



**T**he Office of Special Programs (OSP) sponsored the College Access, Retention and Success (CARS) Conference in the Wichita State Rhatigan Student Center on February 21, 2017. Approximately 65 people attended the morning event that was held in conjunction with National TRIO Day.

McNair Scholars Program Director, LaWanda Holt-Fields, presided over the event and introduced Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of Special Programs, Deltha Q. Colvin, who welcomed the audience and talked about the importance of TRIO and GEAR UP programs and Office of Disability Services. She emphasized the vital work that each department performs in creating educational opportunities for first-generation and low-income students, adults, veterans, and persons with disabilities.

The OSP staff presented a variety of sessions that addressed specific populations and various practices that have been found to be effective in bolstering students' academic, social, and emotional success. Larry Ramos, Stephanie Haynes and Vic Chavez presented a session that highlighted instructional and summer programming designed to reverse learning loss that occurs between school terms for middle school students. Kaye Monk-Morgan, Rhonda Hicks, and Carla Williams talked about the importance of Upward Bound services and activities including bridge programs that are effective in transitioning high school students to postsecondary education. Shukura Bakari-Cozart and Frances Ervin

presented a session on grit as it relates to adults and veterans and successful strategies that enhance college preparation for individuals who have been out of school for a length of time. Holt-Fields and Kennedy Musamali, EdD spoke about practices that support first-generation college students at WSU. They shared how the future demographic profile of students will change the college landscape. According to the presenters, in 20 years over 50 percent of students will be from minority groups and most of those students will be first-generation college students. Grady Landrum, Vanessa Souriya-Mnirajd, and Corinne Nilsen discussed characteristics of high achieving students, in particular, foster care youth and students with disabilities. These students typically are not traditionally thought of as high achieving but the programs have experienced great success in addressing the specific needs of these populations.

The overwhelming response to the CARS conference was positive. Several attendees indicated how informative the sessions were, while many felt that they learned how the programs operate in tandem. Several WSU faculty, staff and Wichita Public Schools (USD 259) personnel were eager to share how much they enjoyed the presentations. After learning about all the diverse programs offered, Beth Regehr, Special Education, Student Support Services for USD 259 shared her intention to "refer more students to TRIO and GEAR UP." Norman Bent, WSU College of



OSP staff presented a variety of sessions about college access, retention, and success.



for future collaboration.” Not only were WSU faculty and staff impacted, but the OSP staff, many of whom were new professionals, also felt the event was a great eye-opener for them and their professional development. Alysa Parsons, site coordinator, South Wichita GEAR UP, said “it was beneficial to have the programs come together and share ideas to better support our students.”

Following presentations, the audience was guided to visit informational tables set up by each OSP department to learn more about the different services and activities offered. Staff, representing each program, was on hand to answer questions and share their thoughts on the significant contributions made by the programs. Audience members were enticed to visit as many tables as possible to qualify for the door prize drawing.

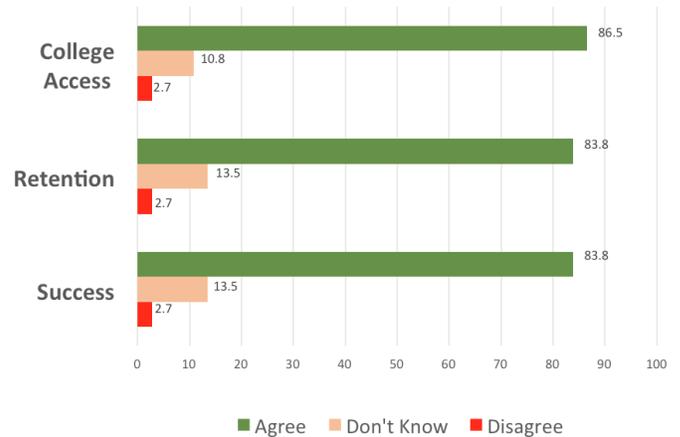


Colvin felt the event was excellent and commented how diverse each presentation was. She thought the presenters did a very good job of sharing best practices and engaging the audience. Evaluation results revealed that the attendees found the conference experience worthwhile and educational.

Conference attendees had the opportunity to speak with program staff from each OSP office following the presentations.

## Evaluation

The CARS Conference increased my understanding of how special programs at WSU assist underserved students regarding...



Engineering, was thoroughly impressed with the work that the programs are doing to help students be successful. “Today was a wonderful opportunity for the University community to know the good work that is going on to support underrepresented populations.” Bent went on to say, “the conference provided a picture of the circle of services offered by the programs.”

Organizers of the CARS conference had hoped that a number of faculty and staff who may not have been familiar with the various OSP departments would leave with a much clearer understanding of TRIO, GEAR UP and the Office of Disability Services. Susan Norton, WSU Office of Adult Learning, said, “I got a global perspective