

STUDENT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Unit Plan: 2009 - 2014

SEO Mission and Goals:

SEO is composed of numerous projects, most funded through federal grants, with a common mission to provide services that promote access to and success in higher education among Wyoming's disadvantaged or underrepresented secondary school and college students as well as adults wishing to enter postsecondary education. SEO projects work with individuals who are economically disadvantaged, first generation college students, ethnic minorities, and disabled to help them access educational opportunities and to achieve academic success.

SEO projects and staff seek to:

- identify and assist disadvantaged students to plan and prepare for entry into college
- provide disadvantaged students with instruction in student and study skills, career development, and personal development
- increase the high school and college-level retention and graduation rates of these students and facilitate the placement of disadvantaged or underrepresented students in graduate degree programs
- promote institutional and public awareness of the unique needs of the populations served
- further the educational, career, and personal goals of ethnic minority, first generation, disabled, and economically disadvantaged students and promote their potential to thrive in higher education

SEO Previous Planning Accomplishments:

Previous accomplishments include updates to President Buchanan's *Vision and Goals 2007-08*, the short- and long-term goals in the *Student Educational Opportunity (SEO) Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2007*, and the *Student Affairs Support Services Plan II*.

Goal: Accomplishments/Update
<i>Enhance UW partnerships with Wyoming community colleges:</i> GEAR UP partners directly with community colleges to provide services to students • EOC staff work closely with student services offices at colleges to promote non-traditional student access and entry to higher education • The McNair Scholars and Student Success Services programs receive frequent direct referrals of college transfer students to program services, especially from other TRiO program staff in Wyoming • Disability support services offices at UW and in Wyoming colleges have an informal network and meet one to two times per year to share best practices, network, and provide informal training for one another.
<i>Postsecondary student pipeline development:</i> SEO staff members are active in statewide web-based services initiatives • SEO programs continue to form a pipeline from secondary schools to postsecondary education to graduate school through student participation in TRiO and GEAR UP programs • UDSS is beginning to address high school-to-college transition issues among students with disabilities through discussion with secondary school professionals as time and funding permit • SEO hosts three US Department of Education grants serving 2,150 secondary school students statewide with the purpose of increasing college-going rates among disadvantaged students.

Assist in working to increase college-going rates among Wyoming high school graduates: SEO hosts five US Department of Education grants serving 4,650 students with the purpose of increasing college-going rates among disadvantaged students in Wyoming.

Actively participate with state partners to implement and market the Hathaway Scholarship Program to promote the affordability of a UW education to Wyoming residents: SEO is providing workshops on Hathaway availability and student eligibility to Wyoming TRiO and GEAR UP staff serving secondary school students • SEO is developing materials related to maintenance of earned Hathaway Scholarships.

Increase the percentage of student employees from diverse backgrounds within Student Affairs departments: SEO student employees are active participants in our programs which results in a pool of students who are first generation college students from low-income families, ethnic minority students, and students with disabilities.

Continue to enhance internal and external program assessments related to direct service delivery: Grant-funded programs use internal assessment of student outcomes to address employee performance, provision of student services, and barriers to success among target populations • External evaluation is in place through annual A-133 audits and federal annual performance reporting • The UDSS program has undergone a Comprehensive Program Review which provides both an internal and external program assessment • Program assessments have led to changes in course delivery for McNair and SSS courses, recruitment and selection practices in EOC and McNair, supervisory practices in EOC, workload assignments in UDSS, and frequency and mode of communication in the GEAR UP program.

Institutional Issues Relevant to SEO:

The institutional issues of relevance to SEO include **access to higher education** for secondary school students, nontraditional students, and potential transfer students all of which SEO addresses through direct student services to disadvantaged and underrepresented populations and through tracking and assessment of annual student outcomes. Also related to access is UW's goal to **increase opportunities for low-income students to obtain need-based aid**. SEO programs and staff address this goal through partnering with UW offices applying for federal and private funds to support low-income students and through providing direct aid to low-income students through Upward Bound Bridge Program scholarships and stipends, GEAR UP scholarships, Student Success Services stipends, UW Foundation funds distributed to Disability Support Services students, and McNair Scholars Program Research Internship stipends.

Also relevant to SEO programs is the goal of **enhancing partnerships with Wyoming community colleges**. All SEO programs communicate and cooperate, informally and formally, with Wyoming's community colleges through direct placement of staff in community college service areas who work to promote non-traditional student access and entry to higher education, partnering in providing statewide GEAR UP services to low-income secondary school students and their families, promoting referrals of eligible transfer students for participation in SEO programs and services, and working with like-program staff in community colleges to promote common goals and widen the effects of services through activities such as annual meetings among Wyoming's TRiO program staff, managing College Goal Sunday activities, and planning for college-going events and resource fairs in community college service areas.

Action Items and Implementation Tasks for SEO Programs and Staff:

1. Action Item: Student Pipeline Development Among Current and Eligible Participants in Student Educational Opportunity (SEO) Programs

Goal: Establish definitive student referral and services pipelines statewide for students who are disadvantaged in terms of successfully completing high school, earning a Hathaway Scholarship, completing a GED, entering college, persisting in and graduating from college, and entering a graduate degree program.

Implementation Tasks:

- Refine student pipelines within SEO programs to arrange for referral from agencies that are not federal TRiO or GEAR UP programs.
- Work with community colleges to develop two-way referrals that ensure transfers to UW are aware of and receive services for which they're eligible and that SEO pre-college student participants are aware of resources available to them at community colleges.
- Formalize referrals through UW offices such as Admissions, DOS, RLDS, SHS, UCC, CACS, LeaRN, and SFA to ensure that eligible students are referred to SEO services including UDSS, SSS, and McNair.

2. Action Item: Increase the Availability of Need-based Aid to UW Students

Goal: Advocate for increases in the availability of need-based aid to low-income students with a focus on nontraditional students.

Implementation Tasks:

- Support UW departments applying for grants to provide need-based aid by providing current and longitudinal data on nontraditional and/or low-income students served through SEO, referring SEO participants for awards and application for aid, and by providing technical assistance in grant writing when allowed under federal guidelines.
- Increase efforts to make UW campus offices, including academic departments, aware of SEO programs and services in order to increase the degree to which grant writers consider the needs of disadvantaged students, prioritize SEO participants as potential aid recipients, and collaborate with SEO staff in order to increase the likelihood that grants requiring collaboration with current campus programs will be more competitive.

3. Action Item: Develop Student Success Services (SSS) as a UW Learning Community

Goal: Continue development of the Student Success Services Freshman Year Experience as a recognized UW Learning Community with strong, positive outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Implementation Tasks:

- Complete attempts to extend the SSS AS1205 course to include spring semester in students' first year at UW.
- Refine means of recruiting eligible Freshmen to both the SSS program and the Freshman Year Experience.
- Consider block course scheduling in consultation with Enrollment Managers and student feedback.
- Coordinate with UW's Freshman Transitions initiative to maximize attendance and participation of SSS Freshmen and other TRiO- and/or UDSS-eligible students in order to play a role in how program goals are established and carried out.

4. *Action Item: Develop and Promote an Accommodation Model that Allows Faculty Management of Extended-time Test/Exam Accommodations among University Disability Support Services (UDSS) Participants*

Goal: Establish a campus atmosphere and model in which faculty will manage test/exam accommodations for UDSS participants requiring only “extended-time.” In addition to maximizing student access to faculty during testing and allowing faculty to manage the testing environment for their students, this shift in services provision would free up very limited clerical, student services, and administrative resources within UDSS and allow program staff to better manage increases in student caseloads, the demand for alternative format production, and the complexity of services delivered to students.

Implementation Tasks:

- Develop an initial model for faculty management of extended-time test/exam accommodations. Discuss the feasibility of the model and refine procedures under the guidance of a small sample of UW faculty.
- Share a faculty-vetted model with Faculty Senate and other Academic Affairs leaders and representatives with the goal of establishing support for a move toward faculty-based extended-time test/exam accommodations.
- Establish faculty handling of extended-time test/exam accommodations on a limited basis with the objective of moving a substantial majority of extended-time testing under the control of UW faculty by the end of this planning period.

5. *Action Item: Enhance and Move Toward Comprehensive and Effective Access for Students with Disabilities Through Implementation of Recommendations Made by the UDSS Comprehensive Program Review Site Team*

Goal: Continue to examine the mission, expectations, role, resources, and staffing of UDSS to determine how best to effectively address the University’s responsibility to support students with disabilities.

Implementation Tasks:

- Develop a long-term strategic plan to identify a ground floor location with appropriate lighting, ventilation, and adequate student and UDSS staff space.
- Identify resources to better support the services required from UDSS.
- Evaluate and enhance UDSS’ communications plan to enhance awareness of resources available from UDSS.
- As part of the institution’s diversity goals, identify ways to enhance awareness of disability issues, the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, and the understanding of disability as a part of diversity.