

FSW ANCHORS

Annual Report AY '21-'22



Table Of Contents

01 Background

02 Program Outcomes

03 Program History

04 Key Findings

10 Recommendations

17 Acknowledgements

18 References

Background

Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) Anchors is a student success program housed in the Division of Student Affairs and administered by the Office of Student Engagement (OSE). The FSW Anchors program launched in the Fall of 2021, with the goal of improving the retention and graduation rates of students from first-generation, low-socioeconomic, and underrepresented backgrounds. The idea for the program first emerged during the Spring of 2018 when a trend in informal mentoring was observed. Staff from the Office of Student Engagement (OSE) – in addition to implementing involvement initiatives throughout the year – spent a significant amount of time providing mentorship and support for students. This mentorship included helping students stay on track to graduate, and to navigate various processes at FSW. Prior to the start of the FSW Anchors program, this student support was offered in an informal capacity, and was the product of individual connections OSE staff members had with students.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought an increased need for individualized student support. The OSE formalized the Anchors program by developing systems to operationalize across campuses. During the Spring and Summer of 2021, OSE developed key relationships with staff and faculty across the college to ensure students who were struggling academically and needed community received enhanced support in a variety of areas including academic tutoring, financial aid, CARE services and academic advising. Employees from multiple functional areas were recruited to serve as mentors for students in the FSW Anchors program. Mentor – modeled support, which began organically in the OSE, served as the foundation for the FSW Anchors Program.

FSW Anchors focuses on connecting FSW students to innovative services to improve student success as measured by retention and graduation rates. The resources and services provided by the FSW Anchors program complement college academic programs and support students' college experience beyond the classroom. FSW Anchors students benefit from enhanced learning and sense of belonging through participation in social, cultural, intellectual, and recreational activities that increase confidence, persistence, and motivation

Program Outcomes

By participating in the FSW Anchor program, students will:

- Maintain a 2.5 gpa and financial aid eligibility.
- Be equipped and develop the self-efficacy needed to support college persistence and degree attainment.
- Connect and establish a relationship with mentors internally (faculty and staff) and externally (community partners) to realize their academic and personal aspirations.
- Enhance their academic and personal development via concepts explored in relevant workshops.
- Demonstrate career-readiness (as prescribed by the NACE competencies) and gain professional experience through site visits, job shadowing, internships, or apprenticeships.
- Learn how to effectively navigate the transfer process to baccalaureate programs.

"This program has helped me fill comfortable with the process of obtaining my AA and Bachelors and eventually my DPT. My mentor is amazing and communicates all the time and has helped me gain confidence and proper knowledge in what I have to do to become successful." ~ Anchor Mentee 2022

Highlights



Cross
Departmental
Collaboration

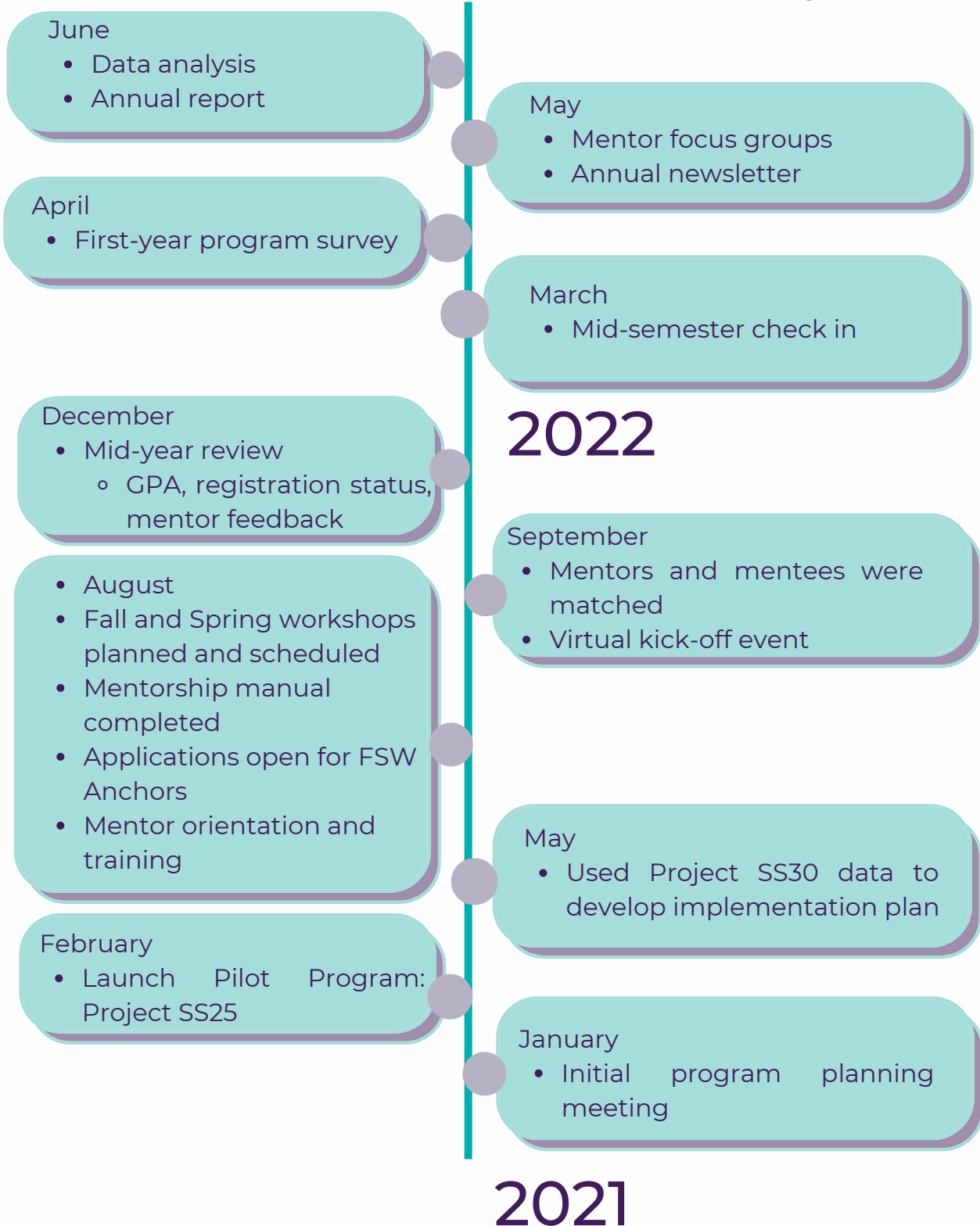


77 Mentoring
Relationships
Created



AY '21-'22
90% Semester to
Semester
Retention

Program History



Key Findings

Navigating College Resources

Academic Support

Students in the anchor mentoring program faced challenges that require Tutoring and Advising assistance. Mentors mentioned FSW Advising and FSW Academic Support Centers as resources that can help Anchor mentees successfully enroll in and complete courses.

"She needed academic support and not being able to get it when she needed it was challenging. For example, she used the first four hours of her tutor.com in the first two weeks and three weeks into math class. I requested more on her behalf, and she was granted two additional hours, which was not enough. She was told there is virtual tutoring, but virtual tutoring is not at 10pm when she's doing her work. So, we need to have support available to students when they need help."
~ Anchor Mentor 2022

28%

of students reported finding the Career Preparation Workshops helped to enhance their development.

Professional Support

Anchor mentees require professional as well as academic support. mentors and Student Engagement workshops helped mentees enrolled in the program to identify career paths and develop the background knowledge necessary to persist on the academic and professional journey to attain their career goals.

"I had someone who knows about higher education and the white collar world that could guide me as I am entering a space neither I nor my family have ever been a part of."

~Anchor Mentee 2022



Non-academic Support

In addition to academic and professional support anchor mentees and mentors reported the need for wellness support for general and special student populations. Students who are facing personal challenges often need support in managing those challenges and communicating them to professors.

"I wish there would be more emphasis on Veteran student awareness and staff. Adaptive services helps but that is only with accommodations. Many issues arise as a Veteran student and some professors are unwilling to work with us. It important that it is stressed that every student have a safe environment to learn, without judgement especially considering disabilities and special assistance."

~Anchor Mentee 2022

26%

of students reported finding the Wellness & Mental Health workshops helped to enhance their development.

30%

of students surveyed expressed that they did not feel confident in their wellness management.

"I have encountered many students who need mental health resources. Students face many challenges that affect their ability to be successful personally and academically. Having access to therapists and counselors can help students a lot."

~Anchor Mentor 2022

Connecting and Building Relationships



Mentoring Relationship

FSW Anchors is a program that puts students first. The mentoring relationships formed in Anchor Mentors are advantageous to both students and their mentors. The experiences shared, and connections created help the students to persist in education, and the mentors cultivate empathy for students.

76%

of students reported making connections and forming relationships during the Anchor Mentoring program.



"This program has helped me feel comfortable with the process of obtaining my AA and Bachelors and eventually my DPT. My mentor is amazing and communicates all the time and has helped me gain confidence and proper knowledge in what I have to do to become successful."

~ Anchor mentee 2022

Staff Support

One of the key relationships strengthened through Anchor Mentors is the relationship between students and staff members. Staff members have a unique vantage point to view the workings of higher education and are able to serve as guides and advocates for students outside of the classroom. .

"I have gone to the monthly meeting and I have made connections through the program that can possibly help me in the future." ~Anchor Mentee 2022

Peer-to-Peer Interaction

Reports of feeling lonely have recently been widespread across college campuses (Hopmeyer et al., 2022). Anchor mentees report both wanting to make connections with peers while in college and being able to make connections through the anchor mentoring program.



Institutional Collaboration Across Departments

Working in self-constructed siloes can be a pitfall of the demanding roles both faculty and staff fill in higher education. Through their mentees, Anchor Mentors were allowed to break a few of those siloes to understand better the responsibilities of individuals in a variety of roles and departments.

41%

felt most connected to their mentor and

38%

felt most connected to an Anchor staff member (22% did not respond).

"I reached out to other colleagues when I could not answer a question. For example, I emailed advising about a question my mentee had. I forwarded the message from the advisor to my mentee and explained how to get the situation resolved. I felt like a role model by professionally showing them how to respond to say an email and explain the next steps. Showing them that we do not have all the answers, but we all are a team, and we can get answers together." ~Anchor Mentor 2022

Persisting and Student Success

"Because of the goals I set, I made sure that my mentor and I held me accountable for taking the measures to obtain the goals and that enhanced my confidence overall." ~Anchor Mentee 2022

84%

of students reported that the program helped them to develop the skills needed to achieve their goals

Goal Setting

Students were able to learn about and apply goal setting strategies to increase accountability and self-efficacy.

"She reached out to me outside of our meeting times to ask for help, which was awesome. When my mentee would tell me some of the challenges she was facing, I did not know what to do other than listen. Her biggest challenge was time management."
~Anchor Mentor 2022

Motivation

Students were motivated by regular communication and advice from their mentors that helped them to persist even through failures.

"She has a lot going on in her life. So, we had continuous communication daily. I felt needed and provided advice to help her see options when she didn't think she had any."
~Anchor Mentee 2022

Time Management

The mentoring program required students and mentors to be flexible when managing time and meeting schedules. Mentees often had time commitments that kept them from meeting during typical business hours. Mentees reported needing support in managing their time, focusing on coursework outside of scheduled classes, and learning in online modalities.

Work-Life Balance

Through setting goals, managing time, and sharing challenges, students and mentors were able to explore work/life balance together. This understanding of the demands students have on their time gave mentors increased agency to advocate for students and helped students to prioritize effectively and prepare for future roles and responsibilities.



53%

of students reported that attending workshops helped them to develop academic and personal skills.

Personal and Academic Development and Workshops

The students who could attend workshops found them beneficial, but students also reported that the workshops' times and locations were not always accessible.

*"The Anchors program has been beneficial to me, by teaching me skills to become a better leader, and to be prepared for adult life outside of college."
~Anchor Mentee 2022*

Recommendations

Many educators and researchers believe college students are most likely to succeed when fully integrated within an institution's academic, cultural, and social environment (Aljohani, 2016; Daniels et al., 2019). Colleges must take an adaptive approach that allows them to operate with flexibility and creativity to meet the needs of the students they serve (Paige et al., 2017). Improving barriers to student success is an ever-changing process based on new information and unexpected challenges. The study results suggest a need for further action to address barriers to student success.



Navigating College Resources

Academic Support

Recommendation 1: Expand Tutor.com access.

Tutor.com hours request process: Online tutoring services provide crucial academic support for students. Therefore, finding ways for students to become and stay engaged through web-based student support services is more critical than ever. A recommendation for the future is to develop an effective process for students to request additional time for tutor.com (Cooper, 2010; Gregg & Shin, 2021). Tutor.com provides twenty-four (24) online tutoring that connects students with a subject expert tutor when they need assistance for a limited time. Expanding the allotted time and creating a straightforward process for requesting additional hours will reduce barriers to academic success by helping students to get support on demand.

Recommendation 2: Increase academic support for upper-level coursework.

Tutoring helps students strengthen subject comprehension, increase confidence, and enhance learning skills (Cooper, 2010). Tutoring gives students the individualized attention they need to succeed in challenging academic disciplines. Expanded tutoring for upper-level courses would help struggling students in core subjects. Working with the academic support center and academic schools to develop a plan to provide upper-level course tutoring ensures students have the support they need to succeed throughout their academic program (Huston, 2019). Many higher education institutions are exploring opportunities for integrating academic tutoring into programs and courses beyond regular tutoring options (Huston, 2019).



Recommendation 3: Monthly group advising sessions.

Monthly group advising sessions allow students to develop and build relationships with advisors and other students. Effective group advising is a strategy that creates learning experiences that can enhance student success and provide skills to prepare students beyond college (Donaldson et al., 2020). Group advising allows students to ask questions among peers in a group session, which pushes students toward a cohesive understanding of the college and reduces misinformation (Donaldson et al., 2020).



Professional Support

Recommendation 4: Career preparation programming.

Focusing on career preparation allows students to pinpoint their particular career path through academic and social programs. Career preparation initiatives prepare students for life after college. As college graduates begin their careers, they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate the workforce (Jaunarajs, & McGarry, 2018; Ritzer & Sleight, 2019).



Non-Academic Support



Recommendation 5: Enhanced veteran student services.

Enhancing veteran services will help students to develop a sense of belonging and increase support. To ensure veteran students are successful colleges have a designated lounge, mental health services, peer mentors, and specialized student resources for veterans (Jenner, 2019; Morris et al., 2019). Researchers and educators expressed that using targeted services for student populations has proven effective (Jenner, 2019; Morris et al., 2019). Creating an action plan to address student veterans' needs is effective for those who continue to feel isolated and struggle within the academic and social environment.



Recommendation 6: Increase awareness of mental health resources at FSW.

College mental health resources focus on defining the scope of services, regular ongoing training, leveraging student voices, and reducing stigma (Bourdon et al., 2020; Mowbray et al., 2006).

Increasing student awareness of BetterMynds, ULifeline, Active Minds Club, and Campus Recreation wellness programming supports the mental health and academic success of FSW students.



Connecting and Building Relationships



Peer to Peer Interaction

Recommendation 7: Increase programming that fosters technology-enhanced relationship building.

Further support initiatives that build relationships through targeted interactions and support college-wide student engagement programming (Krause & Moore, 2021). Peer-to-peer interactions create an environment for students to share their experiences, insights, and learning (Gamlath, 2022). Technology platforms such as GroupMe and social media provide community and build relationships (Krause & Moore, 2021; Gamlath, 2022).

Recommendation 8: FSW in-person and virtual study halls. Offer semi-structured study sessions (study halls) students can join either online or in-person to ask questions, stay accountable, and build a learning community (Gay & Betts, 2020). Researchers acknowledge that semi-structured learning environments increase students' attention and focus, develop meaningful learning experiences, and promote higher levels of student performance (Gay & Betts, 2020). Modeled after <https://www.caveday.org/members/welcome#loaded>.





Mentoring



Recommendation 9: Further develop mentor training programming.

Provide additional training on cultural sensitivity, mental health, and relationship building for mentors (Houdyshell et al., 2021; Thurman, 2021). Additional mentor training will enhance the mentoring relationship by helping mentors to empathize with mentees who are experiencing challenges outside of the mentor's lived experience.



Community

Recommendation 10: Anchor Mentor community building. A Microsoft Teams channel can be used for mentors to communicate and join monthly meetings to discuss mentoring challenges, program updates, and professional development. Regular networking events and team-building activities can increase mentee connection and sense of belonging.

Institutional Communication and Collaboration



Communication and collaboration are vital contributors to organizational success, especially in higher education. Communication is challenging to master within an incredibly complex and ever-changing organization. Effective communication improves workflow and overall productivity in which all functions move in the same direction (Fleming et al., 2018). Secure communication invites and fosters an environment of collaboration. Collaboration builds partnerships within the organization that enhances synergy and cohesion (Senge et al., 2012).



Guided Pathways

Recommendation 11: Support the Guided Pathways initiative. Institutional communication and collaboration can be increased through the support of the Guided Pathways initiative. Guided pathways aim to improve the student experience and institutional metrics such as graduation and retention rates (Bailey et al., 2015). The guided pathways initiative provides a clear road map for students, on-ramps to an academic program, enhanced academic and support resources (Bailey et al., 2015; Jenkins & Cho, 2013), and can be supported through FSW Anchors programming.



Recommendation 12: Support the FSW Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) Creative Connections. FSW Anchors will support the QEP through co-curricular programming such as hosting workshops, discussion forums, and facilitating hands-on learning experiences (Kuh, 2008) that foster transdisciplinary connections.

Persisting and Student Success



Recommendation 13: Interpersonal skills development. FSW Anchors will help students to cultivate social skills through workshops that develop interpersonal skills such as motivation, actively listening, communication, leadership, and emotional intelligence (Kimbark et al., 2017; Fowler and Boylan, 2010).



Recommendation 14: Study skills development. FSW Anchors programming will include workshops throughout the semester, such as time management, note-taking, critical thinking, and decision making (Kimbark et al., 2017; Pike et al., 2010) that support the development of effective study skills.



Acknowledgements



The FSW Anchors program is pleased to present the inaugural FSW Anchors Annual Report: Academic Year (AY) '21-'22. The annual report describes the program's progress toward achieving strategic objectives, strengths, challenges, and recommendations within the context of continuous improvement.

Thank you to the FSW Program staff, mentors, departments, community partners, and students who made this possible. The annual report would not have been achieved without the collaboration, guidance, and expertise of Dr. Sholondo Campbell, Director of Student Engagement, Dr. Jackie Beard Jr, Senior Coordinator of Student Engagement, and Heather Olson, Director of Online Teaching and Learning Experience.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Dr. Jackie R. Beard Jr.
Sr. Coordinator, Campus Student Engagement
Email: Jackie.Beard@fsw.edu
Phone: 239-489-9277

