



**GULF COAST STATE COLLEGE**  
**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**  
**PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK**

**2025-2026**

**(09/01/2025-08/31/2026)**



# CONTACTS

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### TRiO Hours:

Monday & Wednesday = 8:00am – 7:00pm  
Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday = 8:00am – 4:00pm

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## ***Welcome to TRIO Student Support Services!***

We are absolutely thrilled to have you join our community. As the Associate Director of TRIO SSS, I'm genuinely excited to be part of your academic journey and to support you every step of the way.

TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) is here to provide comprehensive support to first-generation college students, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities. Our mission is to help you succeed academically, grow personally, and flourish professionally. We offer a variety of services to meet your needs, including academic advising and tutoring, financial literacy and assistance, career and transfer school preparation, personal and social development, and cultural enrichment and campus engagement.

Our dedicated staff and tutors are ready to help you with your coursework, develop effective study habits, and stay on track for graduation. We also offer workshops and one-on-one counseling to guide you through financial aid processes, manage your budget, and find scholarships. Additionally, we're here to help you with career exploration, resume writing, interview skills, and preparing for graduate school.

We believe in your potential and are committed to providing the resources and support you need to thrive. We encourage you to take full advantage of the services we offer and to reach out to us with any questions or for additional support. We're here to make sure this is a successful and rewarding year for you.

Welcome to TRIO Student Support Services and congratulations on taking this exciting step! We're thrilled to have you with us and can't wait to cheer you on as you chase your goals. You've got a team behind you every step of the way, and we believe amazing things are ahead!

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kendra Kizziah". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

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# What is TRiO's Student Support Services Program?



Student Support Services (SSS) is a federally-funded grant program that has effectively provided services to first-generation, low-income, and disabled students at GCSC **since 1985**. We are dedicated to empowering students to achieve their academic and personal goals. Our comprehensive program offers personalized academic support, tutoring, study skills workshops, and financial aid assistance to help students navigate all aspects of college life. We additionally provide personal and career counseling to guide students through challenges and plan their futures. Through cultural enrichment activities and mentoring, SSS also fosters a supportive community that inspires success and ensures that every student has the resources and encouragement necessary to graduate on-time.

*Please note: GCSC was awarded a Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Student Support Services (SSS) grant by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025. That award (P042A250175) runs from 09/01/2025 till 08/31/2030 and is budgeted to receive approximately \$307,474.00 annually. SSS' program costs are 100% financed by federal money and all project services are provided to participants free-of-charge.*

## Activities & Services

To facilitate academic success, SSS provides a variety of support **free-of-charge**, including:

- Individualized academic counseling
- Tutoring
- Reminders & nudges
- Scholarship opportunities
- Career and college exploration
- Assistance with entrance exam registration and preparation
- Educational/Cultural field trips
- Tours of colleges and universities
- Help with Bachelor's degree admissions applications
- Assistance with financial aid applications & applications
- Access to our Lending Library (i.e., to borrow textbooks, calculators, etc.)

## Academic Advice

During each fall and spring, SSS participants fill out an **Academic Success Plan** (ASP) to prepare for their semester. ASPs are a personalized strategy designed to help students achieve their educational goals and overcome any academic challenges they may face. In addition, SSS provided students with advice and assistance in postsecondary course selection and address any unmet academic need. Our knowledgeable staff can assist with planning your academic map from the time you start until you finish your degree with the goal of saving you time and money.

## Financial Aid Assistance

Our goal is to have 100% of our students fill out the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid** (FAFSA) and **GCSC's Foundation Scholarship** Application. It is important that students do not miss out on possible federal, state, and local financial assistance simply because they do not apply. Our staff are trained to guide students through application processes and provide support as needed. Additionally, TRiO SSS offers assistance in finding and applying for private scholarships to help make college more affordable.

## Economic/Financial Literacy

TRiO will offer 4 economic/financial literacy **workshops** throughout the academic year that will cover topics such as money management, paying for college, credit and debt management, and financial planning. Each student should attend one workshop per semester for the first 4 semesters that they're at GCSC. Our workshops are geared toward promoting SSS participants' economic stability, preventing future financial problems, empowering financial decision-making, and enhancing quality of life.



## Tutoring

SSS provides a **Tutoring Lab** which is staffed with knowledgeable tutors who can explain difficult concepts, assist with homework, improve your study skills, and help you prepare for tests/exams. Our dedicated space fosters a productive learning environment where you can receive the guidance you need to excel in your courses and master challenging subjects. In addition, our tutoring lab has several desktop computers available for students to use for Canvas, homework, writing, or watching instructional videos. Regular use of our tutoring lab can boost your confidence, enhance understanding or comprehension, and contribute significantly to your academic achievements.

Our tutoring lab is open from 8:00am-7:00pm Mondays & Wednesdays and 8:00am-4:00pm Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays to assist students with their tutoring needs. Ah hoc workshops or study group sessions can also be arranged by contacting our Tutoring Lab Supervisor to request a specific time/date/location.

## Bachelor's Degree Admissions

TRIO staff are dedicated to assisting students in **transferring to a 4-year institution**. They offer comprehensive support in filling out applications, ensuring you meet all requirements and deadlines. Additionally, we can help you find and apply for scholarships to ease the financial burden of your cost of attendance. TRIO staff also organize campus visits, giving you a firsthand experience of potential universities and helping you make an informed decision. With our guidance, the transfer process becomes smoother and more manageable—thereby setting you up for success in your continued education.

## Single-Day / Overnight Trips

Transfer trips are a unique way for SSS to expose you to different **college/university experiences**. Each excursion provides opportunities to walk around campus, tour facilities, and experience the unique culture of a particular area. Our trips are only for *active* TRiO SSS participants who have a completed there ASPs. Emergency medical release forms **MUST BE SIGNED AND ON FILE** prior to departure from campus. Students must have a  $\geq 2.00$  G.P.A. and have the approval from the Dean of Student Life to travel. Non-enrolled participants who are friends or relatives are not permitted to accompany or meet the group at any time during the trip.

## TRIO Society

SSS participants are encouraged to join GCSC's "TRIO Society" Student Government Association (SGA) club. TRIO Society can be a transformative experience that will develop essential skills like leadership, communication, and teamwork. By joining, you'll have the chance to network with peers, meet professionals, and open doors to internships or job opportunities. Membership can also boost your resume, showcase your commitment to growth, provide service/community project opportunities, build confidence, and **prepare you for future leadership roles**. Investing in a TRIO Society is an investment in your future, so don't hesitate to unlock your full potential by signing up!

## Career & Major Exploration

TRIO staff provide invaluable support through **career counseling** and assistance in selecting a college major. They help you explore various career paths, understand the job market, and align your interests and strengths with potential careers. Additionally, they guide you in choosing a major that fits your career goals, ensuring that your academic journey is purposeful and fulfilling. With personalized advice and resources, TRIO staff empower you to make informed decisions about your education and future career.





## Program Acceptance

To join SSS, students must submit a paper application so we can determine eligibility and academic needs. Students who apply will then be notified of our acceptance decision (i.e., admitted, wait-listed, or ineligible) by phone and email within 3 business days of submission. Ineligible students will be referred to GCSC's Educational Opportunity Center for further assistance.

Admitted and wait-listed students will be scheduled for an in-person orientation with SSS staff to complete an Academic Success Plan, review our program's requirements, and discuss the services we provide. To maintain active status with SSS, students must engage in at least two services during each fall and spring semester. Admitted students who fail to adequately participate will be placed on our waitlist until they demonstrate satisfactory engagement. Wait-listed students who lack sufficient participation will be deemed ineligible for SSS services. **We only have 200 spots, so it is critical to actively take advantage of our services!**

## Being an Active SSS Participant

Participants are required to keep TRiO staff informed of their academic progress regularly. This may include providing documentation such as financial aid verification, admissions applications, and notices regarding any academic challenges or concerns. Additionally, TRiO staff should be notified of any academic achievements and improvements in your studies. If you plan to withdraw or transfer from GCSC, we ask that you inform us so that we can update your records accordingly.

To remain an active participant in SSS, students must complete the following requirements:

1. Financial Aid Applications
  - Submit the FAFSA ([studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov)) by February 1<sup>st</sup>
  - Complete a Foundation Scholarship application by March 15<sup>th</sup>
2. Advising Sessions
  - Attend an Academic Success Plan session during the fall semester
  - Attend an Academic Success Plan session during the spring semester
3. Complete *at least one* of the following engagement opportunities *each semester*:
  - Transfer trip to a 4-year institution
  - Participate in an SSS workshop
  - Sign-up for TRIO Society
  - Attend a GCSC event (e.g., Trunk-or-Treat, Career/College Fair, etc.)
  - Join us for a TRIO event (e.g., Welcome Back Week, Family Engagement Night, Nacho Week to Fail, Popcorn Wednesdays, Graduation Celebrations, Art Soothes the Soul, etc.)
  - Other activities & services—such as career counseling, tuition & fee / billing inquiries, tutoring, or stopping by for miscellaneous guidance / general advice

*Please note: These are the minimum participation requirements to maintain SSS eligibility. We encourage more frequent engagement so that we can better support your academic and personal development!*

## Conduct Expectations

Participants are expected to abide by GCSC's Code of Conduct at all times and respond to SSS staff inquiries or requests. TRIO subsequently reserves the right to suspend or expel participants from SSS if they—among other transgressions—behave disorderly, harass classmates, abuse illegal substances, damage property, or intentionally fail to complete program requirements.