

“PIONEERS, NOT PROBLEMS”

An Appreciative Approach to Advising
First-Generation College Students

Presenters:

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A photograph of a large, multi-story brick building with many windows, likely a college building. The building is made of reddish-brown brick and has several arched windows on the upper floors. There are green bushes and trees in front of the building, and a paved path leads towards it. The sky is clear and blue.

MEDAILLE COLLEGE'S

TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM

H107, 18 Agassiz Circle
Buffalo, NY 14214

•PROGRAM PROFILE

- Medaille has maintained a TRIO SSS program on its Buffalo campus for 32 years
- We serve 200 low-income, first-generation students and/or students with disabilities
- 74% of the entering freshman class in 2012 was TRIO eligible
- 62% of all students enrolled at Medaille are first-generation college

TRiO SERVICES INCLUDE

- Academic coaching and personal cheerleading
 - Peer mentor program
 - Access to their own computer lab in H107
 - Professional liaisons to campus resources (i.e. Financial Aid)
 - TRiO supplemental grant aid for first and second year students
 - Laptop/calculator/textbook/etc. library
 - Financial assistance with graduate school application and professional licensing fees
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- Graduate school exploration and career guidance
 - Workshops on study skills, financial literacy, and personal development topics
 - Extended tutoring time

APPRECIATIVE ADVISEMENT

- The appreciative advisement model was developed by Dr. Jennifer L. Bloom Ed.D. at the University of South Carolina
- *“Appreciative advising is the intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals and potentials”*

6 phase process

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS:

- First-generation student (FGS) is defined as a college student whose parents have not attained a Bachelor's degree
- FGS often come from low-income families

FAMILIAL INFLUENCE

- While some families of FGS are supportive, some do not understand the need for a college education and would rather have the student contributing to the family's income and/or household responsibilities
- FGS often work off-campus to help pay for school, but when work becomes the priority, school success is less likely

ISOLATION

- FGS often feel that they are straddling two different worlds, trying to fit in at college, but not losing sight of where they came from
- Family and friends from home can often view the FGS as acting “too good” for them when they try to share the knowledge they have learned

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POLICIES / RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- FGS come in at a disadvantage because they do not know the unspoken rules of college culture that their peers with college educated parents are aware of
- Not only do FGS not know *who* they can ask for help, they also do not know *what* they should be asking about

FINANCIAL AID ISSUES AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

- FGS can also be confused and intimidated by Financial Aid and billing offices. When faced with any kind of financial misunderstanding, many students will just assume there is nothing they can do and give up, disappearing without asking for clarification of something that could be a simple fix
- Not having access to or knowing how to obtain certain resources may jeopardize grades (e.g., textbooks, calculators, laptops, transportation, tuition)

ACADEMIC OVER- OR UNDER-CONFIDENCE

- Without a reliable external barometer, FGS may overestimate their ability to perform at a college level, or demonstrate a self-sabotaging lack of confidence even if they *can* perform well
- If they attended high schools with less rigorous curriculums, they may underestimate their academic readiness for college-level coursework

Vargas (2004) as cited in Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster (2004)

Striplin (1999) as cited in Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster (2004).

OTHER “COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE”

- FGS may hear terms like syllabus, office hours, and Dean's List and have no idea what they mean, but they may be too embarrassed to let on
- FGS are often unclear about instructor expectations, but may feel too intimidated to ask for clarification

GROWING DEMOGRAPHIC

- One in three college students is first-generation
- This increase is due to declining enrollment and higher education needing more bodies to fill seats, leading to recruitment of students who were previously ignored

ACCESS WITHOUT SUPPORT IS NOT OPPORTUNITY

- However, "access without support is not opportunity" (Tinto, 2012)
- More than one-fourth of these students are not retained past the first year and almost 90% do not graduate within six-years

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES OF FGS

- What do you see as the positive attributes of FGS?

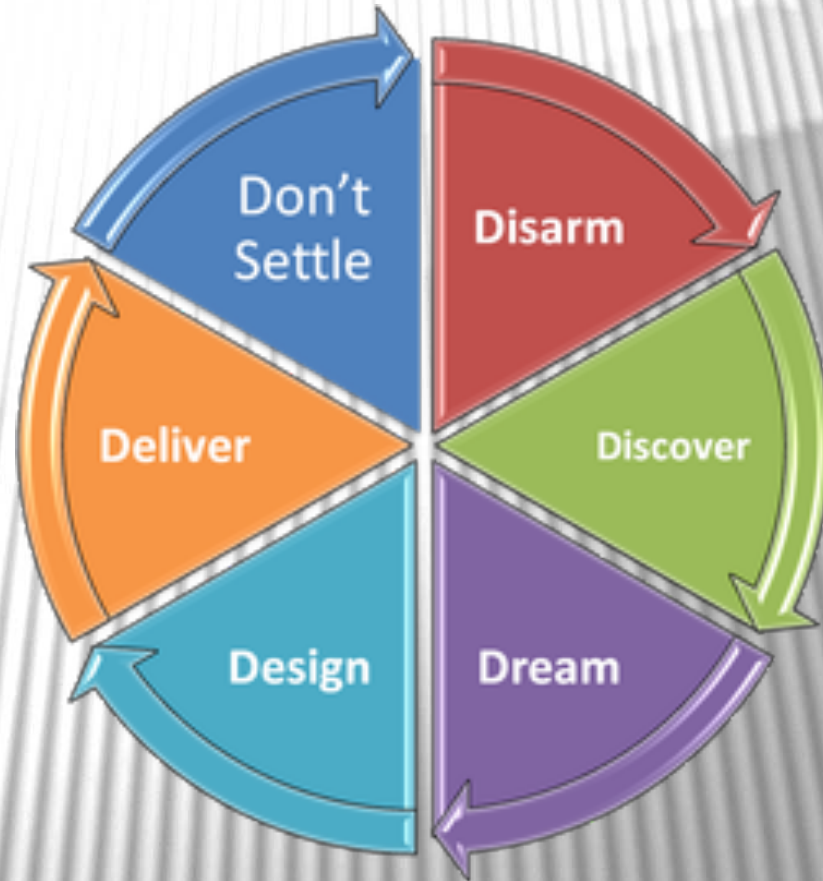
SO WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY ABOUT SUPPORTING FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS?

- Orientation that also includes parents
- First-year seminars that teach basic concepts (reading a syllabus, time management, note taking, academic policies, etc.) to ALL students
- Peer mentors with similar backgrounds
- Social support through programs that act as a gateway for students to navigate systems of higher education and create a "home away from home"

APPRECIATIVE ADVISEMENT
IN MEDAILLE COLLEGE'S
TRIO PROGRAM:
STEP BY STEP

6 PHASE PROCESS

- Disarm
- Discover
- Dream
- Design
- Deliver
- Don't settle



- **Disarm:** Make a positive first impression with the student, build rapport, and create a safe, welcoming space
- **Discover:** Ask positive open-ended questions that help advisers learn about students' strengths, skills, and abilities
- **Dream:** Inquire about students' hopes and dreams for their futures
- **Design:** Co-create a plan for making their dreams a reality
- **Deliver:** The student delivers on the plan created during the Design phase and the adviser is available to encourage and support students
- **Don't Settle:** Advisers and students alike need to set their own internal bars of expectations high

NEW PARTICIPANT ORIENTATION

- **Disarm:** First opportunity to develop relationships with program staff and other participants; first place we begin to help students and parents gain “college knowledge”
- **Discover/Dream:** Icebreakers led by peer mentors
- **Don't Settle:** Realistic view of what is to come helps them set reasonable expectations for success





TRIO LAB

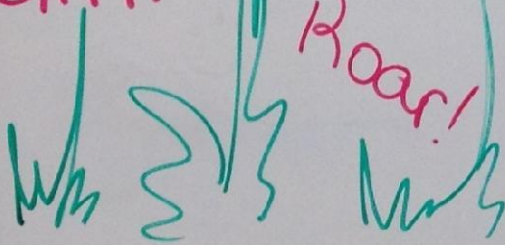
- **Disarm:** Home away from home
- **Discover:** We learn a lot about the students while they are here, and they learn about each other
- **Dream/Design/Deliver/Don't Settle:** These phases all happen in informal, yet powerful ways

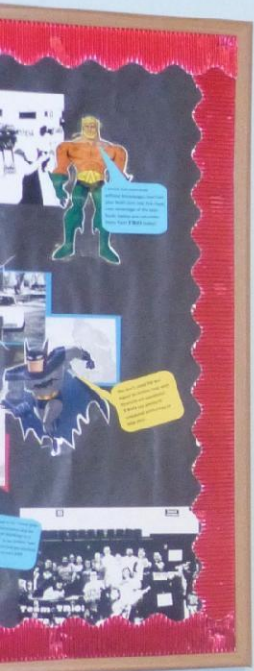
Welcome to
TRiO!

Tina says
Sign In!

Grrr...

Roar!







FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

- **Disarm:** Learning Community format; we instruct the FYS and serve as their first year advisors
 - Nature of the class and coursework provide ample opportunity to Dream and Discover
 - Board of Directors, TypeFocus, Scavenger Hunt, COM101





PEER MENTOR PROGRAM

- **Disarm:** Come from similar backgrounds, majors, and interests
 - Orientation, social, community service projects
 - More likely to open up to peers about Dreams (and fears about / obstacles to not reaching them)
- **Design:** Bridge between students and staff
 - More receptive to recommendations from peers about Delivery
- **Don't Settle:** Peers can hold them accountable in ways that staff cannot





INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION PLAN (IGP)

- Serves as a contract between a student and an advisor about a student's plans for success, both academically, personally and career-wise during their time in college
- Meet at least once a semester
- Goals are based in part on the success indicators laid out for each year while in college

Student goals should help move them towards

IGP

- **Dream:** The advisor assists the student in developing overarching life and career goals
- **Design:** Where concrete, incremental and achievable goals are collaboratively created; provides room for a student to set one academic and one personal goal per semester
- **Delivery:** The student assumes responsibility; advisor provides students with options for receiving support from the institution in the form of workshops, support offices, tutoring, etc.
- **Don't Settle:** Advisor supports the student through the successes and challenges as they move towards the goals

EVIDENCE THAT THE 6-PHASE APPRECIATIVE ADVISEMENT MODEL
WORKS FOR STUDENTS IN MEDAILLE'S TRIO PROGRAM

2010-2012 TRiO Participant
Graduation and Persistence Rates

| | 2010 – 2011 | 2011 - 2012 |
|----------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Good Academic Standing: | 87% | 86.5% |
| Persistence to the next academic year: | 79% | 84% |

DWAIN

Disarm

- Helped me with recognizing the importance of making a good impression
- Useful workshops on how to present yourself, e.g. “Personal Branding”
- With all the advisors making TRIO a friendly environment, it has showed me how to welcome students and has shown me and others that TRIO is a safe environment

Discover

- Always asked me questions that I had to answer about myself
- Never told me what my strengths were; they always let me figure out for myself
- Always listened to me and gave great suggestions and comments that made me discover new things about myself
- Used Strength Quest Test

DWAIN

Deliver

- TRIO helped me go through with my plans and always made sure I was on top of my game
- They always made sure I wasn't feeling down about school

Don't Settle

- They expect the best out of me
- Never had a doubt about me or let me doubt myself
- Always gave me a challenge(s) (go for a 4.0)

JOANIE

Disarm:

TRIO did this as soon as I walked through the door. When I had my initial meeting with the TRIO advisor, I was comfortable because they were genuinely happy to meet me. We bonded over the conversation and I have been loyal to TRIO ever since because of that first impression.

Discover:

The TRIO advisor took the time to ask me what my goals were instead of speaking over me. We designed a graduation plan that fit in perfectly with what I wanted to do. They asked me what I thought were my strongest areas and weakest areas and helped me figure out how I could better myself accordingly.

Dream:

JOANIE, CONT'D

Design:

We worked together on an achievable plan to meet the goals that I wanted to reach. They told me that my dream was awesome and gave me the encouragement to push on. We created the graduation plan and as a last semester senior, I am proof that it worked.

Deliver:

It took me some time to adjust to college but TRIO was there every step of the way when I wanted to give up. My mother passed away after my freshman year, and I really didn't want to come back. But the TRIO staff pushed me because they knew I could do it. I owe them my successful college career because honestly I don't know where I would be without them.

INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES REFERENCED FOR UPDATING IGP:

- Cedar Valley
- Valencia College
- University at Buffalo <http://advising.buffalo.edu/succeed/academicplanning.php>
- The Sage Colleges
- Binghamton University
<http://www2.binghamton.edu/harpur/advising/current/academic-plan.html>

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