
The COS Student Success Center's Four-Year Plan

For the COS Student Success Center (SSC), success is not just about grades; it's also about fostering a sense of belonging and identity.

By Md Mohsin

Success can mean being able to go to college. Success can mean admission to UTSA and passing classes. The meaning of success for students is diverse, and the path to success is often steep.

Some students face systematic obstacles when it comes to attending college and accessing resources. For others, engaging in a class is difficult. Sometimes, a roadblock to success is simply not having enough time.

The SSC collaborates with students to overcome these evolving or systematic barriers to success. The center allows students to be what they want to be. The SSC is a place for students to meet science mentors for peer mentorship, to connect with fellow students one-on-one or to join large events. Students can also engage with potential employers through SSC-sponsored gatherings such as Science Semana, an annual, week-long series of networking and skill-boosting opportunities. "We need to think of what we are doing with students beyond the classrooms to meet them where they are and help them focus on their area of study," said SSC director Daniel Ramirez-Escobedo. "And so, that's what we can offer and what we're trying to do with our four-year plan and the SSC in general."

In addition to the challenges of higher education, there are also opportunities for growth, emphasizes Ramirez-Escobedo.

"During the pandemic, students engaged virtually. Blending online and in-person modalities remains a tough choice. Do students still want to use virtual resources? Are online resources more of an archive? The nature of online resources can lead to issues of access and additional barriers for many first-generation students and those who would rather learn in the classroom versus online." Sometimes, college resources can improve students' time management with their workload. "For example, every department can offer their own tutoring and support measures," said Ramirez-Escobedo. "If they get a low grade in their class, one solution is to offer tutoring. There are several groups on campus offering tutoring. And now we have to analyze which spaces the students are maximizing."

The COS aims to do more than prepare students for internships by the end of their second year. "We want to say, [the four-year plan] is what you're going to do to get focused on going from classroom to career within your next four years or three years, whatever timeline works for you," said Ramirez-Escobedo. Once they are prepared academically, students then know what they want to do with their degree.

The four-year plan is designed to be effortless and engaging. "Parts of the four-year plan are things the students are already doing," said Ramirez-Escobedo. "We're just having them check in. If they were already going to go to, for instance, Science Semana; if they attend one event, they're getting credit for it."

The SSC prepares students for the professional world beyond the classroom through workshops on topics such as interview skills, résumé building and teamwork. “We have some events where our science mentors will say, ‘Let’s practice doing interview questions, or just talk to me about, for example, gravity in 30 seconds,’” said Ramirez-Escobedo. “Also, teamwork is something that’s huge; every employer is going to want to ask about teamwork. With our mentors here, we tell

students ‘you’re on a team of 30,’ so they have to learn what teamwork is just by being here.”

The SSC nurtures each student’s science identity. “We always wanted to promote that tagline ‘I am a scientist,’ and we tell students, ‘You are a scientist from day one,’” said Ramirez-Escobedo. “That’s blended into our four-year plan. For us, success is letting students know where they belong.”



Science mentors host a tabling event outside the Flawn Science Building to help students learn more about their majors and degree plan.

THE SSC creates individual four-year plans for COS students. Each plan consists of checklists and activities that are grouped into the following categories: academic success, road to graduation, COS involvement, university engagement, career readiness and career launcher. These focus areas play a role in the success of students. For example, the career launcher encourages students to play an active role in their professional development by submitting job applications, attending company information sessions and participating in mock-interview sessions. Students receive help navigating their plans and are rewarded with cords and pins that can be worn at graduation. **Students, find your four-year plan on RowdyLink!**

THE SSC'S FOUR-YEAR PLAN CHECKLIST

- ☒ Academic Success
- ☒ Road To Graduation
- ☒ COS Involvement
- ☒ University Engagement
- ☒ Career Readiness
- ☒ Career Launcher