Leading with Student Voice: Developing a Strengths-Based TRIO SSS Needs Assessment for Individualized

Presenters

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How does your program currently learn about each student's strengths, goals, and support needs?

The Challenge:
Consistent Process, Individualized Support

Programs need consistency

Students need individualized support

Why This Project Began

Program Need:

A consistent process for learning about students and developing or revising Individualized Success Plans

Development Opportunity:

Center student voice while connecting consistent assessment with individualized advising

Questions That Guided Development

1. How can student support needs be identified and documented in a systematic and consistent manner during intake and annually thereafter?
2. What specific supports do students need to succeed academically?
3. If students are succeeding academically, is their success sustainable?
4. What strengths do students bring to the program?
5. What challenges or barriers may impact student success?

What Informed The Assessment's Design

Federal SSS Requirements

TRIO Knowledge and Experience

Literature Review

The Principles That Guided My Decisions

1. Use a strengths-based perspective
2. Use a student-centered perspective
3. Ensure the tool is useful for advisors
4. Be transparent about the tool's limitations
5. Be consistent, but not prescriptive

What the Assessment Is Designed to Do

- Create a consistent starting point for initial and annual ISP development
- Gather students' strengths, goals, experiences, priorities, and perceived support needs
- Help advisors recognize patterns and prepare individualized follow-up questions
- Inform collaborative planning, referrals, next steps, and reflection over time

What the Assessment Is Not Designed to Do

- Determine SSS eligibility, diagnose students, or predict academic success
- Produce risk scores or categorize students by level of need
- Replace professional judgment or the advisor-student relationship
- Serve as a validated measure of growth or program effectiveness
- Guarantee compliance with grant, institutional, or legal requirements

***Evidence-informed and pilot-ready; not psychometrically validated**

The Assessment Is More Than an Instrument

4 Core Documents

1. The Instrument
2. The Interpretation Framework
3. The Advisor Guide
4. The Materials Overview

8 Assessment Domains

- Learning & Academic Skills
- Confidence & Motivation
- Educational Goals
- Campus Connections & Support
- College & Resources Navigation
- Well-Being & Life Circumstances
- About You
- Your Voice

Domain 1: Learning & Academic Skills

How do you learn?

I can identify why a study strategy is not working for me.

When a study strategy is not working, I can adjust my approach.

From Assessment to Individualized Success Plan

1. Advisor explains the purpose of the assessment.
2. Student completes the assessment.
3. Advisor reviews the full response pattern.
4. Advisor identifies strengths and areas needing clarification.
5. Advisor prepares individualized questions.
6. Student and advisor identify priorities together.
7. Priorities inform the Individual Success Plan.

Activity Time!

Analyze a Fictional Student Response Pattern

Please take 2-3 minutes to review your handout

Activity Questions

What strengths did you notice?

What would you want to understand better?

What follow-up questions would you prepare?

What might become an ISP priority?

(if the student agrees)

Activity Debrief

Strengths we might notice:

- Persistence during challenges
- An existing organization system
- Awareness when a strategy isn't working
- A supportive network
- A developing educational and career direction

Areas we might explore:

- What makes adjusting study strategies difficult
- How work, family, transportation, and finances interact
- What "working in healthcare" means to the student
- What makes asking for help feel uncomfortable

Possible follow up questions:

- What is already helping you keep track of your responsibilities?
- Can you tell me about a time you realized a study strategy was not working?
- What have you already explored about careers in healthcare?

Thoughtful Assessment Implementation

1. Clear explanation to students
2. Time for advisors to review responses
3. Staff preparation
4. A defined connection to Individualized Success Plan conversations
5. Appropriate data access and storage

Where could these principles strengthen your current process?

Thank You!

Questions?

Student Needs Assessment Package:

- Assessment
- Interpretation Framework
- Advisor Guide
- Materials Overview
- Implementation & Customization Guide
- License & Permitted Use Terms

Package and other available services can be found through the QR code below: