The Realness of a Student

Barbara Browning expressed surprise when she reminded herself that 1,300 students have benefited from TRIO Student Support Services since she began as director in 1997.

“That is surprising to me because we have to stay so focused on helping our current students [that we don’t] take the opportunity to look at our past successes,” Browning said. “We have 333 undergraduate students now, and our staff must attend to that group as our priority. It seems surreal when thinking about 1,300 students because the first year we began we worried about getting 125 students.”

Student Support Services originated with a U.S. Department of Education TRIO grant aimed at helping first-generation and low-income students. Of the enrollment currently served by the program, about 95 percent are the first in their families to attend college, and 80 percent are both first-generation and low-income students.

“You won’t find a string of likenesses through our students,” Browning said. “We have students from all socioeconomic, educational, and age levels. You might see a student from a higher economic background, but that student is a first-generation student from a small rural town who has a need for the program to adjust to a large urban campus. On the other hand, we have students who can barely make ends meet. Diversity in our program represents race, gender, high school, the community the student is from, and admission scores, as well as socioeconomic conditions.”

Browning’s staff includes a financial aid advisor, administrative assistant, and two academic advisors.

“Our staff must stay focused on supporting our students,” Browning said. “That focus means supporting and nourishing the development of every student. We create an environment that allows students to grow and make mistakes, but always feel safe. They grow as they make progress toward their degrees.”

“I usually work closer with juniors and seniors because of the rapport I have developed with them over the years. A lot of times this is about changing their majors to fit their skills or personalities. Mainly my role is to complement my staff in how we support our students. We must stay involved with our student body. That is the key to our success.”

Student Support Services – The Name Says It All!

By Samantha Nobbe

Student Support Services (SSS) is an IUPUI University College program designed to help students with person-specific support. It provides a variety of services that include academic advising, free academic tutoring, assistance with their new college life on campus, and financial aid counseling/workshops as well as assistance in applying for financial aid. In addition, first-year students are mentored by a student in the program who is a junior or senior.

To be eligible for this program a student must be a first-generation student (neither parent has received a bachelor’s degree), or they must be in need of academic support, have a disability, or have financial needs (in accordance with federal guidelines).

Opportunities for Giving

- Scholarships for financial aid
- Summer school
- Support six hours of courses for a student and tutoring staff

The Student Support Services mission is “supporting each student in the program, retaining them in college, and giving them the tools and support necessary to earn their degrees. Through intrusive counseling and advising, academic peer mentoring, and financial aid counseling, Student Support Services provides a supportive and nurturing environment.”

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