



EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

A TRiO Student Support Services Program

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2014





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96% of ESP students continue to the following academic year

94% of ESP students are on Good Academic Standing

74% of ESP students graduate within six years of starting college

Grand Valley State University

A strong liberal education serves as the foundation for Grand Valley State University's wide array of undergraduate and graduate programs, fostering critical thinking, creative problem solving, and cultural understanding. Through personalized learning enhanced by active scholarship, we accomplish our mission of educating students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies.

Educational Support Program

ESP is a federally funded, comprehensive support program for first generation and financially eligible college students. The program employs three professional advisors, each of whom provide a holistic array of services designed to meet the needs of students.

Participants in the program are supported with services such as: academic advising, financial aid counseling, career counseling, graduate school counseling and personal counseling, with additional assistance in securing secondary program admission. Additionally, advisors help students build study skills, manage their time and become integral members of both the local and global communities through volunteerism and international study.

ESP tracks retention, progress, and graduation rates of program participants for its Annual Performance Report. Of the 215 students served during the 2012-2013 academic year, an impressive 96% continue their educations to the following year, 94% were in good academic standing and 74% graduated with a bachelor's degree within 6 calendar years (GVSU's 2006 cohort had a 6 year graduation rate of 65.7%).

In the Educational Support Program, we are committed to providing first generation and financially eligible college students access to the vital tools they need to reach their academic and professional goals and break the cycle of poverty.

Staff Directory

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Jeff Keson
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Ja-Queshia Allen
Peer Mentor

Brandon Bowman
Peer Mentor

Nina Hatter
Peer Mentor

Bennie Rambin
Peer Mentor

Vanessa Ramirez
Peer Mentor

ESP STAFF

Meet the Program Staff



MarcQus Wright Director

MarcQus Wright currently serves as the Director of the Educational Support Program (TRiO/SSS). Before his current position, MarcQus held a number of different positions at Grand Valley, all centered on impacting student success. He began work with GVSU in 2005 in Housing and Residence Life working as a living center director. After this he also spent time working as the assistant director of camps and conferences and later the assistant director of academic student support.

MarcQus has a Bachelors degree in Business Administration, a Masters degree in Training and Development, and a certificate in Project Management all from Illinois State University. He is also a certified True Colors® facilitator. Currently, he is pursuing a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Eastern Michigan University.

As the director of the Educational Support Program, I would like to thank everyone for their support of our program and students this year. As we continue to press forward we will continue to look at new and innovative ways to serve our students while continuing to maintain our holistic approach to student success.



Marnie Parris-Bingle Advisor

Marnie Parris-Bingle graduated from Central Michigan University with her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, majoring in management with a minor in psychology. Her career has taken her down many different paths; human resources in logistics, healthcare, and manufacturing, restaurant ownership, and fundraising in higher education. Before joining the staff in The Educational Supports Program (ESP), Marnie worked as a graduate assistant in Transfer Advising in the CSAL graduate program here at GVSU while working towards her Masters in Adult and Higher Education. She also work as an adjunct instructor for the Allied Sciences department teaching Healthcare Management 340 (HPR 340).

All these rewarding experiences, both professional and personal, help Marnie every day in her role here with ESP and GVSU. One of her favorite quotes (by Margaret Fuller) says a lot about her philosophy of life and working with students: If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it.

"I feel very fortunate to work for an organization and with people who share these same philosophies and encourage me to keep my candle lit!"

Patrick Wilson Advisor

Patrick Wilson graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Health Communications and a Masters in Education Leadership from Grand Valley State University. During his time at Grand Valley, Patrick has been a key influence in the development of several cultural organizations and non-profit entities. Patrick has played a key role in the cultural advertising efforts at Grand Valley State University.

Over the past several years, Patrick has worked as a Disability Support Specialist and Academic Advisor in the West Michigan area. Patrick has built partnerships with the surrounding public school systems as a GEAR-UP coordinator. Patrick has also contributed to the successful academic efforts of several NCAA National Championship sports programs. Patrick recently transitioned from Hope College, where he served as the Assistant Director for the Office of Multicultural Education. Patrick currently is an Advisor with the Educational Support Program at Grand Valley State University.

"Working with ESP has been one of the most fulfilling opportunities I have had, I truly enjoy serving our population of amazing students."



Jeff Keson Graduate Assistant

Jeff Keson is currently serving as the Graduate Assistant for the Education Support Program (TRiO/SSS). Now entering his second year, Jeff spent his summer completing an internship with Morehead State University in Kentucky. While there, he worked with the SOAR orientation, created a leadership development program and created a framework for a future Greek Life orientation program.

Prior to his work experience, Jeff attended Central Michigan University where he earned degrees in photography (BFA), anthropology and art history (BS). As an undergrad, he was involved with Greek Life, academic clubs, volunteered as a lab assistant in the photo dark room, worked as a staff assistant in the Leadership Safari program and even underwent a brief stint on the club fencing team.

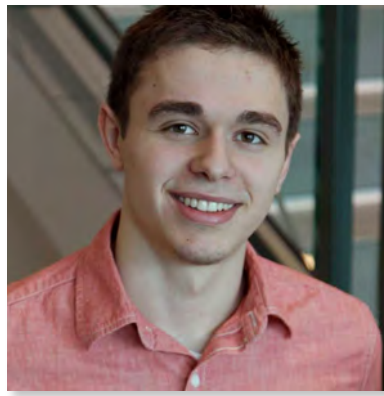
This fall, he looks forward to the beginning of the ESP Seminar for new students. Focusing on easing the transition to the college environment so students experience success early, Jeff looks forward to working with new students to the program and the university.





Ja-Queshia Allen
Junior

Originally from Flint, Ja-Queshia is studying Social Work with a minor in Sociology. Beyond the classroom, she loves to crochet, cook and spend time with her family and friends. Being positive and outgoing is her mantra and she loves to help students in the ESP office.



Brandon Bowman
Junior

When not studying for his classes in the Nursing program, Brandon enjoys going to the gym and researching special topics that interest him. He hopes to work as a travel nurse and do endocrinology research for Type 1 Diabetes.



Nina Hatter
Junior

Coming from Chicago, Nina plans to enter the marketing world after college. She is passionate about fashion and children, and someday hopes to open a small boutique and a nonprofit for children. As one of the newest peer mentors, Nina is excited to be working with ESP and hopes to make a positive impact in students lives.



Bennie Rambin
Junior

Hailing from Detroit, Bennie hopes to someday be a talk show host and is actively working towards his dream by pursuing his Communications degree. When reflecting on his time in ESP, Bennie "enjoys having the personal connection with advisors. They make you feel comfortable."



Vanessa Ramirez
Junior

Clinical Lab Science is Vanessa's passion at Grand Valley and she has also taken an interest in Criminal Justice. While not in the classroom or studying, Vanessa enjoys being involved with the Educational Support Program. Her favorite part of being a Peer Mentor is getting to make connections with students.

CAMPUS COLLABORATION

Working Together for *Student Success*

The Educational Support Program is fortunate to have strong relationships with multiple on-campus departments. Through the constant support of the Student Academic Success Center to collaborative programs with offices such as Financial Aid, ESP participants are able to get the most out of their time at Grand Valley State University.

One of our most recent events was our FAFSA Night program in February. At this event, students were able to work one on one with advisors and Liz Le, a Financial Aid Councilor. The main focus was preparing students' FAFSA applications for next school year, but there was also plenty of time for food and a chance to catch up.

When asked about her experiences with the program and our students, Liz Le had the following to say:

"I love working with ESP students because they are down to earth and appreciative. They don't take Financial Aid for granted and are always beyond thankful for the time and advice I give them."



Liz Le

Financial Aid Councilor

GEAR UP & ESP



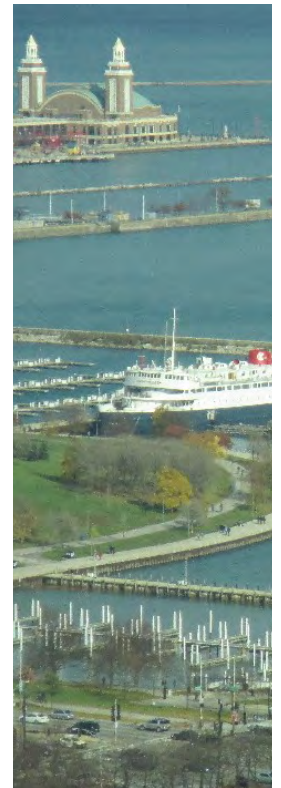
This year, the Educational Support Program teamed up with Bobby Springer and the GEAR-UP program to mentor high school students in Grand Rapids. GEAR-UP and ESP are both grant-funded programs serving similar populations. We knew it would be great to connect some of the ESP undergraduate students with GEAR-Up's High School students. The GEAR-UP students were very accepting and appreciative during the panel discussion.

Like many of our ESP students, GEAR-UP students will soon be First Generation college students. Our ESP students understand the importance of connecting with the next generation of college students, providing them with academic, professional, and personal mentorship. ESP plans to continue the partnership with Bobby Springer and GEAR-UP.

Educational Support Program CULTURAL TRIPS

Cultural Trip: Chicago

In November of 2013, the Educational Support Program journeyed to the Windy City for culture, food and theater. Touring the Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts (CCPA) offered students that chance to check out a contemporary theatre program. After that, the group traveled to Navy Pier for the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* and dinner at Capri's Italian Restaurant.



"This experience exposed me to cultural sights that I never experienced before."

- Cultural Trip: Chicago Participant



Cultural Trip: Detroit

In February, the Educational Support Program traveled to the Motor City to tour the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

During this powerful guided experience, our students experienced the exhibits and artifacts from African American history. Afterwards, a side trip to Greektown ended the day with dinner at Pizza Papalis.



"I took away the lifestyle of my ancestors: what really happened and I got to feel what it felt like for that time."

- Cultural Trip: Detroit Participant





"...going into the Social Work field, I could pass along the information I learned...to help them."

- Feeding America:
West Michigan Participant



Giving Back

Partnering with community leaders that give back to the communities of Allendale and Grand Rapids is a focus of the Educational Support Program. During the course of the academic year, the ESP has partnered with **Special Olympics, Kid's Food Basket, Gear Up and Feeding America - West Michigan** in our quest to enrich the community around us.

By engaging in this outreach, it is our belief that students grow as individuals, leaders and community leaders by giving back to the communities in which they live.

Educational Support Program
SOCIAL SERVICE



"I really appreciated ESP helping me with my test anxiety and finding formats to study for finals."

Finals Fest Participant

All of the trips and events of the Educational Support Program seek to enrich the cultural understanding of our participants. Blending intentionality with planned happenstance, excursions are designed in a way that exposes students to specific themes (social justice, healthy living, culture and the arts) while allowing time for individual exploration.

Components of these immersion programs typically include a historical perspective, a contemporary viewpoint, a cultural performance and the chance to try local/ethnic cuisine. This community outreach embodies the belief that our students should engage and give back to the community in which they live.

Focus on **Social Service**

September 19th, 2013	Kid's Food Basket
October 22nd, 2013	Feeding America – West Michigan
November 19th, 2013	Special Olympics – Allendale
December 6th, 2013	Holiday Card Making for the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital
January 21st, 2014	Special Olympics – Allendale
February 20th, 2014	GEAR UP with Union High School
February 27th, 2014	GEAR UP with Union High School
March 11th, 2014	God's Kitchen

Cultural **Exposure**

November 9th, 2013	Chicago – Navy Pier
February 1st, 2014	Detroit – Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Special **Interest Events**

September 6th, 2013	Annual ESP Open House
October 11th-13th, 2013	MAEOPP Leadership Conference
October 30, 2013	Walking Dead Leadership Program
December 6th, 2013	Finals Festival
February 7th, 2014	FAFSA Night

EVENTS AND TRIPS

LOOKING AHEAD

Orientation Program

New this fall will be an orientation program for our new students. Focusing on making Grand Valley State University feel like home, our orientation will focus on connecting participants with the staff, peer mentors, resources and campus departments. The goal of this program is to give students all the tools they need for success before classes begin.

Resource Guide

Culminating the knowledge and experience of a successful college grad is no easy task, but our peer mentors have been collaborating on a new Resource Guide for our participants. This guide will cover everything from where to eat on campus, how to figure out housing, where to go for food that reminds you of home and even how to make the most of your time here. This tool will help students as they navigate their tenure at GVSU.

Graduate School Visits

As our students continue to plan for their future, graduate school is often on their minds. In order to help students during their time at Grand Valley and beyond, a number of high impact college visits will happen this summer. These trips will focus on the graduate programs, financial aid, assistantship and research possibilities at each of these schools.

Cultural Trips - Bigger and Better

Already a success, our cultural trips will be even better next year. As we research new locations and new attractions, ESP is challenging itself to create the most impactful and memorable experience for our students. Blending themes of culture, food, the arts and social advocacy, next year's cultural trip will be sure to please.

"...to increase the rates of academic achievement, retention, and graduation among historically underrepresented students by providing holistic and individualized support services that maximize students' innate abilities..."

- Educational Support Program
Mission Statement

Special Thanks

The Educational Support Program would like to thank the following individuals for serving on the ESP Advisory Board. Their dedication and commitment to the program has been instrumental as we strive to expand and improve the services we offer our students.

Mike Messner

Director, Student Academic Success Center

Dr. George Grant

Dean, College of Community and Public Service

Dr. Paul Plotkowski

Dean, College of Engineering and Computing

Janean Couch

Assistant Director, Career Center

Marlene Kowalski-Braun

Assistant Vice Provost for Student Affairs

Christy Mayo

Associate Registrar

Sean Huddleston

Assistant Vice President for Strategic Implementation,
Inclusion and Equity

Jill Dooley

Senior Director of Annual Giving & Alumni Relations

