



SONOMA STATE
UNIVERSITY

First-generation Early Engagement Program

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First-generation Student Support

- **First-generation undergraduate student population: 47%**
- **Long standing first-generation supporting programs**
 - **Educational Opportunity Program**
 - **TRIO Student Support Services**
 - **TRIO Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program**
- **First-gen Forward Institution**

The Issue

- **2019 First-generation retention rate - 83%, compared to continuing generation retention of 79%.**
- **Retention decline beginning in 2020.**
 - **2022 first-generation retention - 72%, compared to 77% of continuing generation students.**

The Intervention

- **2023-24 Early Engagement Initiative focused on first-year and academic probation SSS students.**
- **Collaboration between TRIO SSS and Department of Student Success & Retention (SSR).**
- **Two-component intervention:**
 - **Early alerts**
 - **Engagement activities**

Early Alert Campaign

- **TRIO SSS and SSR developed list of alert types designed to trigger specific action:**
 - **Nudge = message that is sent directly to the student**
 - **Creates Case = a case is opened and assigned to student's advisor. The advisor will reach out to the student to provide resources and interventions to support the student to get back on track.**

Early Alerts - Nudges

Alert	Process	Message Summary
Student doing well in class	Nudge	Professor says you are on track
Low Scores	Nudge	Professor has notified us that you are not scoring well on assignments, check in with professor to let them know what's going and see if you need to catch-up Provide appointment scheduling link for professional advisor
Attendance Concern	Nudge	Professor has noticed you aren't coming to class, check in with professor to let them know what's going and see if you need to catch-up Provide appointment scheduling link for professional advisor

Early Alerts - Creates Case

Alert	Process	Message Summary
Missing Assignments	Nudge & Creates case	<p>Professor has notified us that you are not turning in assignments, check in with professor to let them know what's going and see if you need to catch-up</p> <p>Provide appointment scheduling link for professional advisor</p>
Not Prepared/ Participating in Class	Nudge & Creates case	<p>Professor has noticed you aren't prepared or aren't engaging, check in with professor to let them know what's going and see if you need to catch-up</p> <p>Provide appointment scheduling link for professional advisor</p>

Early Alerts

- **TRIO SSS early alert campaign:**
 - **56 first-year students (46 first-generation)**
 - **22 academic probation students**
- **2 rounds of alerts each semester, September/October 2023 and February/March 2024**
- **Outreach to faculty outlining initiative:**
 - **Alert types and outcomes**
 - **Timeframe**
 - **Instructions for completion**
 - **Faculty support via SSR**

Engagement activities

- **Programming targeted first-year and academic probation SSS students.**
- **Goal of programming was to support retention by:**
 - **Providing encouraging communication from professional and student staff.**
 - **Providing holistic advising rooted in a collaborative student/advisor approach.**
 - **Providing student-led academic success skill building support (one-on-one and small group).**
 - **Community building opportunities.**

Early Intervention Outcomes

➤ First-Year Students:

- 97% of first-year SSS students ended the year in good academic standing returned for Fall 2024.

➤ Academic Probation Students:

- 54% regained good standing at the end of Fall 2023 and returned for the following semester and Fall 2024.
- Of 10 remaining students, 60% returned to good standing at end of semester and returned for Fall 2024.

Connection to Affordability

- **Increasing first-generation retention addresses the financial burden associated with prolonged time in college by reducing the time to degree.**
- **By facilitating a smoother path to graduation, overall cost of college is minimized.**
- **Project goes beyond traditional approaches to improving access and affordability by directly engaging first-generation needs such as navigating campus resources, developing effective study and self-advocacy skills, and building relationships with faculty and staff.**

Scaling First-generation Early Engagement

- **2024-25 - expansion of early alert campaign to:**
 - **Additional first-generation serving programs**
 - **Students not connected to first-generation serving programs**
- **Expanded engagement activities targeted to students included in early alert campaign:**
 - **Weekly peer led academic success group: First-gen Fridays**
 - **First-year student follow-up orientation**
 - **Campus-wide first-generation symposium**
 - **A first-generation graduate recognition ceremony**

A Collaborative Approach

- **Challenges faced by first-generation students extend beyond academic concerns to: socio-economic, cultural, and personal factors.**
- **Increasing retention requires bringing together professionals from diverse fields such as academic advising, counseling, financial aid, student affairs, and faculty members from different departments.**
- **Leveraging cross-functional expertise and resources creates a holistic support system that addresses the multifaceted needs of first-generation students.**



Thank You!

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