The National Hispanic University
Student Success Program (SSS)

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SELF STUDY

Program Mission, Goals, and Objectives

1. Mission: to provide participants with expanded tutorial programs beyond English and math; a mentoring/coaching program, an SSS Summer Bridge Program, intensive personal, academic, and financial aid counseling; and cultural/academic enrichment.

2. The objectives of the Student Success Program are the following (see Appendix A):
   a. NHU SSS will select and identify 160 students each year who meet the federal eligibility guidelines and demonstrate the greatest academic need. Of those selected, at least 67% will be both low income and first generation or individuals with disabilities. Up to 33% will be low income (LI), first generation (FG), or individuals with disabilities (IWD). At least 33% of the individuals with disabilities will also be low income.
   b. Of all SSS participants, 70% will be in good academic standing with a 2.0 G.P.A. at the end of the academic year.
   c. To assure that 85% of each entering cohort of students is retained to the third semester (or second year). We project continuing persistence as follows: 73% to the fifth semester; 65% to the seventh semester; 59 % to the ninth semester and 56% to the eleventh semester.
   d. 60% of each entering cohort of SSS participants will graduate within 6 years of admission to the program.
   e. SSS will meet 100% of the administrative requirements, including record keeping, reporting, and financial accountability each year of the program.

3. The goals and objectives of the Student Success Program fit the university’s mission (The mission of The National Hispanic University (NHU) is to enable Hispanics, other minorities, women, and others to acquire an undergraduate degree or certificate using a multicultural educational experience to obtain a professional career in business, education, or technology.) in the following ways:
   a. The program serves low income and first generation students and those with disabilities through their careers in Liberal Studies, Computer Information Systems, Business Administration, Early Childhood Education, Math and Science or Translation/Interpretation.
   b. The program provides/hosts multicultural activities, tutoring, career related workshops, and mentoring opportunities to help retain students
PROGRAM HISTORY

1. The Student Success Program (see SSS committee) was proposed to serve the new population of college students at NHU. The program began to serve students in Fall of 2005. The traditional college age student began to attend NHU and the SSP served as a program that would help high school students transition into college. The NHU Sobrato Building was built just in time for the SSP. Arnulfo Sanchez, an NHU alumnus, also testifies to the changes that have impacted the NHU staff, faculty and student population. An SSP did not exist while he completed his undergraduate degree, therefore, he claims that this program has contributed many changes in the NHU college culture, and supported the academic programs. NHU is well known for its Trio Pre-College programs and we are now able to offer Trio alumni the services of Student Success Program, now the 3rd trio program on campus.

Currently the program serves more than 160 students. Many students benefit from the following services: college workshops (Interview skills, resume building, time management, and stress management), academic tutoring, one on one advising, attending local conferences, and Summer Bridge. The SSP extends their services to as many students who need academic assistance and support. According to our grant objectives our resources are only available to those who qualify for the program; low income, first generation, US citizen, Permanent Residents. There are many NHU students who do not meet eligibility requirements but are academically unprepared and need additional support. It is important that we meet grant requirements but we follow NHU’s open door policy and assist students in other ways that the program cannot service.

2. During the first 3 years of the SSP, the program worked alone. Some but very little collaboration was done between the SAAC, academic departments and the SSP to better serve the students’ needs. The major issues affecting the program was the lack of collaboration with other departments and programs, the lack of staff training, the lack of resources from other departments, and the lack of space in the SAAC.

Many changes have occurred this year, 2008. We are currently addressing the lack of collaboration between all departments. Early in 2008, the new provost, Dr. Necchea directed the SSP and the SAAC to revisit ideas and ways of collaborating to strengthen our services. This Fall of 2008 we were introduced to a third program, the First Year Experience (FYE) which has become an additional support program on campus.

The SSP staff has not participated in enough professional development. The SSP needs professional training and experience in providing career resources. Unfortunately, NHU does not provide students with specific career resources. The Trio community hosts several seminars
and conferences throughout the year and this Fall 2008 we will attend the Council of
Opportunity in Education conference and the NorCal Westop Professional Development
Seminar. The program also plans to continue attending the annual Westop conference. As a
Trio program we must meet with other SSS programs in the bay area that can provide us with
ideas in providing student services. The purpose of the Trio community is for programs to
collaborate and share ideas.

The lack of resources from other departments has affected the SSP because we find ourselves
providing services to more students that we can serve and directing students outside of the
university for additional help. We should be able to serve as many students’ needs on campus.
Their personal lives will always conflict with their academic studies; therefore, services
addressing personal issues should be strengthen at NHU. Students are faced with many issues
on a daily basis, for example, death in the family, depression, stress, etc. NHU does not offer
personal counseling to those students who need it. We are in need of certified therapists or
counselors. Students meet with SSP staff to discuss academic and mentoring issues, but when
addressed with more serious personal matters, they are referred to an outside organization.
The SSP works on a referral basis; when students seek personal counseling services we refer
them to organizations in the community. In the next year we plan to refer more students to the
First Year Experience program where their personal needs may be addressed.

During the last two years we have found that more office/storage space and desk space is
needed for the program to run effectively. It is difficult to meet with students in a small setting
when the program has 3 staff members who meet with students on a daily basis. The SSP
utilizes the space in the SAAC to meet with students and tutor/mentor them. Now with an
additional program, the First Year Experience, it is more difficult to provide space for our staff.

In the next five years, we will be able to address the issues mentioned above. The university is
experiencing many changes and they all involve providing better services for the students.
PROGRAM QUALITY

1. The SSS must serve 160 program participants. Currently the program has improved during the last five years in the following ways: the number of participants served in fiscal year 2005-2006 was 145 and in fiscal year 2006-2007 it increased to 176 participants. The number of employees hired for SSP has increased from 1 person: Director of the program, to now 5 employees: 1 Director, 1 Retention Specialist, 1 Academic Specialist, 1 Office Assistant, 1 Peer Tutor. During the Summer Bridge program we hire additional staff: the 5 SSP employees, 2 professors, and 4 additional peer mentors, a total of 11 staff.

The summer bridge component of the SSP has helped students build relationships with their colleagues, faculty, and staff. During the first summer bridge in 2006 the SSP hosted 49 students, during the second year in 2007 we hosted 29 students, and during the third year in 2008 we hosted 17 students. The number of student participants has decreased every year.

During the first 2 years (2005-2007) of the SSP, the previous Program Director, Mr. Cruz, was also a UNI-100 First Year Seminar professor. This course must be taken by all incoming freshmen. The Director’s relationship with the students was strong because he spent class time with them and had the opportunity to get to know the students on an individual basis. This allowed the SSP to recruit students from the UNI 100 courses and build relationships with them. As a professor, Mr. Cruz required students to attend the SSP activities and events for class participation, and as a Director he encouraged students to attend and bring other students who didn’t know about the program.

During the last five years our visibility on campus has increased but the relationship with our students has changed particularly because we do not have enough visibility in the freshmen classrooms. Every year we provide workshops on resume building, interviewing skills, stress relief, and volunteer opportunities. In addition, we provide student involvement opportunities such as men and women leadership groups (M.A.R.I.P.O.S.A. & H.O.M.B.R.E.S.), trips to the Latina Coalition of Silicon Valley luncheons, and Intensive Care Unit hospital tours through March of Dimes. We have built relationships with other academic departments, professors, and students. Many students come to our program in hopes of being introduced to other students, staff, and faculty. We have become the program who introduces first year students to the NHU college culture.

The program activities have attracted students on campus and encouraged them to participate and get involved. During the Volunteer in Your Community Day in 2006, the SSP hosted over 12 organizations to provide students with volunteer opportunities. A total of about 45 students attended the event. During the SSP International Day in 2006, an estimate of 50 students
attended the event. This event included a multicultural fashion day, a tasting of foods from different countries, poetry reading in various language and entertainment. The program provides mixers/socials at the beginning and end of every module to reconnect with students and staff; an estimate of 25 students attends. Icebreakers, food, and refreshments are provided. We find that providing snacks and refreshments attracts more students to attend.

2. Collaboration meetings between the SAAC, SSP, and the library begun in Spring 2008. The SAAC, SSP, and the First Year Experience will collaborate under one umbrella to serve students, improve retention, persistence and graduation rates. All 3 programs will collaborate with other departments on campus, such as Outreach and Recruitment, the academic departments, the library, and the Pre-college programs to increase the visibility of our services and encourage students to participate in at least one of the programs. The SSP staff and the FYE staff will work closely with each other. Weekly staff meetings have been established to initiate the collaboration our services. The First Year Experience program will be of great help when dealing with first year college freshmen. We will be able to directly refer students to other resources on campus. The SSP tutors and SAAC tutors will combine resources, space, and experience to best serve the students. The SSP is located is in the SAAC, where there is daily student traffic. This serves as a benefit to us because we are able to interact and see program participants.

During the next academic year August 2008- August 2009, the SSP will be collaborating with the SAAC and the First Year Experience program to strengthen the services and provide students with an established academic advising system, career assessment and retention services. Each program will share its calendar to avoid duplicating services and events. We hope to refer students who do not meet SSP eligibility requirements to the First Year Experience Program and SAAC to help meet their needs. The SSS grant ends in August 2009. The NHU Grant office will be submitting a renewal application for the Student Support Service trio program in October 2008.

3. The technological needs of the SSP include the following: laptop use, telephone, internet/wireless, and access to the network. All SSP full time staff have mobile laptops to provide a better service to the students. The part-time staff also need a mobile laptop or desktop to complete job duties. Many times the laptop is not available; therefore the staff cannot perform the duties in a timely manner. A desktop has not been provided for the part-time staff. The SSP office is too small to serve several students at the same time. Many times either staff member has to step out to give the students and staff the privacy and space for a conversation. The entire NHU and SSP need more IT resources including updated programs and computers, printers and trained professional IT personnel. This can avoid delays, lack of internet service, and lack of connectivity to certain programs. During the past year the entire NHU faculty and staff have struggled with getting internet service, access to sending and receiving work and personal emails and difficulty using E-advisement when advising students. NHU does allow the
SSP to include online program information, the application, and summer bridge program on its website.

The SSP has its own database called Student Access where all student data (eligible students and non-eligible) is entered. The program pays for technical support and Heiberg Consulting does a great job at providing technical assistance for this program.

NHU does a great job in providing computer use for SSP students in the SAAC, library, and third floor computer room. Students have access to internet and Microsoft Office and other programs. When the SSP tutors help students, there are sufficient computers for them.

Last year NHU provided all registered students an NHU student email. The SSP attempted to send messages to students using their NHU emails. The problem is that many students do not activate their accounts or go to the Registrar’s office to receive their log-in and password. We would like to improve the way we communicate with our students through email. Many times we find ourselves calling students to invite them to our workshops and activities. It would be more convenient to have updated student emails and phone numbers. NHU does use FX Scholar to store student information, but that information is many times outdated. Two years ago, the SSP attempted to communicate with students through www.myspace.com, a networking website that allows you to connect with friends. This method did not work because the program space has to be updated daily or weekly and we didn’t have one specific person assigned to do that. The webpage also brought corrupted files to the program computers at times. The SSP also plans to update the program link with our calendar, program activities, pictures of past events, and an opportunity to make online appointments with tutors.

4. Employee profile:
   a. New employees are mentored by the SSP Director and Retention Specialist. They receive an NHU tour, they get introduced to NHU staff and faculty, and receive a program orientation and during the first staff meeting they are required to present on what they know about the program. Each employee is given an overview on how to fill out paperwork, and timesheets. An NHU catalog is given to them if they are not familiar with the NHU academic programs and services. An employee handbook is also given to them. SSP employees are required to attend Town Hall meeting, staff luncheons, and campus events to help them familiarize themselves with other employees and with the university.

   An employee who will be directly advising students, such as the Academic Specialist and Retention Specialist receives training from Michael Jordan, NHU faculty, on General Studies and the transfer agreement between NHU and San Jose State University.
b. The SSP is a federally funded trio program therefore the Department of Education requires our SSS Trio program to submit an Annual Performance Report to evaluate program effectiveness. We use the Student Access database to submit the report. The Student Access database serves as a tool that provides students demographic information, tutor information, student and staff contact information, counseling reports, eligibility reports, and persistence and retention reports. The program also looks at how many students attend a particular event to evaluate the communication between the staff and the student. If it is a well attended event, with more than 30 students, then we consider it was a successful event. We also look at how many students visit the office by providing every employee with a sign in sheet. We then look at the purpose of the visit. During the first two years of the program the students received our program invitations and attended many of our workshops. During the Fall of 2007 we noticed a decrease of students attending program events and visiting the program office. At different times of the year, the SSP Director reviews the program budget. The program budget is also a reflection of how organized the program is running, how many student/staff activities are held, and if the money is being used.

c. Plans for enhancing program effectiveness are the following: taking action after the program review and self study results are reviewed, using all or most of the features in the Student Access database, working with the SAAC and First Year Experience to review the program services and calendar, and requesting and receiving monthly reports from the Finance Department to review current program expenses.

d. The SSS grant allows hiring 2 full time staff, the program Director and the Retention Specialist. Full-time staff is required to work 40 hours a week. The rest of the staff is part time: the Academic Specialist, Office Assistant, Peer Tutors, Peer Mentor/ Coaches, Faculty /Summer Instructors. Part-time staff work 18-20 hours a week. The Peer Tutors work directly with the students and are supervised by the Academic Specialist. The Peer Mentor/Coaches are hired during the Summer Bridge Program and are supervised by the Retention Specialist. The Office Assistant is supervised by the Director of the program. The summer faculty is supervised by the Program Director. All program staff works directly with students not including the Office Assistant.

e. When the program has job openings the NHU Human Resources office will post them on www.edjoin.org. The program has an account with the San Jose State career center and the program job openings are posted their as well. Several community colleges such as San Jose City College, Evergreen Community College and De Anza Community College post our job openings in their career centers and websites. Employees are asked to submit a cover letter and resume with related job experience. If the employee meets that process then he/she is interviewed by the Program Director and the Retention Specialist using interview questions that have been revised the HR office. All
interviewees are asked the same questions. The interview questions are then rated on a scale from 1-5. The interviewee with the highest score will be reviewed and possibly hired by the program.

The program has hired staff based on their education, experience, past roles and responsibilities, and other abilities and skills. The Director, Retention Specialist and Academic Specialist must have at least an undergraduate degree completed. A Master’s Degree is required for the Director position and preferred for the Retention Specialist position. The Office Assistant must have a minimum of an associate’s degree. The Peer Tutors, Peer Coaches/Mentors are usually college students, and must have a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA, be enrolled at a college or university, and have upper division standing. The summer instructors must have a Master’s Degree in the subject they are teaching.

Employees must have a great understanding of what Trio programs are, have prior experience in working with students at different levels, must understand the challenges of students and succeeded overcoming barriers, and must complete the application and interview process. Recently we have evaluated the program’s hiring process and have agreed that all employees must go through a probationary period. After 3 months probationary period, new employees will go through a performance evaluation (See Appendix C). The employee and the supervisor will complete an evaluation and then it will be reviewed by both parties. At that point an agreement will be made with the help of HR to decide if employee has met his/her roles and responsibilities.

f. Employees’ resumes. See Appendix B.

5. The National Hispanic University has experienced many program changes since the SSP started in Fall 2005. During the first two years many of the program services were delivered directly from the program employee to the student. The Pre-College Programs, Upward Bound and the Esperanza Education Talent Search as well as the Outreach and Recruitment team collaborated with the SSP during the first 2-3 years to help recruit participants and inform incoming freshman of the services offered. Services were offered and announced to the SAAC, library, and academic departments but there was little or no collaboration done.

Currently the Provost has initiated the collaboration between the SAAC, the First Year Experience, and the Student Success Program to allow students to benefit from our services. All three programs are now under the Center for College Success, which is located in the 2nd floor, best known as the SAAC. During the Fall of 2008 the SSP will be coordinating with the SAAC and FYE program to deliver workshops, student activities, host student led events, assist the first year students during Summer Bridge, provide career assessments, provide self-assessment
inventories, provide individual and group tutorial sessions, and motivate students to become involved in outside activities.

6. The SSP works with academic departments and faculty to improve delivery of student support services in various ways. The Program Director, the Retention Specialist, and the Academic Specialist have been trained by a full time faculty member with information regarding academic advising for the undeclared, General Studies, and transfer students. The Program Director and Retention Specialist are authorized to sign registration worksheets and advise students every semester. The SSP tutors and Academic Specialist are required to assist classrooms, present the program services, recruit students and initiate study groups for the Math 40, Math 45, Math 100, English 40, English 45, and English 100 courses. During every module, the chair of General Studies forwards a list of students who are on the midterm report (students receiving a “C” or below in their current course) and the SSP contacts those who are program participants to request a follow up academic meeting. The results of the student and staff meeting is recorded and sent back to all department chairs.

The SSP staff maintains open communication with NHU staff and faculty. At the beginning of every module we visit the UNI 100- First Year Seminar courses and present our services. At that time we recruit students for the program. We present our services and activities in the NHU Comunicado, a weekly email that addresses NHU familia. The Program Director also attends the biweekly Academic Planning Council meetings update all academic departments and faculty on what the program is doing. During that meeting, all department chairs and others report and provide updates for everyone. Currently we hire tutors in other subject areas that the SAAC may need help in. The Program Director attends Quality Assurance Committee meetings where issues concerning student support services are addressed. The Retention Specialist has also agreed to participate in the Retention Committees where staff and faculty can continue the conversation of improving the delivery of services.