percent are non-traditional aged; 86 percent traditional aged.
- Of the 70 UT students who applied to SSS, in 2014, 62 were invited to join the program and 52 became participants.

Students must qualify for participation in SSS, and all students who register for Rocket Launch or Rocket Transition are invited to learn about the SSS project. As mandated by Congress, students must come from families at 150 percent of the federal poverty level, be defined as first-generation by 34CFR 646.7 (b) 2010, or have a disability as defined by the ADA for Higher Education.

---

## 2014 PARTICIPANTS BY ELIGIBILITY TYPE



---

## Academic Achievement

- Average grade point average of all active SSS students was 2.61.
- 50 students (33 percent) earned a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher.
- 94 students (62 percent) earned a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or higher.

## Student Satisfaction

- 85 percent rated the overall program 3 or higher out of 4.
- 100 percent rated meetings with their SSS advisor 3 or higher out of 4.
- 100 percent rated their SSS "advisor's support of me" 4 or higher out of 5.

(End of Year Evaluation, May 2014, 26 respondents)

- 88 percent reported that their SSS Tutor Mentor "helped me to improve my academic skills."
- 88 percent reported that "the tutor mentor helped to improve my class performance."
- 63 percent reported that "my grade was improved as a result of tutoring."

(Tutoring Survey, May 2014, 15 respondents)

## SSS IS PERFORMANCE BASED

As a federally funded project charged to provide retention services at The University of Toledo, SSS operates against specific, measurable outcome objectives as clearly defined in the approved grant proposal. Annually, SSS has successfully met its objectives in working with the targeted population. The objectives are based on students reported to the U.S. Department of Education. SSS serves more students annually both directly and indirectly through its programming, but reports only those who were served more than once.

Objective	Goal	2010	2011	2012	2013
Students served annually	160	160	160	160	152
Students will enroll from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year.	65%	75%	75%	67.5%	74.3%
Students in good academic standing	80%	82.5%	88.1%	80%	82.8%
Students who enter the SSS project will graduate within six years	35%	52.7%	36.2%	45%	56.4%

SSS multi-year data from Annual Performance Reports

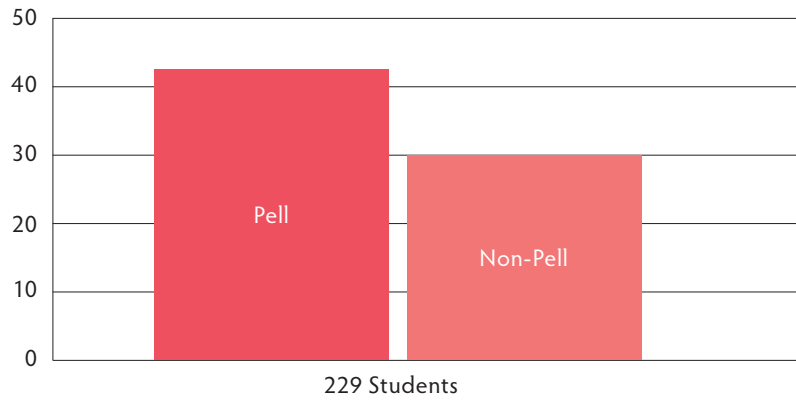
## SSS IS TARGETED

SSS exists because Congress recognizes that financial aid alone is insufficient to ensure college success. More than two-thirds of the students in the SSS program are Pell-eligible.

More than half come from families where neither parent graduated from college, does not understand the postsecondary process, and does not necessarily value a higher education.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, SSS participants received \$2,459,252 in financial aid. SSS enhances the value of Pell Grants, direct loans, and other forms of aid by combining such aid with individualized support at a cost of about \$1,440 per student. Of the 229 participants who graduated between 2003 and 2012, 43 percent had earned the Pell Grant during their matriculation at UT. SSS represents UT's investment in first-generation, low-income, and disabled students.

Low-income and first-generation college students are more likely to be enrolled in developmental courses, have undecided or undeclared majors, have lower first-year persistence rates, and have lower graduation rates. For example, in fall 2012 the retention rate for low-income and first-generation students was 54.5 percent compared to 62 percent for all UT students. The graduation rate was 26.7 percent for first-generation and low-income students and 39.5 percent for the UT average.



6-year Graduation Rates of TRiO served students from 9/1/2003 to 8/31/2013, based on baccalaureate-seeking students who enrolled as first-time, full-time students. Source: Office of Institutional Research.

The chart below demonstrates the continued need for targeted services for first-generation and low-income students at The University of Toledo. Students served by SSS display better results due to our intervention and comprehensive services that target issues both in and outside the classroom.

	Fall 2013 Retention Rate	6 year Graduation Rate
All SSS eligible	65%	37%
Not SSS eligible	76%	67%
Overall UT Average	71%	48%
Overall UT SSS average	74%	45%

Source: Institutional Research and SSS annual reports

*"I am very pleased with TRiO SSS. TRiO makes sure that I succeed in my academics. I feel very comfortable in the environment. The people who greet you when I sign in are also nice. Without TRiO, my grades and attendance would not be what they are."*

— D. Cavanaugh, Communication Major, '18

*"I enjoyed TRiO's easy-going atmosphere, especially because of the high-stress and [competitive] nature of my program. Trio SSS was and is a much more relaxed and collaborative setting."*

— Comment from the 2013-2014 survey

	Fall 2008 Retention Rate	Fall 2012 Retention Rate	Fall 2008 6 year Graduation Rate	Fall 2012 6 year Graduation Rate
Low Income and First Generation	45.6%	54.5%	17.7%	26.70%
Non-Low Income	68.2%	53.4%	43.5%	50.09%
Non-First Generation	68.5%	66.8%	44.0%	43.20%
Overall UT Average	68%	62%	39.9%	39.54%
Overall TRIO SSS average	85.2%	76.25%	34.5%	43.75%

Source: Institutional Research and SSS annual reports

## SSS IS BUILT ON RELATIONSHIPS

All TRIO SSS programming is based on understanding the relationship between the student's unique characteristics and environment, as well as how both can be influenced by working with the student to reach desired academic goals. To cultivate this understanding, all program participants are assigned an SSS advisor who works with their assigned students throughout the year. Students are assigned an advisor every year until they graduate. SSS advisors meet with students for half hour, one-on-one appointments at least twice a semester. All newly admitted SSS students are required to participate in an hour-long intake meeting to review their current academic plan of study, study skills, and goals. During the intake meeting each student is individually advised on how the SSS program can be personalized to fit his or her needs.

The relationship that develops between the SSS advisor and the student is the foundation for the project. These strong relationships promote retention by providing students a resource on campus to whom they can address questions and concerns. This relationship also helps create a sense of belonging for students that is not limited to any designated physical space on campus; students also have a University staff member who knows them well and acts in their best interests. During student meetings, SSS advisors address issues relating to academics (securing tutoring support, course selection, and registration and degree audit requirements) as well as non-academic issues (understanding financial aid, getting involved in student life, and becoming familiar with on-campus processes). To ensure consistency, SSS advisors use a standard checklist of meeting topics.

Consistency of service is emphasized in the extensive training SSS advisors receive prior to meeting with any students. At the end of the training, which typically lasts between three to five days, members of the advising staff are equipped with a resource manual and access to online documents, assessment tools, and additional training resources in a database. Advisors are encouraged to add to their growing expertise as they progress professionally. Whenever possible, advisors and staff are offered opportunities for training seminars and conferences.



## SSS IS CONSISTENT AND INTENSE

Every year, TRiO SSS provides a schedule of activities and events for students to ensure both academic success and access to leadership opportunities. Throughout the students' time at The University of Toledo, SSS staff establish regular meeting schedules, encourage interaction with the advising staff of individual colleges, and employ measures that provide feedback regarding students' academic performance.

- Each new student is given an intake assessment to review all services that SSS provides and to gain knowledge of a student's current major, current semester goals, and previous semester achievements or concerns. This intake includes the submission of writing samples to determine the students' skill level, and a leadership quiz to identify students with leadership interests.
- Every new freshman, or new student with a previous semester GPA of less than a 2.0, is also given a study skills assessment to determine their current inventory of study skills.
- New and returning students complete an academic plan that details strategies for successfully completing the semester. Strategies may include tutoring, meeting with a major advisor, or planning for graduation.
- Mid-term progress reports are completed by faculty and instructors to provide an early alert system for students who are struggling, and to provide positive feedback for students who are performing well.
- During the mid-term meetings between students and advisors, instructor feedback is reviewed and additional strategies are implemented if needed. The feedback empowers students to take control of monitoring their own class performance. The mid-term meetings are also a point in the semester to review the next semester schedule for curriculum requirements and to identify potential difficulty.

*"I was a nontraditional student and the first one to go to college in my family for three generations. I came to TRiO and they helped me in every way possible to succeed."*

*— Eftimos Agapitos, Interdisciplinary Studies, '13*

## SSS SERVICES ARE COMPREHENSIVE AND CULTURAL

The academic and student services administered through the SSS program are comprehensive, extending beyond the traditional services offered by college advisors. Students receive assistance in completing graduate school admission and financial aid applications, are given tutorial services, credit management and financial literacy workshops, and have opportunities to attend cultural events. In addition, SSS offers semester workshops on time management, note taking from books and lectures, test taking, motivation, and basic math skills. All staff are trained to provide study skill presentations so they are able to assist students immediately with basic college skills if a request is made.

The annual cultural events are the Professional Dining Etiquette luncheon, Punch Party for Spring Break travelers, and the Spring Into Summer awards dinner. While SSS's primary focus is ensuring students' academic success, it is important to assist students in their personal and professional development as well. To encourage students' personal development, SSS helps them identify opportunities to build leadership skills, join student organizations, apply for Federal Work Study jobs, and volunteer in the surrounding community.

TRIO SSS is located in suite 0300 in Carlson Library. Carlson Library also hosts the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) and the Writing Center (WC). Being centrally located near other success offices benefits all participants by making it easier to access resources. The SSS study area is designed to provide easy access to SSS and library resources. The location is ADA-compliant with a floor plan conducive to learning for all types of students. It is a quiet area, with movable walls to reduce multi-sensory distractions for hyper-sensitive students and includes power outlets for electronic devices.

### **Advising**

Like their students, the SSS professionals at UT had to overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to succeed in higher education. Because of this, they can both relate to students and mentor them throughout their post-secondary experience at UT.

Our comprehensive services build on this foundation and are targeted to each student's individual needs; instruction, tutoring, mentoring, referral assistance, and graduation guidance are among the services available for these students. SSS helps each student learn how to employ their skills and interests to achieve success, to acquire campus and leadership opportunities, and to take advantage of resources that best target their career goals.

Comprehensive advisor training includes student development theories, characteristics of first-generation students, listening techniques, matching student needs with UT resources, the informational, conceptual, and relational components of advising, and use of the program's recordkeeping resources.

### **Tutoring**

In 2013, 33 students used our in-house tutoring services; 41 were referred to the Learning Enhancement Center, Writing Center, Math 1200 Study Tables, and Supplemental Instruction tutoring services for a total of 574 recorded sessions. Additionally, students were referred to tutoring resources in the College of Engineering.



There were 55 reported students who used available tutoring resources during AY14:

44 percent freshmen

33 percent sophomores

11 percent juniors

13 percent seniors

In summary, 55 students accessed tutoring services from LEC, WC, and SSS for 77 separate courses. 74 percent of those students accessed the LEC/WC and SSS for tutoring support. Of those students who committed to more than five tutoring sessions and did not withdraw from their academic course, 45 percent earned a C or higher and 69 percent passed the course.

Tutor mentor training focuses on topics that include the tutoring cycle, listening and communication skills, tutoring students with disabilities, role-playing, and study skills.

### **Mentoring**

To assist students with their transition to college, student mentors were trained and hired during the academic year. The student mentors are available during orientation to welcome eligible SSS students to the office and explain the benefits of program participation. During the academic year, student mentors can often be found in the technology lab assisting new students with navigating MyUT and Blackboard, writing research papers, and studying for exams. Student mentors also sit at the office front desk to greet all students, sign them in, and remind them about upcoming workshops.

### **Financial Literacy Education**

Mary Beth Tice with Directions Credit Union discussed money management, budgeting, credit

scores, and how to avoid identity theft in a workshop entitled "What is My Score?"

The workshops are offered once per semester. During the summer, students have the opportunity to take an online financial literacy course called Money Skills. Topics covered: expenses and budgeting; costs and benefits of borrowing; credit cards and other unsecured debt; credit ratings; identity theft.

### **Financial Assistance**

The TRIO SSS program awarded \$10,000 in grant aid to 11 first- and second-year and first-year transfer students. Annually, The University of Toledo provides a one-third match for the SSS Grant Aid fund. Participants must satisfy certain requirements to access this grant, including a recommendation by an SSS staff member, attendance at one of the financial literacy workshops, and passing the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements. In 2013, grant awards averaged \$1,300 per person. In the majority of cases, the grant aid reduces overall student loan debt. According to Project Student Loan Debt, in 2013 more than 69 percent of UT graduates averaged \$29,141 in debt. Project on Student Debt. (2014). Retrieved from <http://ticas.org/posd/map-state-data#>

### **Technology Lab**

With the support of UT Libraries and Information Technologies, SSS boasts a technology lab equipped with eight computers and a network printer.

Through the support of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, SSS has been able to maintain a selection of lower level math and science textbooks that have been superseded

by new editions. Students and tutors can use the previous editions to study while awaiting funds to purchase the most current edition. To support this program, all students are encouraged to donate their books to the library. These resources are stored in the Technology Lab along with other support materials for students.

### **Rocketing to Success**

Rocketing to Success workshops help SSS students become more effective in college, introduce college success skills, and assist students with career development.

SSS hosted 37 workshops on topics that included goal setting, time management, memory techniques, reading strategies, note-taking skills, test-taking skills, critical thinking, communicating with faculty, and utilizing college resources.

### **Graduate/Professional School Preparation**

Each spring semester, the SSS advisors collaborate with the College of Graduate Studies to conduct a Graduate School Preparation workshop. The workshop addresses how to select a graduate program, understand the application process, and research funding sources for continued study.

### **5th Annual Welcome Back Celebration**

Held in 2014 on September 10, the Welcome Back party is an annual orientation program for new and returning students, offering an opportunity to become familiar with the program staff and TRIO resources, as well as providing a comfortable setting to meet new people.

### **Punch Party**

The 8th annual Punch party was held the week before Spring break to raise awareness of topics related to popular Spring break destinations.

Speakers from the UT Police and UT Counseling Center spoke on the following topics related to spring break: the legal ramifications of engaging in inappropriate behavior, how to protect yourself, awareness of local laws, and ways to prevent and protect against abusing alcohol, date rape, and unsafe party practices.

### **Financial Aid Information**

Each new student is given a financial aid assessment on their knowledge of key financial aid issues. Students who score low on the pre-assessment are given immediate advising and information about Financial Aid, including handouts from the Financial Aid Toolkit website. Each semester, new and continuing students are encouraged to attend the financial aid workshop sponsored by Rocket Solution Center.

Rose Neuser and Lisa Hasselschwert of Rocket Solution discussed financial aid and scholarships in a workshop titled, "How Do I Pay for This?"

### **11th Annual Spring Into Summer**

Students, together with their families and friends, attended the 11th Annual Spring Into Summer banquet on April 16, 2014. UT Success Coach Jose Rosales addressed the group on succeeding as a first generation college student and never giving up. Graduating seniors addressed the audience and reflected on their experiences at UT as members of the SSS program. More than 50 students were honored for their academic success during the 2013 calendar year.

## UT IS COMMITTED TO TRIO SSS

TRiO SSS at The University of Toledo occupies a space conducive to its mission and objectives in Carlson Library.

### **Professional Development**

With the support of the College of Graduate Studies, SSS provided professional advising and programming experience to graduate students. These students, who share similar backgrounds with SSS students, gain further expertise in their fields, develop professional skills, and acquire interpersonal effectiveness and leadership experience. Skills learned in the assistantships prepare students not only for higher-education, but also for corporate, government, and nonprofit organizations.

Staff members received training in the following areas: customer service (iCare), FERPA, sexual assault, Office of Academic Accessibility, and SAFE PLACE – LGBTQ in order to improve their professional practice by further developing and applying the knowledge and skills necessary to help students learn.

### **University Commitment**

All program activities are designed to improve the quality of student life and learning for program participants. The cooperation and support of the University community is vital in ensuring student retention, both in the SSS program and at the University.

Over the years, our program has built relationships with offices across campus in order to best advocate for the needs of our students. Our collaborative partners are:

- Learning Enhancement Center
- Counseling Center
- Experiential Learning and Career Development
- College of Graduate Studies
- The Writing Center
- Commuter and Off-Campus Services
- Office of Student Involvement
- Office of Excellence and Multicultural Student Success
- Student Disability Services

Student Support Services has consistently offered retention services by creating a supportive environment for students who traditionally have lower degree attainment rates. The University of Toledo TRIO Student Support Services received \$291,016 in grant monies during the 2013-2014 fiscal year to fund services for 152 or more eligible students (approximately \$1,440 per student). The University of Toledo contributed \$52,455 toward the project, which included matching dollars for student grants, along with other program costs associated with the primary SSS budget.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**TOLEDO**  
1872