



**Internal Program Review  
Self-Study Report**

**Program Name**

<TRIO Student Support Services>

**Self-Study Completed by:**

<Ann Willcockson, Director of TRIO SSS>

**Date Completed:**

<2017-2018>

## **A. Introduction**

The TRIO Student Support Services program serves 140 Helena College students at any given time. It is grant funded and provides services to assist students who are from traditionally underrepresented populations, and who may be considered at risk, or potentially at risk, in regards to completing a college education. TRIO SSS offers a partnership to its participants in overcoming academic, career, financial, and personal challenges that could hinder college completion. The program is designed to increase persistence and completion for its participants.

## **B. Alignment with Mission, Strategic Goals and Core Themes**

The TRIO program supports the college's strategic goal of *promoting student success and achievement*. TRIO's required services include Academic Tutoring and Assistance, Post-secondary Course Advising, Financial Aid Technical Assistance, Financial Literacy, and Transfer information. These mandatory services support a student in their pursuit of education. In addition, we provide services that enhance their academic and personal development. Acceptance into the program implies students have limited knowledge of the college environment and statistically are less likely to graduate than their peers not belonging to the previously delineated population.

In addition, the TRIO program has developed various initiatives in support of student success. An example was the LEAP program designed to provide at-risk participants in the AA/AS programs with a learning community that addresses not only their academic, but also their social and emotional needs. This served TRIO's need to address non-cognitive attributes such as social belonging and served the college as a precursor to the development of career clusters. TRIO's success in piloting various initiatives has been its ability to develop cross-functional teams. Through collaboration with both academic and student affairs personnel TRIO has been very successful in providing the institution with a way to effectively test various initiatives with a smaller population before expansion. In turn the TRIO program has received institutional support to serve its unique population. Another ongoing example of this is the IPad program supported by TRIO but administered by the Helena College library.

In order for the TRIO program to be responsive to student needs the grant application stipulated that the grant Director have regular access to both the Academic and Student Affairs Deans. The recent institutional reorganization, which has consolidated the senior academic and student affairs positions into one, and has placed the grant director under the student support center director has negated that recommendation. This could jeopardize the director's effectiveness in responding to both TRIO's needs as well as institutional needs. With 50% of the student population being First Generation, it is our recommendation that Helena College reexamine its institutional placement of the TRIO grant.

## **D. Student Participation and Success**

The TRIO SSS must serve 140 students each academic year as stipulated by the grant. Two thirds of the participants must be low income and first generation. The remaining participants selected may qualify

under one criterion however at least one third of all disabled participants must also qualify as low income. This required formula for participants creates certain challenges and limitations for the program’s ability to recruit and serve participants.

**E. Student Learning Outcomes and/or Program Goals**

Each year the Department of Education requires the grantee institution to submit an Annual Progress Report. The 2015-2020 grant narrative for Helena College requires the following outcomes:

- 60% of participants will persist from the beginning of one academic year to the next (graduation, and or transfer counts toward persistence)
- 85% of participants will maintain good academic standing (2.0 GPA)
- 25% will graduate with a degree or certificate within 4 years
- 5% of new participants served each year will transfer with an associate’ degree or certificate within 4 years

The APR for AY 2015-2016 reported the results for the following outcomes:

2015-16 Summary Results for the Standard Objectives (P042A150874)					
Criteria	Maximum Score Allowed	Approved Rate	Actual Attained Rate	Standard Objectives Scores	
Persistence	4	60%	79%	4	
Good Academic Standing	4	85%	93%	4	
Associate’s Degree or Certificate	2	25%	41%	2	
Associate’s Degree or Certificate and Transfer to a 4-Year Institution	2	5%	12%	2	
Funded Number	3	Number of Participants Funded to Serve	Number of Participants Served	Percent Served	3
		140	140	100%	
<b>Total Scores</b>	<b>15</b>				<b>15</b>

Helena College TRIO has met its objectives every year since its inception in 2010. This has allowed the program to receive prior experience points to support renewal for the next grant cycle.

## **G. Faculty/Staff Profile**

Ann Willcockson, the Director of the Program, has a graduate degree (MS) as required by the grant, and was approved for hire by the Department of Education's Program Specialist. Ann attends training on a yearly basis provided by the Council of Education Opportunity to keep abreast of federal regulations and best practices. Ann is in her 4<sup>th</sup> year of employment at the college. She has extensive knowledge of the college's academic programs and student services. Ann is also an experienced higher education professional with extensive knowledge of secondary education, which is pertinent in working with both traditional and non-traditional students transitioning into the post-secondary system.

Stephanie Pung, the Retention Specialist for the program, has a master's degree in English. Stephanie will regularly attend training provided by ASPIRE (Regional association) and Montana ASPIRE (local chapter). Stephanie will also attend National Academic Advising Association NACADA state level meetings to improve advising skills as that is a primary function of her position. Stephanie is in her first year of employment at the college. She has extensive knowledge in recruitment, admission, and advising in a post-secondary setting.

Monica Latham, the Program Assistant, is finishing her Associate's Degree. She is a participant of the TRIO program and has extensive knowledge of the program gained from her participation and employment. She is using her current academic pursuits to enhance her skills.

In addition, TRIO hires various temporary and contract professionals to round out its services for its participants. These include tutors, mental health and wellness coaches, and faculty.

## **H. Fiscal and Physical Resources**

The TRIO program is funded by a federal grant through the Department of Education. The grant award is approximately \$220,000 per year over a 5-year period. This is the second TRIO grant cycle for Helena College 2015/2020. The TRIO grant allows for Helena College to draw down 8% of TRIO funding spent per grant year to support indirect costs. This year that would be \$18,500 if we spend down completely. It should be noted that the grant period award and budget begins September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

The college provides additional targeted operational funds to support the success of the program and to help the program give back to the institution. This is necessary because of federal budget guidelines that prohibit or restrict certain expenditures such as food, which are vital to the success of many of the grant initiatives. Currently, the college allocates approximately \$3,000 each fiscal year for food and additional training costs. This has allowed TRIO to build community by increasing participation and social engagement. Social engagement and a sense of belonging have enabled TRIO to have strong retention and completion rates.

In addition, the college has agreed to pay 5% of the Director's salary allowing for contributions to the Helena College community through committee work, such as facilitating the CARE Team or participating on College Council and the new Advising Committee. Collaboration, joint programming and various partnerships such as the iPad program have benefited the college as well as the larger TRIO eligible population. TRIO serves 14% of the college population; however, the total First Generation population

is 50% and Pell Grant Recipients 49%. By collaborating with the college in joint initiatives, TRIO can serve the larger TRIO eligible population and further support the campus community.

The space to serve TRIO students can currently accommodate 14 students (10% of participants). Additional space is necessary to better accommodate not only TRIO participants, but also all the special populations served in Donaldson 119. The current space is inadequate for TRIO, much less Veterans Resources and Disability Resources which are currently serving over 200 students each semester. Currently the programs occupying the space serve about 36% of the total on-campus population on an ongoing basis throughout the semester. A comprehensive facility and resource plan is needed to more effectively address the specific needs of this large cohort of Helena College students. I recommend that more of the indirect funds be used to address some of the needs in this area. For instance, funding a portion of the TRIO Program Assistant's compensation would allow the position to serve all of the areas in Donaldson 119 including Disability Resources, Veterans Resources, TRIO, and the Academic Coach.

### **I. Recommendations and Preliminary Implementation Plan**

The current grant cycle began in 2015 and ends August 31, 2020. In order to be competitive in the next grant competition, the program must continuously meet the established objectives along with the competitive priorities. TRIO has developed a number of initiatives in support of our grant priorities. These initiatives are often collaborations with various campus partners such as academic affairs to offer LEAP, Summer UP, and Necessary Narratives and the library with an iPad program. Student Affairs has supported the piloting TRIO Wellness initiative. Each of these various initiatives supported the grant priorities as mentioned in the grant application and are being assessed for effectiveness. In addition, each of these initiatives served a need and benefited the greater Helena College community as well. TRIO's placement in the new institutional structure raises a concern that the TRIO program will no longer be as effective in collaborating and producing various initiatives that serve not only TRIO participants but the greater Helena College student population as well. TRIO recommends that Helena College reexamine the placement of this grant in the new structure.

In addition, our ability to create and serve the community within Donaldson 119 is jeopardized by the limited space and resources necessary for the needs and success of all of our populations. This was raised as an issue when the grant was first developed and still exists today. However, the need has intensified with the space being defined as a space to serve all special populations. We are retention specialists all, TRIO, Veterans Resources, and Disability Resources. We work with our students throughout their time at Helena College. Greater dedication of space and resources such as tutoring, mental health and wellness resources are necessary for the success of our programs in this area. I recommend that we look at the space and resource allocation with the acknowledgment that Donaldson 119 is now being viewed collectively serving 36% of the campus population on an ongoing basis. The needs of these populations are currently not being met adequately especially in the area of tutoring, mental health counseling and wellness coaching.

It is our hope that this program and its initiatives will continue to make TRIO a vibrant community where participants have a strong sense of belonging and receive the necessary assistance to be successful. In turn this vibrant TRIO community will give back to the wider community of Helena College. This can only be possible with broad institutional awareness and support. Despite our shared goals and TRIO's success

our institutional support has diminished. We no longer have access to the information needed to anticipate and respond to program and institutional needs. We no longer are encouraged to use our resources to support the larger community through various initiatives. As the institution struggles with enrollment management, TRIO's ability to recruit and maintain its numbers is also being challenged. Yet we are not part of the conversation to address these concerns despite our continued success in retention and completion. In addition, our being viewed as a special program for a special population of 140 is creating additional issues. Four different programs are now sharing a space in Don. 119 and are being looked at collectively but are not being invested in a way that will make them successful. Now more than ever the college needs to support a grant that was viewed important to the institution. Now more than ever dialogue and collaboration needs to occur. The future of the grant as well as its participants' success is in jeopardy. A program that has managed to be successful for the last 7 years in meeting all of its program objectives should be celebrated not sidelined.

**J. Program Review Data Summary**

Summary TRIO – SSS Annual Performance Report (APR) for AY2016-2017.

2016-17 Summary Results for the Standard Objectives (P042A150874)					
Criteria	Maximum Score Allowed	Approved Rate	Actual Attained Rate	Standard Objectives Scores	
Persistence	4	60%	82%	4	
Good Academic Standing	4	85%	93%	4	
Associate's Degree or Certificate	2	25%	52%	2	
Associate's Degree or Certificate and Transfer to a 4-Year Institution	2	5%	17%	2	
Funded Number	3	Number of Participants Funded to Serve	Number of Participants Served	Percent Served	3
		140	141		
<b>Total Scores</b>	<b>15</b>			<b>15</b>	