



CampusCore, a TRiO Learning Community
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Iowa Western Community College is located in Council Bluffs, Iowa and is recognized as one of the fastest growing community colleges in the region. Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, IWCC offers more than 80 career, college-transfer, and technical programs. Its award winning faculty is committed to enhancing the learning opportunity of all students. IWCC is located just minutes from downtown Omaha, Nebraska and is nestled on 250 beautiful acres in Iowa’s Loess Hills. Iowa Western’s on-campus housing options give students a chance to encounter the ultimate college experience. The majority of students attending Iowa Western have the intention to transfer after graduating with their associate’s degree.

TRiO/Student Support Services Program (TRiO/SSS) provides support and assistance to help students complete their academic studies at IWCC and transfer to a four-year college or university to complete a bachelor’s degree. TRiO/SSS serves first-generation, low-income, and disability students. The TRiO/SSS professional staff provides individualized services that address specific needs of students as they confront the challenges of completing a college degree. The program at IWCC has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education for over 20 years and currently serves 175 participants each academic year. A wide range of services are provided to assist students:

- Tutoring and Peer Mentoring
- Cultural Events
- Technology Loans (laptop computers, digital cameras, scientific calculators)
- Leadership opportunities
- Academic Advising and Personal Counseling
- Transfer Assistance
- CampusCore – living-learning community

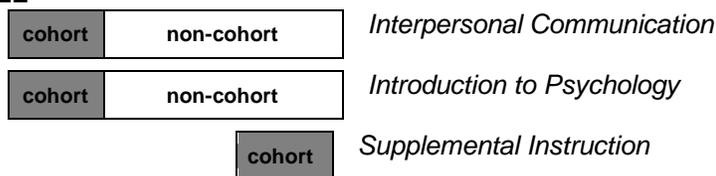
What is CampusCore?

CampusCore is a residential learning community where a small cohort (10-12) of full-time freshmen participate in a unique living/learning experience. Throughout the program, participants take two classes together, live on campus, and participate in Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions and workshops with an academic focus. Students must meet the requirements for and participate in TRiO/SSS. After the completion of the CampusCore program, the students remain regular TRiO/SSS participants until they graduate or transfer from IWCC.

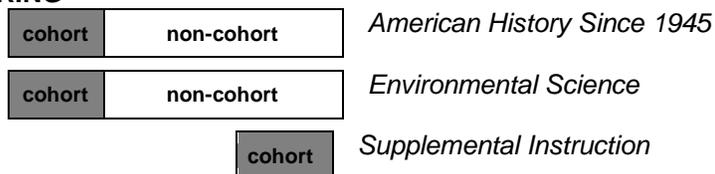
Program Structure

During the project, the cohort enrolled in two linked courses, as outlined below, during both the fall and spring semester. Within these linked courses, the cohort was integrated with other non-cohort students.

FALL



SPRING



Students were required to register for at least two more courses so that they were enrolled full-time. The TRiO/SSS Retention Specialist coordinated and provided SI for one of the linked classes each semester, *Introduction to Psychology* and *Environmental Science*. Through SI, which is an academic support strategy that utilizes peer-assisted study sessions, the cohort learned how to integrate course content and study skills while working together. SI sessions, which were led by a trained academic coach, offered students an opportunity to discuss and process course information.

Key Stakeholders & Campus Partners

In order to develop the learning community at IWCC, the TRiO/SSS partnered with several departments on campus

- Academic Affairs/Faculty – identified faculty and courses
- Student Housing – reserved spaces for students to have guaranteed housing on-campus
- Office of the Registrar – reserved space in the identified courses for participants
- Office of Admissions and Recruiting – recruited and directed new IWCC students to the TRiO/SSS program. Prior to acceptance in the CampusCore program, students had to apply to IWCC and the TRiO/SSS program.

Evaluating CampusCore

Due to the nature of the CampusCore program, it is evaluated on the three TRiO/SSS grant objectives outlined in the grant proposal.

- **Persistence Rate**- students persist towards graduation at IWCC or transferring to a four year institution to complete bachelors degree
- **Good Academic Standing** – students maintain at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average
- **Graduation/Transfer Rate** – students obtain associate degree and/or transfer to a four-year institution

The CampusCore cohort is also evaluated against the non-cohort student groups in each linked class.

Our first attempt: 2006-2007

The first year of the program was a learning experience for everyone, yet it was very successful!

Best Practices:

- Supplemental Instruction was a vital component of a difficult class for entering freshmen.
- Students valued the “extra” support offered by TRiO/SSS and took advantage of it.
- All CampusCore students persisted at IWCC from Fall 2006 to Spring 2007.
- Several students received Phi Theta Kappa – National Honor Society invitations.
- Two students transferred to a four year university after their freshman year.
- Successfully recruited students through advertising materials to students who were TRiO-eligible and applied for on-campus housing.

Lessons Learned:

- Depending on the student’s major, there could be a better lab science option rather than Environmental Science for the student to take in order to meet the graduation requirements. We ran into this problem with students interested in health careers. Therefore, we now allow the students a choice in the spring semester for their lab science: biology, chemistry, environmental science, physical geology, or physics. We will continue to provide tutoring and SI for most entry level science courses.
- Staff should have more contact and involvement with faculty teaching the linked classes. Faculty decided on his/her level of involvement in the program. The students responded well and out preformed in the classes where the faculty was heavily involved in the program. Adjunct faculty is not the best option; however, in some classes it may be the only option.

Where are we at now: 2007-2008

- Faculty are more involved with the program this school year.
- Participants are more involved in other campus activities.
- Several first year participants will graduate this spring and plan to transfer.

Outlook to the Future: 2008-2009

- Develop the residential component of the program more. We would like to hire a student to lead the CampusCore SI sessions AND serve as a Resident Assistant with campus housing in the same building as the CampusCore participants. This specialized RA will be in charge of developing academic programming and peer mentoring sessions for the participants.
- Fall semester is KEY to the students’ connection to the college. Therefore, we are going to focus the programming primarily for the fall semester. During the spring semester, the students will have the lab science option available and be strongly encouraged to get involved in other campus activities.