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FLATHEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The TRIO/Student Support Services project on the Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC) campus is designed to provide low-income, first generation, and disabled students with services that increase their chances of success in postsecondary education. FVCC is a comprehensive community college dedicated to promoting economic, cultural, and social development in its community. FVCC's mission is to promote excellence in lifelong learning, focused on student success and community needs. The college offers over 50 associate of applied science degrees and certificates in addition to associate of arts and associate of science degrees that transfer to 4-year universities.

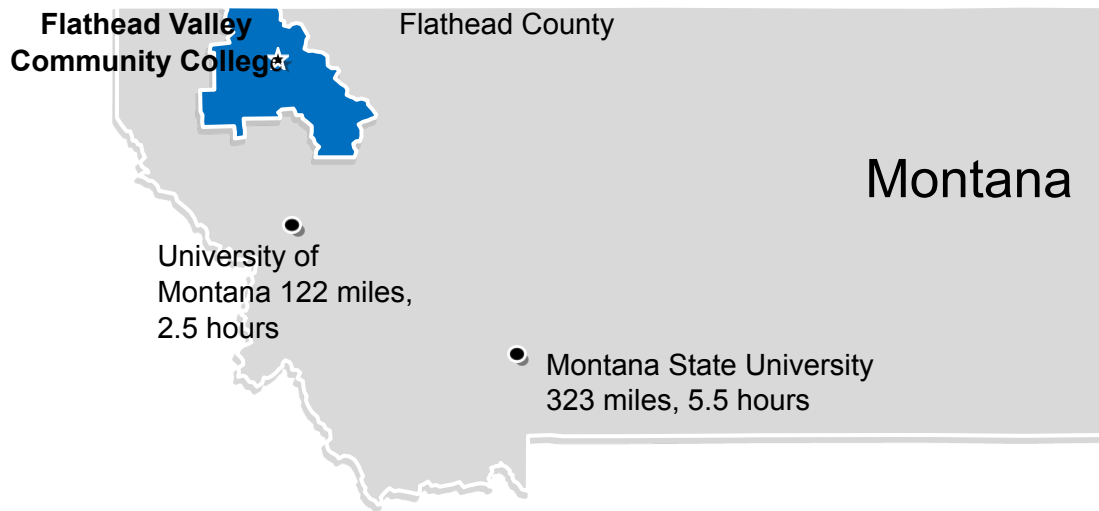
The College is guided by a philosophy of providing access to education for all people regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, or economic disadvantage; assisting individuals in their pursuit of educational and vocational goals by helping students overcome economic barriers to education and providing affordable, high-quality education. FVCC offers an open-door admissions policy and is sensitive to the ever-changing and varying needs of the community. The College is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Although Montana ranks fourth among all states in size, it ranks 43rd in population. Just over one million people are spread across 145,552 square miles. Montana is a rural state with only three urban areas over 50,000 in population. Current U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis statistics indicate that the annual, per capita, personal income in Montana is \$56,936 (2023). Montana ranks 34th in the nation for median household income. Montana ranks 33rd when it comes to cost of living. That means Montana is more expensive to live in than over half of the country (Missouri Economic Research and Information Center). The state's

economy has been dominated by agriculture and natural resource development (farming, ranching, timber products, oil and natural gas, coal and metal mining) and has continued growth in the service and tourism industries as the “Last Best Place” is discovered.

Flathead Valley Community College is in the mountainous northwest corner of Montana, in the city of Kalispell in Flathead County (approximately the size of Connecticut), and the county has a population of 104,354 (20.5 people per square mile).



The mission of FVCC is unique in that it is the only institution of higher education directly serving one of the most remote and isolated areas in the contiguous 48 states. The closest universities are 122 and 323 miles from Kalispell. FVCC is the only opportunity to access higher education in Flathead County for students who are place-bound and wish to pursue a traditional, classroom education.

FLATHEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRIO/SSS AT A GLANCE

NEED Barriers to success for students	Large number of disadvantaged students at FVCC with academic need and challenges to success (GPA, retention/persistence, graduation, and graduation and transfer):				
	Low placement scores, Low GPA's	Limited resources for academic support	Limited academic advising available	Lack of financial literacy knowledge	Limited academic, career, and personal counseling
OBJECTIVES Measures of success in overcoming barriers	70% of all enrolled participants served in the reporting year by the SSS project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next				
	92% of all enrolled SSS participants served will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution (2.0 at FVCC)				
	40% of new participants served each year will graduate from the grantee institution with an associate degree or certificate within 4 years				
	20% of new participants served each year will receive an associate's degree or certificate from the grantee institution and transfer to a four- year institution within 4 years				
PLAN OF OPERATION Activities and services prescribed to meet the needs of individual students	Conduct Needs Assessment for each student and develop an individualized Student Success Plan to include:				
	Placement in appropriate remedial classes and TRIO classes	Tutoring, mentoring	Advising prior to each semester, Transfer advising	Financial literacy instruction, scholarship application assistance	Supplemental academic, career, and personal counseling
INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT	FVCC commitment for the SSS project includes health insurance benefits for benefits-eligible TRIO staff, facilities, receptionist, marketing, offices, office furnishings and computers, photocopy, postage, telephone, cooperation and support of all FVCC offices, including faculty for remedial courses, and writing, math and science lab instructors				

PERSONNEL	Director, Program Assistant, Career/Academic Advisor, Disability Coordinator, Tutor Coordinator/Advisor, Advisors (Health Science, Business/Social Science), tutors, mentors
BUDGET	Staff salaries, travel/professional development, operating and instructional supplies
EVALUATION	Database to track student progress, online student satisfaction surveys, formative and summative evaluations, data shared by Institutional Research, CAS standards administered by SSS staff.

(A)

NEED

1. A HIGH NUMBER OR PERCENTAGE, OR BOTH, OF STUDENTS ENROLLED OR ACCEPTED FOR ENROLLMENT AT THE APPLICANT INSTITUTION WHO MEET THE ELIGIBILITY

The need for a Student Support Services (SSS) project at FVCC is evident by both the high number and high percentage of eligible students. During the 2022-23 academic year, **1,013 or 66.3%** of degree seeking students met one or more of the three SSS eligibility criteria: low-income, first generation, or an individual with a disability, or an individual with a disability and low-income. Table A1 summarizes the number of students at FVCC who meet the eligibility requirements for TRIO/SSS. The most recent data available on degree seeking students was collected to reflect the current student population throughout the Need section.

Table A1: 2022-23 Number and Percentage of FVCC Students Eligible for SSS		
Groups	Headcount	Percentage
Low-income students	232	15.2%
First generation students	405	26.5%
Students with disabilities	54	3.5%
Low-income and first generation students	276	18.1%
Low-income and students with disabilities	46	3.0%
Students proven SSS-eligible	1,013	66.3%
All degree seeking students	1,527	
Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.		
Numbers and percentages are unduplicated.		

LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

Low-income students were identified by using the adjusted gross income, family size and exemptions, and filing status collected by the Financial Aid Office. This information was used to calculate taxable income. From the TRIO federal regulation 646.3, a low-income student is an

individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150% of the poverty level amount determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Census Bureau.

Of all FVCC degree-seeking students, **36.3%** meet the criteria for low-income.

FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

Federal TRIO regulation 646.7 defines a first generation college student (FGCS) as “a student neither of whose natural or adoptive parents received a baccalaureate degree; or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree; an individual prior to age 18 did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or an adoptive parent.” Nearly half of all FVCC degree-seeking students, **44.6%**, are first generation. Of all first-generation students, **40.5%** are also low-income at FVCC.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101) a student with a disability “...means a person who has a diagnosed physical or mental impairment that substantially limits that person’s ability to participate in the educational experiences and opportunities offered by the grantee institution.” During the 2022-23 academic year, **6.5%** of degree-seeking students self-identified as students with disabilities. Of students with disabilities at FVCC, **46%** are also low-income.

2. EVIDENCE OF THE ACADEMIC AND OTHER PROBLEMS THAT ELIGIBLE STUDENTS ENCOUNTER AT THE APPLICANT INSTITUTION.
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ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

FVCC has an open-door admissions policy, admitting anyone with a high school diploma or GED/HiSET. Table A2 indicates **over 12%** of SSS eligible students at FVCC in 2022-23 entered with a GED or HiSET **compared to only 4% of SSS non-eligible students.**

**Table A2: FVCC Entering Freshmen with a HiSet/GED 2022-23			
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non-Eligible	Difference
Entered FVCC with HiSet/GED	12.6%	4%	8.6
<i>Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.</i>			

The college's commitment to meeting the community's needs and facilitating academic success means that offering remedial course work is essential.

Placement scores indicate that **48.4%** of SSS-eligible students entering FVCC during the 2022-2023 year were not ready for either freshman college-level math or writing. As seen in Table A3, SSS-eligible students are placed into remedial math and remedial writing at significantly higher rates than SSS non-eligible students.

Table A3: FVCC Academic Placement in Remedial Math and Writing			
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non Eligible	Difference
Remedial Placement	48.4%	39.5%	8.9%
<i>Remedial Math</i>	41.7%	33.9%	7.8%
<i>Remedial Writing</i>	17.2%	12.3%	4.9%
<i>Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024</i>			

In addition, **51.1%** of first generation, low income students are placed in remedial math and **21.4%** in remedial writing courses and students with disabilities and low income were placed at **40%** remedial math and **25%** in remedial writing, respectively.

The college provides walk-in math and science tutoring. Due to the high needs of FVCC's student population, there is not enough tutoring staff to help students. This is especially true during mid-term and final exam weeks. The limited availability of staff restricts time to work with students to improve study habits and academic skills. Additionally, the science and math lab hours are limited to weekdays. To accommodate the schedules of working students, consistent, weekly tutoring

sessions that are flexible and scheduled regularly is a necessity for TRIO eligible students.

During the past two academic years, 2022-2023 and 2023-24, **39%** of students in need of academic support through TRIO/SSS programming were non-traditional. Non-traditional students are defined as 25 years of age and older. These students have been out of the academic pipeline for over five years, typically need to begin college in remedial classes, and have jobs and family that make it difficult to balance life demands with academic commitments. Due to the numerous demands on these students, they can only attend college as part-time students. Part-time status is defined as less than 24 credits per academic year.

During the 2022-23 academic year, **63%** of students seeking TRIO services were enrolled part-time, and in 2023-24, **61%** were enrolled part-time (Source: TRIO/SSS APR Data). Students enrolled part-time are less likely to complete a college degree: “Exclusively full-time students are nearly four times as likely than part-time students” to complete [Source: Shapiro, D., Ryu, M., Huie, F., Liu Q., and Zheng, Y. (December 2019), *Completing College 2019 National Report* (Signature Report 18), Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center]. Of students who began their studies at FVCC in Fall 2021 and returned in Fall 2022, 54% of full-time students returned compared to 46% of part-time students (National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2024).

In comparing the amount of time for FVCC students to complete a degree, Table A4 shows SSS eligible students take **41%** longer to earn their degree than SSS non-eligible students.

Table A4: FVCC Time to Degree 2022-2023			
	SSS Eligible	SSS Non-Eligible	Difference
Time to Earn Degree (Years)	4.1 years	2.9 years	1.2 years
<i>Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.</i>			

According to FVCC’s Office of Institutional Research, at any one time, up to **26.8%** of

FVCC students identify as “undecided” and **52.4%** identify as “general education” majors.

Table A5: FVCC Degree Declared 2022-2023		
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non-Eligible
Undecided	26.8%	14.8%
General Studies	52.4%	63.4%
<i>Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.</i>		

Successful retention of disadvantaged students correlates highly with clear career goals.

Disadvantaged students at FVCC are characteristically uninformed about career and college program options and unclear about academic paths that lead to chosen careers. These students may lack role models for careers that are different from their families’ traditional work. TRIO eligible students have a need for in-depth career exploration and guidance in choosing an appropriate career path.

FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES

The majority of FVCC’s students rely on financial aid to attend college. Table A6 illustrates the necessity of financial aid for SSS eligible students with **17.6%** acquiring student loans to pay for college compared to **9.3%** of SSS non-eligible students.

Table A6: FVCC Percent of Students with Loans AY 2023			
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non-Eligible	Difference
Percentage of Student Loan	17.6%	9.3%	8.3
<i>Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.</i>			

With over **36.3%** of students attending FVCC considered low-income (see Table 1), it is crucial that students receive information about financial aid opportunities and advice on how to manage financial aid awards, especially student loans. The FVCC Financial Aid Office does not take appointments with students. The primary form of communication is through mail and email. Students

are often confused about priority deadlines, the timeline of aid disbursement, and the requirements of maintaining aid eligibility. In addition, students who receive notice that they are on financial aid warning assume they can no longer receive aid. Without aid, these students will not return to college. They often forego the financial aid appeal process.

Traditional-age, TRIO eligible students have minimal understanding of how loans will impact their future financial well-being. The short-term benefit overrides the long-term consequences of making risky financial decisions. They often do not look at the monthly loan repayment amounts, the cost of interest, or the timelines for beginning repayment. Table A7 breaks down the difference in amount SSS eligible students borrow, which shows they take out almost twice as much in loans on average compared to their peers.

Table A7: FVCC Mean Loan Amount Borrowed		
	SSS Eligible	SSS Non-Eligible
Amount of Student Loan Borrowed	\$953.70	\$536.47
Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.		

As shown in Table 1, over **40%** of degree seeking students at FVCC are first generation college students (FGCS). Being the first in the family to attend college, many of these students are unfamiliar with the structure and expectations of higher education. The pace and rigor of college courses is unexpected and higher education vocabulary is unfamiliar. Hence, these students struggle with the transition.

Because FGCS parents lack knowledge of how the high school curriculum relates to college preparation, they are less likely to encourage enrollment in advanced courses or place importance on performing well in school. Some FGCS attend college without any support from family because parents lack an understanding of the value in higher education, thus college is not prioritized. Without support, these students may themselves shoulder the entire financial burden of college.

First generation college students can feel out of place on campus as they try to navigate a new system. It is important for them to be able to connect with students with similar backgrounds and experiences and to enter college feeling welcomed and accepted.

In an environment that requires a high degree of self-advocacy and self-sufficiency, it is important that first generation college students have the opportunity to learn these skills from peers [Source: Redford, Jeremy and Kathleen Mulvaney Hoyer (September 2017), *First-Generation and Continuing-Generation Students: A Comparison of High Schools and Postsecondary Experiences* (Stats in Brief) National Center for Education Statistics].

3. EVIDENCE OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ELIGIBLE SSS STUDENTS COMPARED TO AN APPROPRIATE GROUP BASED ON THE FOLLOWING INDICATORS:

3(i). RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES.

In 2022-2023 retention rates show that non-eligible SSS students are more likely to persist from fall semester to fall semester at 62% than SSS eligible students at **59%**.

Table A8: FVCC Retention Rate and Graduation Rate 2022-2023			
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non-Eligible	Difference
Retention Rate <i>Baseline Objective A</i>	59%	62%	3%
Graduation Rate <i>*Earned associate degree or certificate within 4 years</i> <i>Baseline Objective C1</i>	31%	36%	5%
Source: FVCC Office of Institutional Research, May 2024.			

In addition, graduation rates of SSS eligible students within four years of starting at FVCC is **31%**. This is a 5% difference than their peers who graduate with a degree at a rate of **36%**. Low persistence rates lead to lower graduation rates signifying a need for SSS.

3(ii). GRADE POINT AVERAGES.

In

fall of 2022, FVCC data indicated that **83%** of eligible but not served SSS students completed their first semester at FVCC in good standing (2.0 GPA or higher) compared to 89% of students who were not eligible for SSS. In addition, the mean GPA of the eligible group was 3.33 compared to 3.37 of the group not eligible for that same semester.

Table A9: FVCC Good Standing			
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non-Eligible	Difference
Good Standing (2.0 <) <i>Baseline Objective B</i>	83%	89%	6%

3(iii). GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATES.

This section is not applicable because FVCC is a 2-year community college.

3(iv). TRANSFER RATES FROM 2-YEAR TO 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS.

Data from 2022-2023 shows that students who are TRIO eligible but not served graduate and transfer at lower rates than non-eligible students. Only **15.3%** of TRIO eligible and not served students graduate and transfer with a degree or certificate. Non-eligible students graduate and transfer at a rate of **21.9%**.

Table A10: FVCC Transfer Rate to 4-year Institution			
	% SSS Eligible	% SSS Non-Eligible	Difference
Transfer Rate	7.5%	11.1%	3.6%
Associate Degree and Transfer to 4-Year Institution <i>Baseline Objective C2</i>	15%	21.9%	6.6%

Summary

FVCC enrolls a high number of students who are eligible for TRIO services. Almost **66.3%** of all enrolled students are eligible for services based on income level, first generation college student status, and/or disclosure of a disability. Based on eligibility and demonstrated high need

through placement of **48.4%** of eligible students into remedial math and writing, an academic support program is needed to foster and facilitate the success of SSS eligible students.

FVCC students who are SSS eligible persist, perform, and graduate and transfer at lower rates than students not eligible for TRIO. The data demonstrates a clear need for a TRIO/SSS project at FVCC to improve the academic performance, facilitate timely graduation, and increase graduation and transfer rates of TRIO SSS eligible students.

As will be seen in the Plan of Operation, a thorough plan of action to increase the academic performance, retention, graduation, rate of degree completion and transfer, and elimination and reduction of debt upon graduation is clearly outlined.

(B) OBJECTIVES

QUALITY OF PROPOSED OBJECTIVES: BOTH AMBITIOUS, AS RELATED TO DATA, AND ATTAINABLE, GIVEN THE PROJECT’S PLAN OF OPERATION, BUDGET, AND OTHER

The objectives identified by the Department of Education include performance, process, and outcome objectives designed to meet the Government Performance & Results Act (GPRA) performance indicators. These objectives are incorporated into FVCC’s strategic plan. These objectives meet the identified needs of proposed participants at FVCC. They are clearly described, specific, and measurable utilizing a TRIO/SSS project database to track student progress, services, and activities. The objectives allow for formative and summative semester evaluations resulting in programmatic changes within the grant’s scope. Each objective is ambitious, attainable, and aimed to increase retention, percentage of students in good academic standing, graduation rates, and graduation and transfer rates of TRIO SSS eligible students as outlined in Table B1.

The project will serve 275 students, not less than two-thirds of whom will be first generation and low-income students, and/or disabled. The remaining project participants will be low-income individuals, first generation college students, or individuals with disabilities. One-third of disabled students will also be low-income as per grant guidelines. A student will not be served by more than

one SSS project at a time.

Table B1. Outcome Data for SSS Eligible and Proposed Targets

<u>Outcome</u>	<u>SSS Eligible</u>	<u>SSS Target</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Persistence	59%	70%	11%
Grade Point Average Above a 2.0	83%	92%	9%
Graduation	31%	40%	9%
Transfer with Degree/Certificate	15%	20%	5%

Source for Eligibility: FVCC Office of Institutional Research

OBJECTIVE A, PERSISTENCE RATE: 70% of all enrolled participants served in the reporting year by the SSS Project with persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or earn an associate degree or certificate at the grantee institution and/or transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year institution by the fall term of the next academic year.

AMBITIOUS: The objective of 70% is ambitious because the baseline of TRIO eligible, not-served students' retention/persistence rate is only 59% compared to a SSS non-eligible student rate of 62%. The objective is ambitious because it is 11 percentage points above students who are eligible and not receiving services.

ATTAINABLE: The project plan includes sufficient resources and staff to provide appropriate and effective services and activities to attain this ambitious objective. Careful attention to individual students' goals and progress makes this an attainable objective. Once a student is officially accepted into the TRIO/SSS program, they work with a TRIO/SSS staff member to create an individualized Student Success Plan based on their responses to a Needs Assessment. The Student Success Plan outlines the services and activities that will support the student's goal of staying in college until graduation. Monitoring of student progress, provision of appropriate services as situations changes, regular and frequent contact with students, improving social,

emotional and academic skills, and developing relationships with TRIO staff and peers will keep participants on track to success.

OBJECTIVE B, GOOD ACADEMIC STANDING RATE: 92% of all enrolled participants served by the SSS project will meet the performance level required to stay in good academic standing at the grantee institution.

AMBITIOUS: 83% of TRIO eligible students at FVCC not currently served by the grant are in good academic standing after their first year at FVCC. The objective of 92% is ambitious as it represents a 9-percentage point gain from the baseline of non-served SSS eligible students.

ATTAINABLE: This objective is attainable because TRIO/SSS provides an integrated approach beginning with appropriate course placement for math, writing, and reading. The TRIO/SSS Tutor Coordinator hires professional and peer tutors to provide individual and small group tutoring. Math, reading, and writing labs are staffed by full-time and part-time professional instructors and are available to students on a walk-in basis. In addition, an Academic Alert system is in place at FVCC allowing faculty to notify TRIO/SSS staff when students are missing classes, arriving to class late, and/or receiving low scores on homework, quizzes and tests. Regular and strategic communications with project participants throughout each semester will ensure students receive the support they need to remain in good academic standing. Free 1-credit College Success Skills classes are offered to TRIO students and assist in building and honing study strategies.

OBJECTIVE C, GRADUATION RATE AND TRANSFER RATES (2-year colleges only):

(i) 40% or new participants served each year by the SSS project will graduate from the grantee institution with an associate degree or certificate within four (4) years.

AMBITIOUS: An objective of 40% is ambitious in comparison to the baseline of 31% and represents a 9-percentage point increase in the four-year graduate rate of SSS eligible

students.

ATTAINABLE: The project will accomplish this objective by providing detailed and proactive academic advising along with thorough financial aid planning. Developing an individualized Student Success Plan with a path toward graduation, as well as early registration, will contribute greatly to accomplishing this objective. The project will also offer appropriate tutoring to assist students in passing difficult classes.

(ii) 20% of new participants served each year by the SSS project will graduate with an associate degree or certificate from the grantee institution and transfer to a four-year institution within four (4) years.

AMBITIOUS: Only 15.3% of TRIO eligible and not served students graduate and transfer with a degree or certificate. Non-SSS eligible students graduate and transfer at a rate of 21.9%. An objective of 20% is ambitious compared to the baseline of 15.3% and represents a 31% increase. More than 60% of TRIO eligible students are non-traditional (25 years old or above) and are often place-bound due to family and work obligations. A target of 20% will significantly close the gap between TRIO eligible and non-SSS eligible students

ATTAINABLE: The intricacies of the transfer process are difficult for students to navigate. When academic programs are not followed accurately, a student may increase time-to-degree completion, wasting valuable time and money. This proposal includes four TRIO advisors who will focus on making sure students are prepared to transfer with the correct prerequisites, with adequate knowledge of the receiving institution, and with all their financial resources in place. Transfer trips to receiving Montana institutions to pre-register and attend orientations that include an introduction to the TRIO/SSS programs will ease this transition. Virtual “campus visits” will also be scheduled throughout the year for students unable to attend in-person. Connecting students to the now many in-state online options to complete a four-year degree will present wider options

to place-bound students. Receiving Montana institutions with TRIO/SSS projects have agreed to accept FVCC's SSS students into their programs to continue support. These efforts make this ambitious objective attainable.

(C)

PLAN OF OPERATION

1. PLAN TO INFORM THE INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY (STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF) OF THE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND SERVICES OF THE PROJECT AND ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT.
--

TRIO/SSS has been present at FVCC since 1971 and is a well-known project on campus due to its longevity, solid record of success, and importance to student services, as well as its respected and dedicated staff. Formal reports about the project's goals, objectives, and performance report results are continually highlighted, presented, and promoted to all students, faculty, and staff on campus. Annual Performance Report results are presented annually to FVCC's Board of Trustees, President, and the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs.

Students

- Upon admission, all new, degree-seeking FVCC students are invited to submit a Welcome Survey to answer questions assessing their academic background, readiness for college, and potential non-cognitive barriers. If students' answers indicate the need for additional support and potential eligibility for TRIO, students are invited to either apply for TRIO using paper or an online application or make an individual appointment to meet with TRIO staff for more information or attend a TRIO informational session.
- At FVCC, every new, degree-seeking student meets with a professional academic advisor for individual student orientation and registration. When a student demonstrates academic need based on placement test scores, high school grades, HiSET/GED, or other factors, the advisors schedule an appointment for these students to meet with a TRIO advisor to determine eligibility for the program.

Faculty

- TRIO/SSS staff participate in faculty and adjunct faculty training programs to ensure that all new instructors are informed about the TRIO program's goals, objectives, and services.
- TRIO/SSS staff regularly host sessions during FVCC's biannual in-service, which all faculty and staff are required to attend. During these sessions, information is distributed about the TRIO/SSS programs, including eligibility requirements, services, and resources offered.

Staff

- The TRIO/SSS program is fully integrated into the Student Center (SC). The SC is a collaborative team of professionals offering the following services: TRIO/SSS, admissions, registration, recruitment, financial aid, academic advising, academic tutoring, career exploration, disability accommodations, mental health counseling, testing services, and internship, apprenticeship, and job placement.
- The Financial Aid Office regularly refers potentially eligible students to TRIO for help with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and TRIO support services.

Marketing

- In collaboration with the Marketing and Communications Department, mailings, postcards, flyers, and brochures are widely distributed and outline the goals, objectives, and services of the TRIO/SSS program. TRIO has a page on the FVCC website that outlines all project goals, objectives, and services. A link to an electronic TRIO application for services is also available on the site.
- The TRIO/SSS First Gen Den (FGD) is at the Student Center entrance within the Student

Lounge and is highly visible to all faculty, staff, and students entering the building. The FGD is a space reserved for TRIO/SSS students to study, use computers, and meet with TRIO mentors and tutors. Staffed by TRIO mentors and TRIO staff during open office hours ensures someone is always available to talk with any interested parties about TRIO/SSS at FVCC.

2. PLAN TO IDENTIFY, SELECT, AND RETAIN PROJECT PARTICIPANTS WITH ACADEMIC NEED.

In accordance with Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), FVCC's plan to identify, select, and serve students ensures that none of the barriers of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age impede a student's access to the program. FVCC's adopted policies ensuring nondiscrimination and affirmative action are strictly enforced by the TRIO Director when making selections of students into the TRIO/SSS project. FVCC's GEPA statement is uploaded as a separate attachment with this SSS application for funding.

Identify

TRIO/SSS staff and the larger campus community are committed to identifying TRIO eligible students as close to the point of college admission as possible.

- Upon admission, all FVCC students are invited to submit a Welcome Survey, answering questions to assess their readiness for college and to identify concerns they have entering college. If students' answers indicate the need for additional support and potential eligibility for TRIO, students are automatically invited to apply.
- All new degree-seeking freshmen, and the majority of continuing students, use the Student Center for orientation, advising, and assistance with class registration. As academic advisors meet with students, they connect students with TRIO/SSS advisors to get them into the program and start using services immediately.
- Students placing into remedial math and writing are referred to the TRIO program and

encouraged to apply.

- The Adult Education program acts as a pipeline to TRIO/SSS for students who complete the HiSET/GED and intend to continue to college.
- The TRIO Director, FVCC Residence Life Coordinator, and FVCC Student Engagement Coordinator collaborate on TRIO mentor training, resident assistant (RA) training, and peer educator (PE) training at the start of each fall semester. TRIO mentors, RAs, and PEs are trained to identify and refer potential TRIO/SSS students.

Selection

Once potentially eligible students are identified or referred, the three-step selection process for TRIO/SSS begins.

1. APPLICATION

Students complete a TRIO/SSS application, available in the Student Support Center and online, and at various locations around campus, such as, the Writing Lab, Foundational Math Center and Library. The application includes questions pertinent to eligibility and statistical data related to the Annual Performance Report, as well as questions about social, emotional and academic needs, goals and barriers.

2. DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

Upon submission of the TRIO/SSS program application, staff determine eligibility based on taxable income, disability documentation, and/or first generation status.

3. DETERMINATION OF ACADEMIC NEED

The final step in the selection process is the determination of academic need. Information from the student's self-reported challenges, placement test scores, GPA, and an interview by TRIO/SSS staff gives a comprehensive profile for each student and their level of need.

4. Prioritizing selection: Students meeting all eligibility requirements and having strong

motivation are selected using three guidelines: 1) Students likely to benefit from the broadest range of program services; 2) Students whose academic difficulties are jeopardizing their continued attendance as determined by campus offices or staff, i.e., Financial Aid, and 3) Students who comply with the statutory requirement (program assurance) regarding the overall program composition as it relates to eligibility. The Director signs off on all entering students to verify eligibility.

5. Notification and waitlist: All students selected to participate in the Program are notified by email, regular mail and by phone. They are asked to meet with their TRIO/SSS advisor for a check-in and review of academic plan. Students not selected are placed on a wait list and encouraged to use other available campus resources.

Retention/Persistence of Selected TRIO/SSS Participants

Strategic supports and effective services are offered through TRIO/SSS to adequately meet the needs of each unique student. TRIO/SSS offers all required services and a substantial array of permissible services.

Required Services:

1. Individual and small group academic tutoring for all subjects.
2. Advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection, which includes clear plans for graduation, job placement and transfer assistance.
3. Information on the full range of Federal Student Financial Aid programs and benefits including Federal Pell Grant awards, loan forgiveness, and scholarship opportunities. Assistance in completing financial aid applications, including the FAFSA and scholarships applications.
4. Education and counseling services designed to improve the financial and economic literacy of students, including financial planning for postsecondary education.

5. Assistance with applying for admission to and obtaining financial assistance for enrollment in 4-year institutions of higher education.

Permissible Services:

1. Individualized counseling for personal, career, and academic challenges.
2. Information, activities, and instruction designed to acquaint students with a wide range of career opportunities.
3. Summer Bridge Program prior to the start of fall semester.
4. Exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and student leadership opportunities.
5. Peer mentoring program facilitated by seasoned TRIO students.
6. Programs and activities that specifically support students with disabilities.
7. Transfer trips to the two major universities in Montana, to include virtual campus visits.

Table C1: Outline of Required Services

REQUIRED SERVICES			
Services	When	How	Person Responsible
Academic tutoring	Ongoing	One-on-one and small group tutoring	TRIO staff; Peers
TRIO classes	Fall, spring and summer semesters	Classroom instruction every semester (3 course offerings)	TRIO staff
Assistance with course selection	Prior to each semester	Individual appointments	TRIO staff
Transfer services	Ongoing	Individual appointments	TRIO staff
Resources for financing college	Ongoing	Workshops, individual appointments	TRIO staff
Assistance with financial aid applications	Ongoing	Walk-in and individual appointments	TRIO staff

Financial literacy education	Ongoing	Online modules, workshops, guest experts	TRIO staff
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Table C2: Outline of Permissible Services

PERMISSIBLE SERVICES			
Services	When	How	Person Responsible
Individualized personal counseling	Ongoing	Individual appointments	TRIO staff and FVCC LCPC
Individualized career counseling	Ongoing	Individual appointments	TRIO staff
Summer Bridge Program	Prior to fall semester	Credit course	TRIO staff
Mentoring	Fall and spring semesters	Individual and small group mentoring	Peers
Cultural and academic enrichment	Fall and spring semesters	Theater, museums, book clubs, lectures & special events	TRIO staff
Transfer trips	Spring semester	Transport students to Montana receiving institutions & virtual campus visits	FVCC TRIO staff and TRIO staff at receiving institutions

3. PLAN FOR ASSESSING NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS FOR SPECIFIC SERVICES AND MONITORING ACADEMIC PROGRESS.

The project staff uses a holistic and systematic process for assessing and evaluating the needs of each project student. At the time of application, the student is given an overview of the TRIO/SSS program and goals, and the services available to them through the program. Following the interview, a TRIO/SSS advisor reviews the student's application and discusses the student's self-reported needs. In addition, any concerns identified by the TRIO/SSS advisor from academic records (i.e., transcripts, placement scores) or referrals are discussed. Every student is asked to assess their needs in the following areas:

- Study Skills

- Career Planning
- Financial Aid and Financial Literacy
- Personal Assistance (i.e., goals/decision making, personal counseling)
- Computer Skills Academic Support
- Educational History

In addition, students are given the option to disclose personal information that suggests need for support such as:

- I am a single parent.
- I do not have reliable transportation.
- I do not have internet access at home.
- I work ____ hours per week.

Student Success Plan

From the student's Needs Assessment, TRIO/SSS staff work with the student to create an individualized Student Success Plan. The plan is developed based on the student's academic and career goals and specifies the individual support services needed and the project activities in which the student will participate. Ongoing assessment is vital to student and project success; therefore, the TRIO/SSS staff monitor and record student progress throughout the project year, utilizing semester grade reports, input from faculty, tutors, mentors, and staff. Feedback from participants is obtained through their frequent contact with TRIO/SSS staff.

Monitoring Plan

- TRIO tutors submit reports to the Tutoring Program Coordinator on the progress of tutees. Tutors assess a student's grasp of course material based on tutoring sessions and course grades.

- Faculty use an Academic Alert system to notify the Dean of Student Success when there is concern about a student who then assigns the alert to the correct TRIO advisor or to the TRIO Director. An instructor uses this system if a student is absent from class, failing quizzes/tests, or has missing assignments. This notification prompts the TRIO Director to contact the student to address concerns, identify support needed, and connect with student with appropriate resources
- Electronic progress reports go out to instructors the fourth and eighth weeks of the semester to collect information regarding student grades, attendance and academic support needed. Information is shared with students and appropriate intervention initiated.
- Grades are constantly monitored by TRIO/SSS staff to identify students eligible for tuition scholarships. Students not meeting the academic requirements of their program are contacted to discuss increased and additional support available through the TRIO/SSS program.
- Registration is continually monitored in collaboration and coordination with FVCC academic advisors to ensure timely registration for subsequent semesters.

In accordance with the Higher Education Opportunity Act, the FVCC TRIO/SSS project includes all required and many permissible services. Services have been carefully constructed to address the objectives and goals of the TRIO/SSS program, as well as the needs of FVCC disadvantaged students, as outlined in the Needs section. Each student's Needs Assessment results in their Student Success Plan, made up of the services TRIO/SSS provides.

4. PLAN TO PROVIDE SERVICES THAT ADDRESS THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE

TUTORING AND LABS

High-achieving students are referred by instructors to work as TRIO tutors and Study Jam

(small group tutoring) leaders. These students are trained to provide individual tutoring and/or group tutoring to TRIO program participants. Math, reading, and writing labs are staffed by full-time and part-time professional instructors and are available to students on a walk-in basis.

Students sign in at a computer to allow TRIO/SSS to monitor the number of students, amount of time, and type of assistance they receive.

INSTRUCTION

TRIO/SSS staff teach the following free courses to TRIO participants:

- College Success Strategies (1 credit): Students are taught academic success strategies and methods to ensure a successful transition to college. A financial literacy component includes public and private scholarship information, financial aid application processes and opportunities. Career and major exploration and academic planning are an integral part of the course.
- College to Career (1 credit): In this course, students learn valuable professional skills including job and internship research, creating professional profiles, resume development, cover letter formatting, interview skills, negotiating salary, and understanding benefits. The course prepares students entering the workforce directly after FVCC, as well as connects transfer students to career resources at 4-year colleges and universities.

FVCC offers four remedial math courses: Pre-Algebra, Introductory Algebra, and Intermediate Algebra and Quantitative Reasoning. The Math Department chair communicates with the TRIO/SSS Director and advisors to make sure the course is meeting the needs of TRIO students and to provide placement guidance.

SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

The TRIO Summer Bridge Program is designed to help new freshmen transition to college with an understanding of the expectations of college professors, academic skills needed for college

success, and resources available on campus. Students complete the course with an academic plan through graduation and an understanding of the financial commitment and financial resources available to them. In addition, students connect with their TRIO mentor during the Summer Bridge Program and start the semester with support in place. Students earn one college credit upon successful completion of the program. The college waives the tuition of the course for TRIO students. At no additional cost, TRIO students enrolled in the Summer Bridge Program can move into FVCC housing early.

ACADEMIC ADVISING, PLANNING, AND SUPPORT

All TRIO/SSS professional staff are trained in academic advising by FVCC's Dean of Student Success. TRIO staff attend weekly advising meetings to stay abreast of program updates and policy and procedure changes and to remain current in best practices in academic advising. All TRIO advisors have the same level of student information access that all professional and faculty academic advisors are provided, and student notes are shared. FVCC academic advisors and TRIO advisors work together to ensure effective and complementary student service and outreach.

Each TRIO staff member is assigned advisees who have been admitted to the project. They also provide supplemental advising for project participants who cannot access their faculty advisor. Each TRIO advisor develops a mentoring relationship with students and actively engages them in academic planning using a holistic advising model.

Financial aid is an integral part of the academic advising process and is addressed with a student in their first meeting with a TRIO/SSS advisor. A Student Success Plan includes assistance in applying for scholarships and FAFSA.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Workshops

TRIO/SSS staff offer monthly workshops on a wide range of financial literacy including:

Writing compelling scholarship essays, financial resources available to students, the importance of building and maintaining good credit, personal and family budget planning, college cost planning, and understanding financial aid including Pell grants and loans.

FAFSA Fridays

Every November, TRIO hosts FAFSA Fridays. All TRIO eligible students can come in on a walk-in basis for assistance with FAFSA completion and submission. In addition, TRIO students can get help with FAFSA completion and submission year-round by making an appointment with a TRIO/SSS advisor.

Scholarships

- FVCC TRIO/SSS staff created a TRIO Endowed Scholarship Fund in 2004. The current balance is \$14,000+. Several awards are made each year while keeping the fund sustainable.
- The FVCC Foundation Office has committed to funding the TRIO Destination Degree Scholarship. This is a scholarship for TRIO eligible students who have left FVCC for at least a semester and have only one semester or several courses left to finish their degree. This is a renewable scholarship of up to \$1,000 per semester.

TRANSFER ADVISING

The majority of FVCC students transfer to one of two Montana universities: University of Montana (UM) in Missoula or Montana State University (MSU) in Bozeman.

The TRIO/SSS advisors work closely with the Montana University System and all 4-year institutions to ensure that transfer advising is accurate and up to date. Each spring, TRIO staff take students to UM-Missoula and MSU Bozeman to learn about financial resources, housing options, TRIO support services (SSS and McNair), and to register for fall classes. In addition, TRIO students who are not yet ready to transfer but want to explore these transfer options may

attend the campus visits. Virtual “campus visits”/workshops are also offered each semester to connect students to information, resources and university staff. Additionally, greater emphasis will be focused on connecting place-bound students to online pathways to 4-year institutions.

INDIVIDUALIZED PERSONAL, CAREER, AND ACADEMIC COUNSELING

Personal counseling is provided to individuals experiencing difficulties that are creating barriers to their success at the postsecondary level. There has been an active disability support group, meeting weekly, facilitated by a TRIO advisor since 2011.

Career counseling is an integral and ongoing part of the academic advising process. All TRIO/SSS advisors are trained to use PathwayU, ONet, and the Montana Career Information System (MCIS) to assist students with career exploration. Both online platforms have information on earning potential, educational programs, trainings, and certification and licensing requirements for various careers. In addition, TRIO/SSS Advisors use *StrengthsQuest* and *16 Personalities* to help students identify natural talents and qualities that will benefit them in their chosen career.

CULTURAL AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Disadvantaged students have little opportunity or money to attend cultural events and often are not aware of how cultural events can enrich their perspectives and personal growth. TRIO/SSS provides opportunities each year for students to attend cultural events such as plays, music performances, and international film festivals. Additionally, TRIO hosts a book club that showcases cultural diversity and achievements by first generation college students.

With the assistance of a TRIO advisor, the Montana American Indian Scholars group became a student organization on campus in 2019. This group meets throughout each semester to develop and plan activities on campus that promote awareness of current issues facing Native Americans in Montana and host events to educate the community on Native American traditions and culture.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Every fall semester, the Student Engagement Office offers a three-day Student Leadership Weekend Retreat to teach students about leadership styles, communication skills, and facilitation of group meetings and activities. The college covers the costs for all TRIO mentors to attend the workshop. Following the workshop, a one credit leadership course is conducted for these students should they wish to continue to develop leadership skills.

The regional TRIO association, ASPIRE, hosts an annual Student Leadership Conference for all TRIO participants in Montana. The three-day conference includes leadership development workshops and inspirational and motivational speakers with backgrounds like TRIO eligible students. Various topics are covered from career exploration to leadership styles and hands-on work involving small groups problem solving real-world case studies on issues facing our communities.

MENTORING PROGRAM

TRIO mentors are high-achieving students who have been active participants in the TRIO/SSS program. Mentors receive intensive and ongoing training to prepare them to work with mentees in small groups and one-on-one. Mentors host educational and social events throughout the academic year to facilitate positive relationships and engagement between mentors and mentees and each other, as well as reinforce TRIO/SSS academic resources. New college freshmen are targeted for this program; however, it is open to any student in the TRIO program. In addition to hosting events, mentors conduct outreach by email, phone and text to inform mentees of academic, FAFSA, and scholarship deadlines and invite them to engage in volunteer service-learning and cultural activities. Any TRIO participant needing one-to-one mentorship is offered this opportunity to meet in person and/or virtually over Zoom.

The TRIO/SSS program has a designated study space for TRIO students, the First Gen Den

(FGD). The FGD is staffed by a TRIO mentor who can help students with general college questions regarding scholarships, FAFSA, courses, and homework. The FGD is equipped with computers and a printer for participant use. TRIO students use this space to study and socialize and to connect with their TRIO mentors. The college provides funds to purchase snacks and coffee for the FGD.

MEETING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND ACADEMIC NEEDS

All courses offered by TRIO include non-cognitive skills development. **College Success Strategies** focuses on assisting students in developing self-care habits, a growth mindset, study skills techniques, and strategies to overcome test anxiety and stress. **College to Career** addresses soft skills, attitude, work ethic and job searching skills. The college waives the tuition for these courses, so TRIO students who enroll can earn up to two, free college credits if they enroll in both TRIO courses.

Every Tuesday morning, TRIO students are invited to attend TRIO Tuesday. FVCC's institutional commitment includes a budget for coffee and breakfast, enticing students to attend. Each week, students participate in varied activities and workshops on non-cognitive skills acquisition, financial literacy topics, and academic skills tips and can engage socially with TRIO staff and mentors. This facilitates positive and engaging conversation and relationships among staff, mentors, and TRIO participants.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TRIO/SSS staff recognized that many non-traditional students entering college do not own a computer. Due to grant restrictions, grant funds cannot be used to purchase computers for student rental. A grant proposal was written and submitted to a local company in 2016, and FVCC was awarded \$10,000 to purchase laptops for a check out program for TRIO students. The program has 30 laptops available for TRIO students. Students may also checkout a Chromebook from the FVCC

Library, in addition to Wi-Fi hotspots which are necessary for internet access in our rural location.

As the cost of college textbooks continues to rise, many students struggle with the expense. Over the years, TRIO students, the FVCC library, and instructors have donated books to the TRIO library. The TRIO library has over 40 textbooks for checkout.

DISABILITY SERVICES

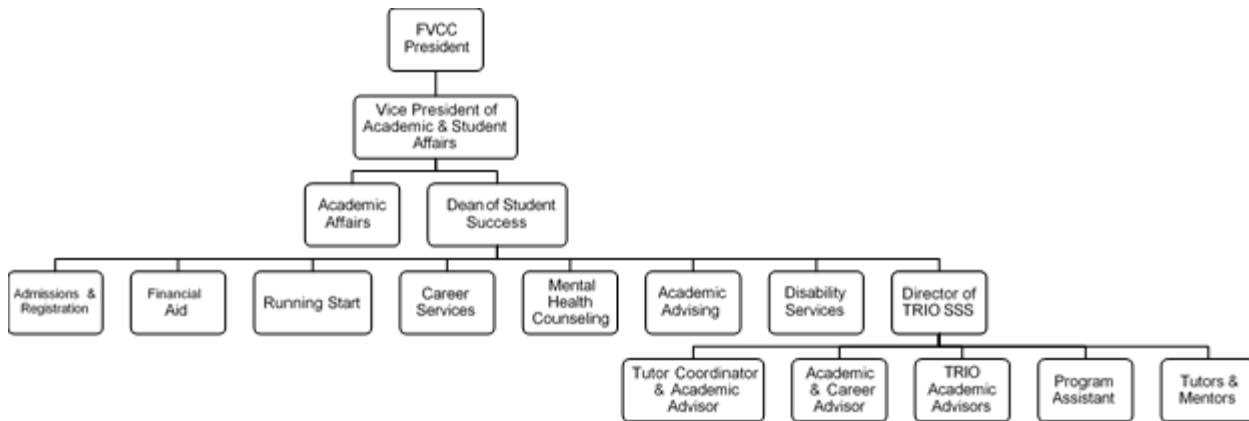
The Disability Services Coordinator initiates contact with newly accepted students who have indicated that they have a disability and invites them to apply for TRIO/SSS if they have academic need. Appropriate accommodations, including interpreters, note takers, and extended test time, as well as advocacy services and academic advising are provided to disabled project students. The Disability Services Coordinator also facilitates a disability support group and promotes education to the campus community about the challenges faced by college students with disabilities.

5. PLAN TO ENSURE PROPER AND EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROJECT.
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ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT

The TRIO Director reports to the Dean of Student Success and maintains close proximity to higher-level administration. This increases the impact the Director has on the academic policies and curriculum, which affects disadvantaged students and guarantees sufficient authority to conduct the project effectively.

Figure 1: Organizational Chart



TIME COMMITMENT OF KEY STAFF

Because FVCC is a small institution, employees must wear many different hats. Careful combination of duties and positions ensures that personnel and their skills are utilized to maximum potential. As per 646.32 (e)(1), FVCC coordinates services with other programs for disadvantaged students, taking care that grant funds are not used to support activities for the general student population; and, as per 646.32 (e)(2), FVCC shares advising staff with programs serving similar populations, maintains appropriate monthly records of Time and Effort, and does not comingle grant funds.

Project staff schedules are coordinated and adjusted as necessary to ensure that students' needs are well met throughout the year. All grant funded personnel at FVCC must complete a monthly Time and Effort report accounting for time spent on grant activities. See Budget Narrative for details about time commitment of each key staff member.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The TRIO Director holds signature authority for all expenditures from grant funds. In cooperation with the FVCC Business Office, a yearly account is set up, grant funds are disbursed, and records are securely and appropriately maintained. In addition, the Program Assistant keeps budget records according to funding category as a check and balance system against the Business

Office. Expenditures are entered as they occur, and line-item balances remain up to date. Account records are available through a secured, shared drive.

The TRIO Director works closely with the Business Office to maintain accurate accounting for project funds on a monthly basis. The system is efficient and ensures proper administration and expenditure of grant funds. Specifically,

1. The TRIO Program Assistant maintains separate ledgers to monitor the budget.
2. Budget reports are always available through a secure, shared drive with the Business Office.
3. The Director is responsible for approving and monitoring all budgeted expenditures. The Director has sole signature authority.
4. FVCC operates in full accordance with standard accounting procedures and all state and federal laws governing the handling of funds. All records related to grant funds, such as purchase orders, vouchers, receipts, and other fiscal records are kept in both the TRIO/SSS Office and the Business Office.

STUDENT RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The TRIO Director and Program Assistant, with the assistance of all TRIO staff, are responsible for gathering, maintaining, interpreting, and disseminating records related to the performance of individual students and the overall project. Records are maintained on a secure student database and are supported by individual student files. Information is collected on a continuing basis, and reports are periodically generated to monitor project progress.

In compliance with Department of Education requirements 646.32(c) for student record keeping for TRIO/SSS, a hard-copy student file is kept for each participant enrolled and includes the student's signed application. On the project database, records include but are not limited to,

1. Basis for FVCC's determination that each participant is eligible to participate in

the program;

2. Basis for FVCC's determination of academic need for each participant (Needs Assessment);
3. The services that are provided to each participant (Student Success Plan); and
4. Performance and progress for each participant for the duration their attendance at FVCC.

Eligibility information includes confirmation of first generation status, taxable income, and/or disability determination. The TRIO application requests demographic information required for the grant's Annual Performance Report. Verification by the Financial Aid Office, verification by another agency, or a signed statement from the student acts as proof of income. A student with a disability is defined in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) U.S.C 12101, et seq. The ADA defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment."

TRIO/SSS uses the *StudentAccess* database to maintain student records that include demographic information, eligibility status, records of services provided, and contacts made, grades, and if applicable, reasons for leaving the project or school. This data is easily sorted, monitored, and reported in the format required for the Annual Performance Report.

StudentAccess is password protected and paper files are in a secure, locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality.

In compliance with Department of Education regulations, records are kept of project outcomes to determine progress in accomplishing objectives and to revise services if necessary.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The TRIO Director has sufficient authority to administer the project effectively. The

Director allocates project resources and personnel to effectively and efficiently achieve project objectives. All project staff are subject to the same FVCC personnel policies as other institution employees.

Through regular staff meetings, staff orientation, and one-on-one meetings, the Director maintains the necessary management of the project operations. In addition, the Director ensures that all project staff regularly receive high-quality training and professional development opportunities. The Director evaluates staff annually and these evaluations become a part of the permanent personnel files.

PLAN TO COORDINATE WITH OTHER PROGRAMS

TRIO/SSS offers the most comprehensive student support services available on campus. TRIO/SSS is invited to participate in planning meetings to ensure that the perspective of the TRIO student is considered and included in campus programs and activities. TRIO/SSS staff coordinates with numerous offices and departments which include admissions, housing, student engagement, advising, financial aid, and the Adult Education department.

The FVCC Student Recruitment Coordinator frequently invites TRIO/SSS staff to talk with student groups about the many benefits of the TRIO program and includes TRIO/SSS staff and mentors in New Student Orientation. The Adult Education department invites TRIO/SSS staff to talk with HiSET students about TRIO services to let them know they will have the support they need should they continue to college.

The Coordinator of Residence Life coordinates housing for TRIO students to attend the Summer Bridge Program at no additional cost to TRIO participants. TRIO is also welcomed throughout the academic year in housing to offer TRIO workshops and activities. Weekly mentor/mentee meet-ups are held in housing in the evenings to promote TRIO community and foster social connections.

The Student Engagement Coordinator includes TRIO mentors in FVCC Welcome Week events, offering numerous opportunities for mentors and staff to promote the program and services. In addition, TRIO mentors are invited to participate in the student leadership workshops, courses, and retreat planned and facilitated by the Student Engagement Coordinator.

The Financial Aid Office is consistently willing to provide financial information to assist TRIO/SSS staff in determining students' eligibility for the program and in awarding TRIO Grant Aid and scholarship funds.

Career services provides presentations to TRIO College Success Strategies and College to Career classes to inform students about in-person, as well as online career exploration tools (PathwayU and Handshake), and internship opportunities.

The Director of Academic Affairs invites TRIO/SSS staff to speak during the New Faculty Class and Adjunct Faculty In-Service to ensure that new instructors are fully informed of how students can benefit from the TRIO program and how they can refer students to the program.

A coordinated effort is made statewide in Montana to ease student transfer between TRIO programs across the state. All Montana state TRIO/SSS directors welcome all FVCC TRIO transfer students into their programs. FVCC TRIO students are introduced to TRIO staff and services during annual transfer trips to MSU Bozeman and UM-Missoula.

FVCC TRIO/SSS is a member of the Montana College Access Network (MCAN). This network connects a wide range of student services professionals for to increase college opportunity and degree completion throughout Montana. The network was born out of the idea that collaboration by the many organizations working to increase postsecondary opportunity in Montana would yield more efficient and effective results than isolated interventions by individual organizations. MCAN provides professional development and training events and opportunities for organizational collaboration and peer networking.

TRIO/SSS directors and staff planned and facilitated a Student Leadership Conference for TRIO participants across the state. The first conference was held in the state capital, Helena, in 2019, and the reviews by the participants were overwhelmingly positive. This now annual event is a three-day conference that includes workshops designed to help students develop leadership skills and to inspire them to become leaders on campus and in their community.

Table C3: Yearly Timeline for TRIO/SSS

August New Student Orientation Fall Advising Summer Bridge College Success class Open house Mentor training College Success class	September Welcome week activities Financial literacy promotion Weekly Disability Support Group TRIO Tuesdays TRIO pop-up tables Progress reports	October Update Student Success Plans Success workshops FAFSA completion FVCC Leadership Retreat Monitor student progress Progress reports
November First Gen Celebration Success workshops FAFSA Fridays Spring advising Outreach for last chance to drop class with “W” Cultural enrichment activity Progress reports	December Advising/registration for spring semester Institutional Research provides student data Update Student Success Plans Scholarship workshop Transfer workshops	January Check on students' financial aid awards Career Prep class Academic warning list Transfer workshops Open house TRIO pop-up tables
February Monitor student progress Scholarship workshop National TRIO Day celebration Success workshops Progress reports	March Review all student files for completion TRIO Student Leadership Conference State ASPIRE conference End of College to Career class Success workshops Progress reports	April Advising/registration for fall/summer semesters Cultural enrichment activity Financial literacy month Progress reports Outreach for last chance to drop class with “W”
May Continue registration for fall/summer semesters Gather semester and annual data Campus visits to 4-year colleges End of year graduation celebration Outreach to students on academic warning	June Compile all data for the year Review student files for completion Grade reports from Registrar Informational Session Interview potential mentors Fall advising	July Plan next year’s SSS activities Review accomplishment of objectives and goals Internal program evaluation Staff retreat Informational Session Fall advising

(D) INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

1. COMMITTED FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, PERSONNEL AND OTHER RESOURCES TO SUPPLEMENT THE GRANT AND ENHANCE PROJECT SERVICES.
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FACILITIES

FVCC created a Student Center that opened in fall of 2020 and has significant space dedicated for TRIO/SSS in a high traffic area within the Student Lounge. There is a TRIO classroom with a capacity for 20 students, and a study lounge known as the First Gen Den where TRIO students meet mentors and tutors and congregate for social activities. This represents an enormous commitment on such a small campus. The Student Center building is in the heart of the FVCC campus.

In addition to TRIO/SSS space, the Student Center includes Admissions and Registration, Financial Aid, Student Engagement, Mental Health Counseling, Disability Services, Career Center, Academic Advising, Running Start, Math and Science Tutoring, as well as Adult Education, the Testing Center and Veterans' Center. The potential for referrals is enhanced with this proximity. The Director and TRIO staff are in adjacent offices. All five TRIO advisors and the Disability Services Coordinator have private offices appropriate for meeting with students. Each office has a workstation with a computer for students and a desk/workspace, computer, printer and locking file cabinets for TRIO/SSS staff. The Director and Program Assistant share one large office separated into workstations by a divider with ample storage space, computers, laptops, locking file cabinets and color printer/scanner. There is also a workstation with a computer and phone access for TRIO mentors.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

FVCC has adopted the Department of Education's definition of equipment as items costing more than \$5,000.

EQUIPMENT PROVIDED BY FVCC FOR PROJECT USE

- Telephone system
- IT infrastructure, including online student information system
- Photocopy machines
- Vehicles for transporting student

Additionally, all computer labs, media equipment, and college laptops are available for use by TRIO staff and students. The College also covers the cost of postage, photocopying, and long-distance telephone charges.

The FVCC bookstore gives the TRIO/SSS project a 10% discount on all supplies. The project is also eligible to apply twice each year along with all other academic divisions to the Equipment Fee Fund for equipment intended for student use. The institution replaces office equipment, office furnishings, and computers on a rotational basis along with the rest of the campus.

PERSONNEL AND OTHER RESOURCES

The most significant commitment FVCC is making to the TRIO/SSS project is paying the cost of **health insurance** for all benefits-eligible TRIO/SSS staff. This represents a generous commitment of over \$100,000 to the project annually.

Table C4: FVCC Institutional Personnel and Resources

PERSONNEL/OTHER RESOURCES	COMMITMENT
Mental Health Counselors	Provide supplemental therapeutic counseling as needed Refers students to TRIO project

Career Advisor	Assists with job search for TRIO/SSS graduates Provides training for TRIO/SSS staff on professional standards in resume writing, cover letters, and interviews Assists with internship placement
Financial Aid	Provides financial aid training to project staff Provides financial literacy education to project staff Administers TRIO Grant Aid Documents low-income status Provides loan counseling workshops Provides supplemental financial literacy education Refers students to TRIO project
Registrar	Refers students on academic warning or suspension Provides academic reports including GPA, graduation, and Satisfactory Academic Progress
Information Technology	Provides IT support and training to project staff Provides data from College's student database Maintains project's computers Assists students with technological literacy
Media Center	Provides AV equipment as needed for services Prepares facilities for teleconferences and webinars Assists in checking out assistive technology
Library Services	Provides workshops on academic research Offers technological literacy education
Human Resources	Guides the hiring and evaluation processes Ensures compliance with state and federal regulations Maintains confidential personnel files for all staff
Marketing and Communications	Publicizes TRIO activities Develops posters, brochures, and handouts for TRIO/SSS Maintains TRIO webpage
Institutional Research	Helps project staff assess effectiveness of activities toward attaining objectives Provides data as requested
Business Office	Manages grant funds in accordance with regulations, program goals, and project scope
FVCC Foundation	Provides \$2,000/year scholarships for the TRIO Mentor from Montana American Indian Scholars Provides a \$1,000 renewable Destination Degree Scholarships for TRIO participants

Dean of Student Success	Ensures project staff receive advising training and adequate professional development opportunities Advocates for the TRIO program to College President
Student Center Manager	Receives visitors and schedules appointments Provides clerical support and assists in gathering and compiling data for annual performance report

2. ESTABLISHED ADMINISTRATIVE AND ACADEMIC POLICIES TO ENHANCE RETENTION AND GRADUATION OF PARTICIPANTS.

FVCC PHILOSOPHY

FVCC's philosophy provides the backdrop for the administrative and academic policies to enhance students' chances of success. FVCC's policies strive to encourage students to remain in school until they achieve their educational goals.

The challenges of keeping students enrolled are great in a school with an open-door policy. Often this "open-door" also creates an "open-exit" situation as well. As a result, FVCC incorporates a wide variety of efforts to retain students, especially disadvantaged students.

A major contribution to retention efforts is FVCC's low tuition. Classes cost \$197 per semester credit or \$2,817 for in-district students taking 14-18 credits (Source: FVCC Tuition 2023-24). Financial aid is available for degree-seeking students as is a payment plan to defer part of tuition costs for up to three months to help in retention. Students may defer 75% of their tuition costs at registration and pay the balance in installments.

Over the last five years, a student emergency fund program helped 65 students stay in school when a small financial disaster could well have caused them to drop out. The emergency funds are donations from FVCC faculty and staff. A significant contribution to the retention effort is the academic scholarship which awards a year's tuition to any student who maintains a 3.5 GPA after earning 30 credits. FVCC's TRIO students were awarded \$348,778 in scholarships and tuition waivers in 2022-23. This is truly an outstanding commitment from the college.

Students taking six or more credits per semester have access to Student Health Services.

Student Health Services provides an many health and wellness services, including immunizations, physical exams, and pharmaceutical orders.

Efforts by the College to develop articulation agreements and common course numbering with Montana 4-year colleges and universities provide initiative for students to stay at FVCC to complete programs and provide support of transfer.

The Running Start program at FVCC provides eligible high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to get an affordable start on their education by earning college credits while still in high school. In Montana, FVCC pioneered a free six credits program for in-district (county resident) students, and, today, FVCC allows for the first six credits to be offered at no cost to all Montana students, and subsequent credits are offered at a significantly reduced cost. Some courses offer dual-credit opportunities, allowing students to gain high school and college credit simultaneously.

Students are placed on academic warning anytime their GPA falls below 2.00. FVCC's Academic Warning and Suspension procedures requires students to meet with an academic advisor to create an Academic Plan before they start the next semester. The advisor and student discuss the student's academic goals and barriers, identify academic assistance available at FVCC, and develop a plan to assist the student to achieve their academic goals. TRIO advisors have the authority to create an Academic Plan for TRIO/SSS students on academic warning.

Students at FVCC may withdraw from a course without academic penalty until the course is 75% complete. After that, an instructor may submit a WI (instructor withdrawal) mark for students when appropriate. A special grading system for remedial courses allows students to receive an S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory) grade. Both the withdrawal procedures and grading system are designed to be non-punitive and provide additional flexibility for the disadvantaged student.

Classes graded S and U also count for financial aid. The grading system at FVCC enhances TRIO/SSS student success. Students who fail a course may repeat it and replace the failing grade with a passing grade for the purposes of calculating cumulative GPA.

The sense of community at FVCC provides students with an atmosphere of belonging. At FVCC, students find smaller classes (15:1 faculty-to-student ratio) where instructors know the students by name and are willing and able to take the extra time that students may require. FVCC has made a commitment to smaller classes by designing a campus with small classrooms that accommodate a maximum of 30 students.

FVCC continues to develop its Advising Program with faculty in-services and inter-departmental communication to ensure that students have appropriate advising and monitoring to increase retention rates. TRIO/SSS advisors participate in “advising huddles” each semester, where faculty share information about their programs, including program requirements, course sequencing, and job opportunities. In addition, TRIO/SSS advisors, along with other professional advisors, act as department liaisons. Liaison advisors attend department meetings to learn as much as possible about their programs. This allows TRIO/SSS advisors to gain expertise in all FVCC academic programs.

FVCC has adopted a vigorous effort to inform all students of financial aid available to them through scholarships, grants, student loans, and campus employment. Financial Aid personnel regularly visit area high schools.

<p>3. COMMITMENT TO MINIMIZE DEPENDENCE ON STUDENT LOANS IN DEVELOPING FINANCIAL AID PACKAGES FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS BY COMMITTING INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE.</p>

Students are discouraged from taking loans if there is any possible way to afford the cost of attendance without them. Information is provided to students about all grant, scholarship, and work-study opportunities to ensure that graduates are not overburdened by student loans.

FVCC strives to keep tuition rates as low as possible. FVCC is more affordable than the two flagship, public 4-year universities in Montana. FVCC’s current, annual tuition and fees for in-

district students, taking 14-18 credits per semester is \$5,634. In comparison, Montana State University's current in-state tuition and fees for full-time students for one year is \$8,082, and University of Montana's current in-state tuition and fees for full-time students is \$8,152. Students who elect to begin their first two years of college at FVCC before transferring to Montana State University or the University of Montana can save 32-34% in tuition and fees.

Additional efforts to reduce student dependence on loans include the scholarships offered by the FVCC Foundation. The FVCC Foundation was organized to provide new sources of financial support to benefit the college and its students with programs and projects that are not funded by state tax dollars. In 2023, 408 FVCC Foundation and community scholarships were awarded to FVCC students totaling \$1,614,457. Additionally, the Foundation helped establish the TRIO Destination Degree Scholarship that assists former FVCC TRIO students with a renewable \$1,000 per semester scholarship. This scholarship is available to TRIO students who have left the college for at least a semester and have one semester left to complete a degree. The Destination Degree Scholarship program provides financial support while connecting students to intentional, required TRIO programming that includes academic coaching, career advising, and financial literacy education.

4. ASSURED FULL COOPERATION AND SUPPORT OF ADMISSIONS, STUDENT AID, REGISTRAR, AND DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS COMPONENTS OF THE INSTITUTION.

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION COOPERATION AND SUPPORT

The Admissions and Registration staff provide the project with initial data for determining eligibility of students and to assist with the identification of students for the project. The staff provides continuous support to the project by supplying the TRIO/SSS staff with student data such as grade reports, attendance reports, and personal and demographic information. The project staff also have access to the FVCC student database for all students. The Registrar and other FVCC

student services staff support the project by collecting information pertinent to student eligibility, liaising with 4-year schools for transfer applications and collection of follow-up data, and enforcing project registration policies by requiring TRIO/SSS staff signatures.

FINANCIAL AID/STUDENT AID

The Financial Aid staff provides training and assistance to TRIO/SSS staff to inform them of financial aid procedures. The Financial Aid staff also provides information to project students and staff about all available financial resources. The Financial Aid Director assists in determining student financial eligibility, provides financial aid information, assists in recordkeeping and student monitoring, advises students about financial planning for school, cooperates with the TRIO Director when student financial crises arise, processes Emergency Student Loans, and provides research assistance for the project. TRIO advisors assist with students' Financial Aid appeals and required academic plans for appeals.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT), INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH, AND BUSINESS OFFICE

IT manages all administrative computer data and processes. IT assists the TRIO/SSS staff in generating reports and maintaining the project student databases. The department also assists in the data management required for project recordkeeping and provides access to the campus computer mainframe for access to student records and information. IT provides training to project staff in computer use and data management. IT provides maintenance and basic computer support. Training and services provided by IT enable the project Program Assistant to directly access student records and other appropriate data. Institutional Research also provides support by responding to requests for data and helping project staff assess effectiveness of activities toward attaining objectives. The Business Office's Grants Accountant assists the project staff with grant compliance and reporting requirements, as well as maintaining monthly budgetary records.

In summary, FVCC is very committed to supporting a Student Support Services project on

campus. FVCC is a small campus, and the College President is highly involved with all institutional departments, meeting weekly with the institution's Executive Staff members. Specific evidence of the level of commitment may be found in the President's Letter of Commitment on file with the TRIO/SSS Director. The following summary highlights the College's commitments.

Summary of Key Points in Letter of Commitment from FVCC President

- Health insurance for benefits-eligible TRIO/SSS staff
- Remodeled Learning Resource Center Building into a Student Center included ample space for TRIO/SSS staff, with private offices for advisors
- Dedicated TRIO classroom and space for First Gen Den (study lounge/gathering place)
- Funding for Student Center Coordinator, serving all TRIO/SSS staff
- Allocation of staff time and computer time for research, evaluation, and federal reporting

Dean of Student Success

- Provision of supervision, direction, and advocacy
- Access to student admissions records
- Staff time, travel, and supplies to recruit under-represented students
- Training and professional development opportunities to project staff

Financial Aid Director

- Documentation and determination of financial eligibility
- Training for TRIO/SSS staff for FAFSA and financial literacy
- Collaboration with project staff to develop financial resources and financial literacy

Registrar

- Reviews policies affecting student persistence rates

- Provides access to academic records and reports on GPA and graduation

(E)

QUALITY OF PERSONNEL

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND COMMITMENT TO COMPETITIVE SALARY.

Hiring preference for all TRIO/SSS personnel will be given to individuals who have succeeded in overcoming barriers similar to those confronting the project's target population and who have prior experience successfully working with disadvantaged people. In 2024, FVCC conducted a compensation study and adjusted salary structures to ensure wages are competitive and staff are receiving a living wage for the local area. FVCC also covers the cost for health insurance for benefit eligible employees.

1. QUALIFICATION OF PROJECT DIRECTOR.

Project Director

Position Description: The TRIO Director is responsible for the planning, coordination, and administration of the TRIO/SSS project and supervises staff and all activities and services as described in the approved application. The Director has administrative and advising duties, is responsible for assisting with writing the grant and filing reports, represents the College to the U.S. Department of Education serves as liaison between the project and all other departments of the College and manages the Academic Alert system.

Required Qualifications: A master's degree in counseling, education, sociology or related area; at least three years administrative experience, preferably with a TRIO program; three years academic advising experience; experience at the post-secondary level. Preferred qualifications include experience grant writing and working with disadvantaged students and people of diverse backgrounds.

QUALIFICATIONS OF PROJECT PERSONNEL.

Program Assistant

Position Description: The Program Assistant is responsible to the TRIO/SSS Director and provides general office administration and daily budget maintenance, and develops systems for recordkeeping and reporting using various computer resources and statistical data. Maintains confidential TRIO/SSS student files and accurate and up-to-date budget account records in compliance with federal and college regulations. Tracks all TRIO/SSS transfer students.

Required Qualifications: An associate's degree or equivalent combination of education and experience is required. The ability to maintain a high degree of confidentiality, proficient technology skills, strong organizational, communication and public relations skills are required. Experience working with TRIO programs or other federal grants preferred.

Academic and Career Advisor

Position Description: The Academic and Career Advisor is responsible to the TRIO/SSS Director and advises/coaches students on career, academic, and personal goals. Assesses, selects, and distributes career guidance information. Administers and interprets career assessment tools for students who are undecided on career or major. Maintains current career resources and employment information. Instructs classes and workshops in career planning and employment search strategies and teaches College to Career course.

Required Qualifications: A bachelor's degree is required in education, counseling, psychology, or related field. Master's degree in counseling or related field is preferred. Experience using various career assessment tools is preferred.

Tutor Coordinator/Academic Advisor Science Fields

Position Description: The Tutor Coordinator is responsible to the TRIO/SSS Director and coordinates the TRIO tutoring program and provides comprehensive advising services to help TRIO/SSS students set and achieve appropriate academic goals. This position recruits, hires, and trains tutors, determines eligibility and need for tutoring for TRIO/SSS students; arranges

individual and small group tutoring sessions; and teaches TRIO College Success Strategies course.

The Tutor Coordinator advises students in course selection, career development, financial aid, and/or personal needs that relate to academic success. In addition, the Tutor Coordinator works cooperatively with other staff members in establishing, working toward, and evaluating program goals and actively participates in college-wide affairs.

Required Qualifications: A bachelor's degree is required in education, counseling, psychology, or related field. Master's degree in counseling or related field is preferred. At least three years of successful academic advising experience at the college level preferred.

Disability Services Coordinator

Position Description: The Disability Services Coordinator reports to the TRIO/SSS Director and works in cooperation with academic, personal, and career advisors/coaches. The Disability Services Coordinator provides direct service to students with disabilities, hires interpreters and note-takers, arranges test accommodations and provides academic advising. The Disability Services Coordinator facilitates a weekly disability support group.

Required Qualifications: Master's degree in counseling, psychology, rehabilitation, special education, or a related area, plus proven experience providing personal or academic advising for students or an equivalent combination of education and professional experience. Experience advocating for disabled students; knowledge of testing materials and procedures used in assessing the learning needs of students. Experience in a community college setting preferred.

Academic Advisor/Health Sciences

Position Description: The Health Sciences Advisor is responsible to the Student Support Services Director and the TRIO/SSS Director and provides support services to assist and coach in the persistence/retention, graduation, and transfer of disadvantaged students; provides transfer and academic advising; acts as liaison to all 4-year colleges in the state; ensures that TRIO/SSS students

understand the admissions and financial aid application process. Teaches TRIO College Success Strategies course.

Required Qualifications: A bachelor's degree in education, counseling, sociology or other fields of studies related to position duties is required. Master's degree in counseling, education or related field is preferred. Familiarity with the Montana University System and transfer requirements is preferred.

Academic Advisor/Business and Social Science

Position Description: The Business and Social Science Advisor is responsible to the Student Support Services Director and the TRIO/SSS Director and provides support services to assist and coach in the persistence/retention, graduation, and transfer of disadvantaged students; provides transfer and academic advising; acts as liaison to all 4-year colleges in the state; ensures that TRIO/SSS students understand the admissions and financial aid application process.

Required Qualifications: A bachelor's degree is required in education, counseling, psychology or a related field. Master's degree in counseling or related field is preferred. Familiarity with the Montana University System and transfer requirements is preferred.

PLAN TO EMPLOY PERSONNEL FROM SIMILAR BACKGROUNDS AS PARTICIPANTS.

The qualifications necessary to be an effective TRIO/SSS staff member require an exceptional combination of attributes and experience. Foremost among these is the ability to identify with and be accepted by target area communities, schools, and students. This implies that staff members coming from **similar backgrounds** may have an advantage in the delivery of TRIO/SSS services.

Targeting underrepresented groups: To attract staff members from disadvantaged backgrounds, all employment advertisements carry a "preferred" statement for applicants who

were disadvantaged college students and/or required financial assistance to attend college. Job announcements describe the overall characteristics of the population to be served and state that like characteristics in applicants are preferred. Staff members fitting this description provide good role models for TRIO/SSS students to emulate.

The TRIO/SSS project operates under FVCC's approved policy of nondiscrimination and affirmative action. This policy, in accordance with existing federal and state laws, is one of equal opportunity for all qualified applicants and employees without regard to sex, race, color, age, religion, national origin, or disability.

Targeting low income, first generation and persons with disabilities: Open positions are posted on the ASPIRE website and the MCAN listserv to recruit seasoned TRIO professionals. ASPIRE is the federal region VIII TRIO organization which includes Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah.

Selection procedures: With the goal of creating a diverse search committee, a committee of TRIO staff members, a Human Resources representative, a faculty member and an additional Student Services staff member is formed. The search committee reviews applications that have been pre-screened for minimum qualifications. Qualified candidates are interviewed, often in two rounds. In the selection process for all TRIO/SSS positions, applicants are asked, in their written application and during the interview, to address the question of overcoming barriers similar to those faced by our students. Additional interview questions, for example, include:

- What inspires you to want to work with a TRIO SSS program?
- Can you describe your previous experience working with first-generation, low-income, or disabled students?
- How do you approach building relationships with students?

- Describe a time you helped a student overcome a significant academic or personal challenge.
- What strategies do you use to ensure students remain motivated and engaged?

This information, along with feedback from references, contributes to the overall evaluation of each applicant.

(F) BUDGET NARRATIVE

THE PROJECT BUDGET IS REASONABLE, COST-EFFECTIVE, AND ADEQUATE TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT.

The budget of **\$314,402** is adequate to support all planned project services and activities and to achieve the goals and objectives of the project. FVCC has nearly 50 years of experience successfully administering Department of Education TRIO grants. This is evidence that the institution is adept at administering TRIO grants and can provide the support necessary to carry out the grant activities and provide excellent services to 275 students with the budget as requested. This request results in **\$1,143** per participant cost.

The budget reflects all direct costs necessary to implement TRIO/SSS and to fulfill its goal of providing quality services. Budgeted program expenses are detailed in this section of the proposal as required. **FVCC is committed to paying staff a living wage for the area and providing benefits.**

Table F1: Annual Budget 2025

PERSONNEL	OBJECTIVES	
Total Salaries		\$227,100
TRIO Director 1.0 FTE Provides administration of the grant at FVCC. Supervises staff.	GPA Persistence/Retention Graduation Transfer	70,833

Program Assistant .75 FTE Compiles and enters all student data into database. Maintains student files and keeps budget account records and receipts.	GPA Persistence/Retention Graduation Transfer	34,281
Academic and Career Advisor 1.0 FTE Provides career exploration and academic advising for undecided students. Coordinates mentor program. Teaches College to Career course.	GPA Persistence/Retention Graduation Transfer	51,465
Academic Advisor/Tutor Coordinator 1.0 FTE Provides academic advising for STEM students. Recruits and trains Study Jam leaders & tutors. College pays 75% of this salary TRIO/SSS pays 25% of this salary	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation on Transfer	16,620
Disability Services Coordinator 1.0 FTE Provides services to students with disabilities and provides general counseling to all TRIO/SSS students. Teaches Academic Communication Skills course. College pays 75% of this salary TRIO/SSS pays 25% of this salary	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation on Transfer	14,615
Academic Advisor/Health Sciences 1.0 FTE Provides academic advising and transfer planning for TRIO/SSS students pursuing a health field. Teaches College to Career Class. College pays 75% of this salary TRIO/SSS pays 25% of this salary	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation on Transfer	12,724
Academic Advisor/Business/Social Science 1.0 FTE. Provides academic advising and transfer planning for TRIO/SSS students pursuing Business and SS degrees. College pays 75% of this salary TRIO/SSS pays 25% of this salary	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation on Transfer	14,562

Tutors and Study Jam Leaders Part-time academic year and summer. Pay ranges from \$12 to \$12.50/hr	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation	6,000
Peer Mentors Part-time academic year and summer. Pay is \$12.50/hr	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation on Transfer	6,000
Other Benefits 18.47% All permanent College employees with an FTE of 0.5 or greater receive health benefits from the state-wide Montana University System health benefits program. The current rate is \$12,648/yr and FVCC is paying the health benefits for all benefits-eligible TRIO/SSS employees. Other benefits: Medicare 1.45% Montana Retirement System 9.47% (TRS) or 9.07% (PRS) Worker's Compensation .7%		\$43,149
Social Security 6.2% 403b 7.00% Unemployment Insurance .25%		
Total Staff Travel All travel is in compliance with FVCC travel policy and cost restrictions. Staff travel does not exceed 4% of total Project salaries.		\$7,228
Director's travel to National Conference \$1,612 Airfare \$850 L o d g i n g \$ 6 0 0 P e r diem \$162		1,612
Director and 2 staff to Regional Conference \$2,315 Airfare \$1200 Lodging \$900 P e r d i e m \$215		2,315

Director and 2 staff to State Conference \$1,467 Mileage \$250 Lodging \$1,000 Per diem \$217		1,467
Director and 1 staff to professional development conferences \$1,834 Airfare \$800 Lodging \$850 Per diem \$184		1,834
Student Travel for 10 students per trip Student transfer trips to receiving 4-year institutions: University of Montana and Montana State University UM mileage 1.0 x 250 = \$250 MSU mileage 1.0 x 650 = \$650 Mileage rates for FVCC van is \$1/per mile Meals and Lodging in dorms \$1,310	Transfer	\$2,792
Supplies Project database software \$1,599 General office supplies \$648 Tutor textbooks \$275 Career development apps \$200 Financial literacy software/materials \$1,000	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation on Transfer	\$3,717
Student Leadership Conference for 4 students 1 staff Transportation: .625x 400 miles x 1 vehicle= \$250 Registration fee: \$400 x 5 = \$2,000	Academic Non-cognitive Social-emotional	\$2,250
Other COE membership \$3,600 50% paid by college State & regional association program membership \$450 Cultural and academic events \$500 Registration fees for professional development \$2,500	GPA Persistence/ Retention Graduation Transfer	\$5,250
Total Direct Cost		\$286,444
Indirect cost 8%		\$22,916
TRIO Participant Costs/Travel		\$5,042

TOTAL PROGRAM COST		\$314.402
Cost per participant		\$1,143

The budget effectively combines college and program resources and utilizes economical staffing structures. All expenditures fit within the budgetary requirements of the College and TRIO/SSS project regulations.

(G) EVALUATION PLAN

<p>1. THE METHODS FOR EVALUATION ARE APPROPRIATE TO THE PROJECT AND INCLUDE BOTH QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVALUATION MEASURES.</p>

The TRIO/SSS objectives and evaluation plan identified in this proposal are driven by the assessed needs of the students at FVCC. Appropriate benchmarks are set using baseline data from FVCC's Office of Institutional Research. The evaluation plan includes quantitative and qualitative measures. Although the documented results of the project's evaluation efforts are compiled in an Annual Performance Report, the process of collecting the data, soliciting student and staff feedback, measuring participant progress, and improving delivery of services is an integral part of the project throughout the year.

Staff feedback on all aspects of service delivery is actively sought and utilized. During the academic year, the staff meets weekly with the TRIO Director. This level of communication between all staff averts potential problems and allows emerging problems to be addressed quickly, enabling the staff to deliver quality, effective services. Staff meetings include project staff as well as occasional visitors to provide seamless, consistent service. Tutors and mentors complete evaluations on trainings and receive feedback on the services they provide to students. Tutors meet biweekly as a group with the Tutor Coordinator to give tutors the opportunity to discuss effective practices, common challenges, and to receive ongoing support and training. The Academic and Career Advisor and TRIO Director meet with mentors as a group on a weekly basis to provide

ongoing training, assess needs for resources, and ensure high standards of service.

Project participants contribute to the evaluation process by completing evaluations of instructional components, activities, and services. Formal evaluations of all TRIO courses are received by TRIO instructors and administration. Tutees and mentees evaluate the quality of service of their tutors and mentors each semester using an online satisfaction survey. Supervisors discuss results with student employees and incorporate areas needing improvement into mentor and tutor training. TRIO/SSS students' feedback is used to improve all key components of the TRIO/SSS program.

<p>2. EXAMINE IN SPECIFIC AND MEASURABLE WAYS, USING APPROPRIATE BASELINE DATA, THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT IN IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS.</p>

Baseline data is obtained in cooperation and collaboration with FVCC's Office of Institutional Research. Comparisons of performance indicators outlined in the Objectives section of the grant proposal are made between TRIO/SSS eligible and not-served students, students not eligible for TRIO/SSS, and students receiving TRIO/SSS services. Comparing these groups determines if students served by the Program perform better, and to what extent. Results are used to measure the success of the Program.

Detailed quantitative and qualitative measures are specified in the following Program Objective Evaluation Plan in Table G1. Utilizing the Council for Academic Standards (CAS), the Program Objective Evaluation Plan provides the primary tools for evaluation of the TRIO/SSS project. The Program Objective Evaluation Plan allows for formative evaluation, summative evaluation, and preparation of the Department of Education Annual Performance Report.

Table G1: Program Objectives Evaluation Plan				
Objective	Criteria/	Documentation	Timeline	Person
70% of participants persist 59% Baseline	<i>Criteria to measure:</i> Completion of each semester, each year for each student in the project	Documentation of enrollment, transfer, or graduation in individual student files, project student database	At the completion of each semester	Director, Program Assistant, Registrar, Institutional Researcher
92% of participants will maintain a minimum semester GPA of	<i>Criteria to measure:</i> Each student's grade reports each semester	Documentation in individual student files, student database	At the completion of each semester	Director, Program Assistant
40% of new participants served each year will graduate from FVCC within four years	<i>Criteria to measure:</i> Number of graduates from each cohort	Documentation comes from Student Services and is maintained in student files and student	At the conclusion of each semester, information is gathered for all graduates and collected yearly	Director, Program Assistant, Registrar, Institutional Researcher
20% of new participants served each year will receive an associate's degree or certificate from FVCC and transfer to a 4-year institution	<i>Criteria to measure:</i> Graduation rate, number of students graduating and transferring from each cohort	Documentation for graduation from Registrar, transfer information from National Student Clearinghouse and all stored in student files and	On-going. Student tracking must be kept up during the year to identify mid-year and late transfer students	Director, Program Assistant, Registrar, Institutional Researcher

3. INTENT TO USE THE RESULTS OF EVALUATIONS TO MAKE PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES BASED UPON THE RESULTS OF PROJECT EVALUATION.

Ongoing evaluation of the TRIO/SSS project is a means to ensure the highest possible level of achievement. Within each year of the project, emphasis throughout the evaluation process is on formative evaluation and any areas identified as needing improvement are addressed immediately. Formative evaluation allows for reallocation of resources and revised managerial decisions by TRIO/SSS Director. All adjustments, reallocations, and revisions to the scope of the project are made with the approval of the Department of Education. Continual monitoring of project progress and needed modifications of activities and timelines are made internally by the TRIO/SSS staff.

The CAS Standards Self-Assessment Guides (SAGs) promote self-assessment, provide staff with informed perspectives on strengths and weaknesses, support professional development, lead the way to enhancement of program services, translate the standards and guidelines into a more user-friendly evaluation format, and provide a vehicle to create action plans that lead to enhanced student learning and personal development. The steps for implementing the CAS SAGs include assembling the assessment team (project staff, faculty, staff, students), understanding the self-assessment process, understanding the Standards and Guidelines, gathering evidence and conducting rating, documenting strengths and deficiencies, preparing a plan of action, and writing a report (see Table G2). In tandem with the CAS SAGs, FVCC's TRIO/SSS project is subject to FVCC's institutional assessment which all non-instructional departments undergo every three years. FVCC developed high-quality evaluation plans. They are both formative and summative and have qualitative as well as quantitative measures.

Table G2: Required Services Evaluation Plan

Services	Type of Data	Timeline	Methods	Analysis Approach	Report Schedule	Use of Data for
Academic tutoring	Qualitative and quantitative	Monthly; semester	Grade reports, evaluations,	Staff review, statistical	Semester	Improve tutor training
Instruction	Qualitative and quantitative	Semester	Class evaluations, student surveys	Staff review, statistical	Semester, annually	Course content; activities and
Course selection	Qualitative and quantitative	Semester; annually	Participant survey, analysis of degree	Staff review	Semester, annually	Advising process and advisor
Transfer services	Qualitative and quantitative	Annually	Graduate survey, National Clearinghou	Staff review, statistical	Annually	Advising process and advisor
Resources for financing	Quantitative	Semester	Financial Aid reports	Staff review	Semester	Identify needs and improve
Assistance with financial aid applications	Quantitative	Semester	Financial Aid reports	Staff review	Semester	Increase student FAFSA completio
Financial literacy education	Qualitative and quantitative	Semester	Surveys, module completion	Staff review	Semester	Course content; workshop materials

(H) QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

QUALITY AND RATIONALE OF THE PROJECT DESIGN.
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The SSS project design at FVCC includes key project components designed to engage and help students get a strong start at college, integrate student support into their college courses, help students graduate in a timely manner with clear pathways toward their goals, increase students' preparation for career or transfer, as well as increase their financial literacy. Each project component in the Plan of Operation incorporates high-impact practices informed by research from What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide (2021), *Effective Advising for Postsecondary Students* which provides four evidence-based recommendations for designing and delivering comprehensive, integrated advising and effective programming to support students' educational success. The four recommendations show strong evidence of success by intentionally focusing on the quality of advising and the development of "sustained, personalized relationships with individual students throughout their college career." The What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide emphasizes the importance of communicating to students the purpose and role of their advisor, so the advisor is seen as a trusted ally, coach and mentor. This type of messaging increases student engagement via: (1) marketing and outreach; (2) relationship building; and (3) developing student-centered programming. Using the recommended proactive Appreciative Advising Model, advisors will become and remain relevant throughout the students' academic career.

Continuous assessment of student programming and advising effectiveness will be key, in addition to collaboration across various campus offices. The TRIO/SSS project at FVCC incorporates strategic formative and summative assessments for all required and permissible services and program activities. The logic model is informed by evidence-based research (Table

G3). Personnel, resources, partnerships, and activities of the program will achieve both the short-term and long-term intended goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Table G3: FVCC Logic Model

[illegible]