



# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



**OFFICE OF MINORITY  
STUDENT AFFAIRS**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ILLINOIS**  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## Guiding Philosophies

### Mission

The Office of Minority Student Affairs' (OMSA) mission is to provide exceptional support services that enhance the academic achievement, personal development, and graduation rates of first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students at Illinois.

### Vision

OMSA's vision is to become the campus leader and national trailblazer in transforming the lives of first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students.

### Organizational Priority

We will continue enhancing our organizational culture by operationalizing the following principles: **S.O.A.R.**—“**Excellence in Service, Organizational wellness, Assessment and Results**”. Metrics for this priority include student satisfaction assessment, learning outcomes assessment, employee satisfaction assessments, and evidence of student success as defined by the metrics for goal number one above.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Accomplishment #1

OMSA provided over 55,000 points of contact through our Advising & Mentoring program, including 1,405 one-on-one mentoring sessions; 9,834 points of contact through our TRIO SSS program, including 503 individual advising sessions; and 2,039 tutoring sessions with 353 unique students in just our first two full semesters after transitioning to a completely new online tutoring service model. Overwhelmingly, these services are utilized by First Generation students and Student of Color: **A&M**: FG 75.2%; SoC 88.3% ; **SSS** FG 84.6%; SoC 96.6%; **Tutoring** FG 52.4; SoC 72.4%.

### Accomplishment #2

This year, the OMSA was extremely proud to honor 7,050 of our students at our 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Mom's Day Scholastic Awards Ceremony. Of these students, 2,901 achieved a 4.00 GPA in either the Spring 2020 or Fall 2020 semesters, with the remainder achieving a 3.67 or better. Of these students, 52.5% are First Generation and 48.0% are Students of Color.

### Accomplishment #3

Our TRIO SSS Grant was renewed, locking in another 5 years of SSS at Illinois. The TRIO SSS award is valued at \$338,337 annually or \$1,691,685 in total for distribution between FY21-FY25 to serve 1st gen, low-income, disabled, and disadvantaged undergraduate student populations.

### Accomplishment #4

The OMSA awarded \$13,500 in direct scholarships in FY21. Additionally, we were also entrusted with stewardship of the Clarence Shelley Endowed Scholarship valued at approximately \$90,000.00 at request of Mr. Shelley. The Shelley Scholarship will provide approximately \$3600 in additional annual scholarships to deserving recipients.

## Accomplishment #5

TRIO Students continue performing at high levels, across all programs: 100% graduation rate among TRIO Talent Search High School Seniors and 100% of TRIO Talent Search students (6<sup>th</sup> grade-11 grade) persisted in school, advancing to the next academic grade level; SSS students reported a 92% persistence rate and 96% good academic standing rate during SP21; 2 McNair Scholars won for outstanding oral presentations at the 2021 Illinois Undergraduate Research Symposium.

## CHALLENGES

The OMSA faced many of the same issues that were prevalent across the division and campus. While adjusting programming offerings to a fully digital environment, updating standard operating procedures to support online offerings, and ensuring continued student knowledge about how to access our services was a major concern, these challenges were the reality of operating during COVID-19.

Beyond these unique challenges, none of the persistent threats to the OMSA's continued successes went away. Staff retention concerns stemming from less competitive salaries, a declining budget amid increasing demand for services alongside additional minimum wage increases, were all major challenges. As we transition back to in-person and hybrid operations, our dire space shortage remains unchanged and we are forced to return to the unsustainable practice of asking our college and student affairs partners to provide office space for our staff.

Finally, uncertainty in the budget continues to hamper service delivery and program support. Despite success in the federal TRIO competition last year, our state allocation continues to decline. Since FY 14 our state allocation has been reduced by nearly 10%, and the threat of additional cuts loom prominently—all the while—the demand for our services from students and campus partners are increasing. The OMSA's support of first-generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students is a vital to ensuring their success. And if current trends continue, the need for our services will increase as colleges alter their services in the face of this campus wide recession.

## STRATEGIC GOALS 2021-2022

### **Goal #1: Return to pre-pandemic levels of advising and tutoring service deliveries.**

Theme: Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

How will it be achieved: Directly interacting with students is amongst the most impactful work the OMSA achieves every year. Each of our units has programs in place to provide academic, personal, and career development services to students. By continuing to adapt our services to reach the most students, we will implement in-person, hybrid, and online services with the goal of returning service delivery numbers to our pre-pandemic levels.

Metrics: Service delivery numbers will be compared to that of the 2018-2019 academic year, across Advising & Mentoring, Tutoring and Academic Services, and TRIO SSS. This will be monitored through the 2021-2022 academic year.

## **Goal #2: Increase academic programming and partnerships with AACC, La Casa, BNAACC, and NAH.**

Theme: Collaboration and Community Partnerships

How it will be achieved: The OMSA is uniquely situated within Student Affairs to provide Academic Affairs style services to the first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students at Illinois. By partnering more closely with OIR units tasked with serving the same populations, we can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of partner units by creating programs that better serve our shared populations of students. This will be achieved by intentionally engaging our colleagues throughout OIR, and considering these partnerships as we implement our calendar of programming for the upcoming year.

Metrics: Creation of new programs jointly operated by OMSA and partners within OIR; Documentation of increased planning and collaboration between OMSA and partners within OIR. Evidence of increased collaboration will be logged throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, with a semesterly review conducted by the OMSA Leadership Team.

## **Goal #3: Engage in a department level strategic planning process to align our efforts with the new SA Strategic Goals for 2021-2026.**

Theme: Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

How it will be achieved: With the release of the Student Affairs Strategic Goals for 2021-2026, the OMSA will engage in a process to review our own strategic plan, including full mapping to the Student Affairs Strategic Plan and the campus' The Next 150. This will be undertaken by the OMSA Leadership Team and select other members of the office and presented for ratification by the entire office tentatively at the October 2021 OMSA Staff Meeting.

Metrics: Evidence for this goal will be the public release of the OMSA Strategic Plan during the Fall 2021 semester.

## **OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS/SERVICES**

OMSA's mission is to provide exceptional support services that enhance the academic achievement, personal development, and graduation rates of first generation, low-income, and historically underrepresented students at Illinois through our Advising & Mentoring, Tutoring, and four federal TRIO programs. While the transition to digital services did make a major impact in our overall service numbers, we are still proud of the impact that we had across campus during this trying year.

### **Advising & Mentoring**

- 778 unique students had individual interactions with an OMSA Mentor—maintaining 70% of 2019-2020 utilization across a major service delivery overhaul.
- 51,632 total interactions were logged during 2020-2021, including 896.6 hours of direct service across 2,663 one on one interactions were provided to the 1,177 NTF and Transfer students identified for our high-impact services.

### Tutoring at the Academic Services Center

- 353 unique students attended tutoring—maintaining 61% of 2019-2020 utilization for comparable programs, even after a major service delivery overhaul.
- 2,039 individual visits totaling 1,888 hours in tutoring services were provided. The transition to digital services across the past three semester has severely impacted OMSA Tutoring. We hope a hybrid system coming this fall will help service numbers rebound.
- Even through the pandemic, we continued to offer matched tutoring, final exam review sessions, study skills consultations, and workshops. This is in addition to our existing digital platforms, StudentLingo and TutorLingo. StudentLingo served 212 unique students across 465 visits.

### TRIO McNair Scholars

- 31 total TRIO McNair Scholars Participants
- December 2020 Graduates = 3; May 2021 Graduates = 11
- 8 scholars presented in the Illinois Undergraduate Research Symposium, including 2 Outstanding Oral Presentations winners Issy Marquez (Humanities & Arts) and Fahren Zackery (Life: Plants and Animals).

### TRIO Student Support Services

- 261 total TRIO Student Support Services participants
- 47 scholars graduated (or are scheduled to graduate) in May or August of 2020 with baccalaureate degrees
- 92% persistence rate; 96% good academic standing rate
- 84% average graduation rate for the 2010-2015 SSS cohorts
- TRIO SSS provided 516 one-on-one advising sessions across, in addition to workshops, cultural events, and community building activities, culminating in 1,191 direct hours of service and 10,256 total points of contact with students.

### TRIO Talent Search

- 450 total TRIO Talent Search participants
- 100% graduation rate among TRIO Talent Search High School Seniors, maintaining our perfect record from last year.
- 100% of TRIO Talent Search students (6<sup>th</sup> grade-11 grade) persisted in school, advancing to the next academic grade level

### TRIO Upward Bound

- 99 total TRIO Upward Bound participants
- 51 students participated in the 2020 Summer Residential Program
- 20+ college acceptances for 2020 seniors from institutions across the Mid-West, the South, and the East Coast
- 20% increase in Study Center participation over 2019-2020.

## ASSESSMENT

The OMSA has continued to expand its assessment practices and continue to push for improvements across all units within the office. This year saw the initiation and expansion of

assessment activities across each of our TRIO units, deeper dives into the experiences and development of our graduate employees and an overhaul of our exit interview process.

### Expansion of Assessment in TRIO

Assessment of our four TRIO programs is always a balance of current programmatic needs, agreed upon assessment practices outlined in each of the four grants, and ensuring participation in an already busy programmatic schedule. However, this year saw key investments in assessment practices with the reenvisioning of the initial needs assessment conducted in our Talent Search and Upward Bound programs. These changes led to concrete changes and improvements in service delivery and participation throughout the year. For example, as a result of the updated needs assessment, Upward Bound added a day to Study Center and reconfigured the program structure to include holistic programming efforts, which has increased attendance and participation by 20% over last year. Additionally, Student Support Services has been exploring ways to better utilize data collected in the LASSI, a standardized assessment given to our incoming SSS students per our grant. We hope this data will allow us to better tailor and schedule workshops and interventions based on the unique characteristics of each student/cohort. Similar efforts are underway in our Talent Search program, while the exit interview process is being reimaged in the McNair Scholars program.

### Graduate Mentor Experience and Professional Development

A large percentage of the OMSA's annual student interactions are provided by the Graduate Mentors within the OMSA's Advising and Mentoring Program. One assessment priority this year has been better understanding their onboarding/training process, development across their experience as a mentor, and their interactions with their supervisors and campus partners in the colleges they serve. A series of focus groups was conducted across the Fall 2020 semester which generated a list of recommendations intended to improve both the GM's experiences as employees, their professional development, and, ultimately, the services we provide to students. As a result of these focus groups and with the help of SATech, we were able to make a major update to how one of our data collection systems operates, leading to more accurate service data and a major quality of life improvement for all who use the AMMS system. Additionally, findings surrounding team building both within the GM cohort and with our campus partners has led to more intentional efforts on resource sharing and opportunities to interact as a staff. Finally, the focus groups highlighted areas where additional training and resources on OMSA and campus-level processes and systems were needed to underline the importance of what we do and why/how we do it.

The OMSA is also extremely proud to have been recognized with the Outstanding Assessment Project for the 2020-2021 year, with our work on the OMSA Interactive Annual Report project. We look forward to continuing that project moving forward.

## EQUITY, INCLUSION, JUSTICE

The OMSA has an abiding commitment to diversity, both amongst our staff and within the services we provide. The OMSA's staff is one of the most diverse on campus. Of our current 20 FTE employees, 65% identify as African American/Black, 15% as Latinx, and 20% as White. 60% of our professional staff identify as women, while 40% identify as men. Amongst our hourly, graduate, and undergraduate staff, we employ individuals across a variety of races, genders, and geography (e.g., American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Latinx, African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White, as well as international students, etc.)

Providing services to the campus's diverse student body is at the core of the OMSA's mission. 100% of the services we provide are designed to meet the unique needs of the 13,094 first-generation, low-income, and/or historically underrepresented or underserved undergraduate students at Illinois.

	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage of Undergraduates</b>
<b>Race-Eligible</b>	7,248	21.6%
<b>First-Generation</b>	7,658	22.8%
<b>Test-Eligible</b>	5,428	16.2%
<b>Low-Income</b>	4,715	14.0%

In addition to the services provided to University of Illinois students, our TRIO Talent Search and Upward Bound services provide college preparatory services to more than 600 middle and high school students from Champaign, Decatur, and Urbana. This is exemplified by our Talent Search population where 78.7% of students identify as low-income and first-generation and 76.4% identify as African American/Black.

Our commitment to pre-college students even extends beyond those directly served by our TRIO programs. The OMSA has expanded efforts in partnering with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to provide materials about our services and efforts on campus to all students who are accepted. This, in addition to other yielding activities, has led to higher rates of incoming students recognizing our office and individual staff members featured in our communications. It is though this early community building we hope to show all students that they do indeed have a place at the University of Illinois. The OMSA has been committed to inclusive excellence for more than five decades; we are committed to sustaining our efforts indefinitely.

## COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Collaborative partnerships are integral to the success of nearly all of the services provided through the OMSA. Below are selected examples of partnerships we participated in during the 2020-2021 academic year.

## Campus and System Collaborations

The OMSA participated in (or was scheduled to participate in) dozens of recruitment, yielding, and outreach activities. Events include, but are not limited to, Summer Registration, Grainger College of Engineering's ARISE Program, Inbound, Salute to Illinois Scholars, Salute to Academic Achievement, the Chicago Public Schools COMPACT Initiative, and numerous middle and high school visits.

One of our most rewarding partnerships is with the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Through the OUA, we emailed all new accepted/admitted students once a month, beginning in February and continuing through to their arrival on campus. In the first year of this program, many more students attended the OMSA Fall Welcome Reception, with many students recognizing Director Cobb by name due to these emails.

## Student Affairs Collaborations

The OMSA Excellence Awards—awarded annually to four graduating students who exemplified excellence in academics, leadership, and community service. Each year the OMSA collaborates with La Casa and the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center to present these awards at their respective congratulatory ceremonies.

R.I.S.E. (Readying Illinois Students for Excellence)—a pre-enrollment, residential first year experience for 1st generation and underrepresented students cosponsored by with Office of the Dean of Students, New Student Programs, Office for Inclusion and Intergroup Relations, Provost, the OMSA, etc.

The Black & Latino Male and Female Summits—a program designed to explore the intersections of race and gender cosponsored by Office of Inclusion and Intergroup Relations, Bruce Nesbitt African American Cultural Center, La Casa, Office of the Dean of Students, the OMSA, etc.

D.I.N.E (Diversity Inclusion Network Exchange)— a career development activity focused on inclusion and diversity cosponsored by the Career Services Network, the OMSA, University Housing, Office of Inclusion and Intergroup Relations.

Partnered with the cultural centers, iPromise, and The Career Center on a host of workshops and events targeting both OMSA students and student employees. In conjunction with The Career Center, we also hosted a series of company information workshops allowing students to directly interact with recruiters from 7 different companies actively looking for students from our targeted populations.

## Academic Collaborations

The OMSA's Advising & Mentoring and Tutoring & Academic Services units continued to partner with the colleges of AHS, ACES, BUS, EDU, ENG, FAA, LAS, MEDIA, SSW, and the Division of General Students (DGS) to provide advising, mentoring, and tutoring to vulnerable first-time, co-eds.

The OMSA collaborated with the Campus Honors Program again this spring to host its sixth annual recruitment luncheon for talented, underrepresented, second semester freshmen.

The OMSA's Tutoring & Academic Services unit continued to coordinate activities for the campus-tutoring network, the Illinois Learning Support Professionals with CARE in Engineering, the Chemistry Learning Center, the Writers Workshop, and other academic support centers on campus.



The OMSA also worked with several external retention agencies to serve Illinois students. These organizations include the Chicago Public Schools, Noble Network of Charter Schools, Evanston Scholars, One Goal, Chicago Scholars, College Possible, The 7th University LLC Educational Consultant Group, and the Institute of Young Minds.

### Community Collaborations

In collaboration with the Champaign & Macon County communities and organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, Urbana Neighborhood Connection Center, Regional Planning Commission, AVID, UIUC Upward Bound and other programs TRIO Talent Search continues to engage and support parents, guardians, mentors and other family members to promote and encourage student learning, student growth and self-advocacy.

### Facilities

The OMSA's space shortage remains dire. As we return to in-person operations, our persistent space constraints will return. Over the past two years, the OMSA has invested significant resources across both the OMSA Main Office and the Academic Services Center to repurpose existing space to best accommodate new staff and operational needs. Improvements include a new floor plan for the cubicle farm in OMSA Main and the addition of a new, freestanding office in its center corridor. However, we are near the end of options should any additional changes be needed. Due to a loss in donated space from campus partners, the OMSA previously took its only conference room offline to provide space for its Graduate Mentors to meet with their student advisees—this may have been implemented once again.

While the OMSA has managed to adapt to the strained environment we have been in, we are at the end of our ability to adjust our current space, both physically and financially. The OMSA needs to find a more suitable, single home to unify our programs and strengthen the impact we can have on the students we serve.