

Abstract

McNeese State University (MSU) is a public 4-year university in Lake Charles, Louisiana that is seeking funding to bolster and strengthen its enrollment and retention, especially for its first-time degree-seeking students. **MSU's Title III Project, *Cowboy Way, McNeese First Year Experience***, includes plans to create and offer a defined First Year Experience program to all of its first-time degree-seeking students. MSU's population of students includes those who self-identify as American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Mixed Race, Native Hawaiian, and Foreign/Non-Resident Alien. For this program to be successful, MSU needs additional personnel which it lacks the ability to hire within the current operating budget. The operating budget is very tuition-dependent, due to large cuts from governmental appropriations. This project asks to hire a Director of FYE to coordinate efforts, a Director of the existing Student Success Center (SSC), a Student Retention Specialist, and Success Mentors.

The projects goals are: 1) Establish the *Cowboy Way: McNeese First-Year Experience* program to increase opportunities for student success, 2) Implement a system of advising, student services, and mentorship to increase student retention, and 3) Obtain professional development and training for math tutors and English TAs to increase effectiveness of these services to increase first-time, full-time degree-seeking student retention. **Expected outcomes**

include:

- More first-time students attend orientation during their first semester
- More first-time students utilize campus resources, including the library, career services, and counseling center
- More first-time students are aware of and utilize the SSC's resources, such as tutoring, and aptitude testing
- More first-time students meet with their academic advisor during their first semester
- First-time students increase sense of belonging and achievement from meeting with mentors
- More first-time students utilize institutional resources including library, computer lab, etc.
- Increase pass rate of freshman in the specific English course