This has been a big year for the Generation One Trailblazers. Thanks to funding from the Student Success Innovation Fund, we are able to implement more GOT initiatives, with more planned for the future. In contrast to other resources that are available to first generation students (e.g., Trio, Foundation initiatives), GOT is unique in that it is faculty driven. Together, the goal is to surround the students with support – from administration to the classroom. In particular, the goal of every GOT initiative is to support our first generation students in navigating through not only the obstacles of college, but also through the obstacles inherent in their status as the first in their family to attend college.

The following initiatives were implemented in the 2014-15 academic year:

- **GOT Faculty Contacts** – Over the course of the year, as word of GOT continues to spread, we have added new GOT Faculty Contacts who have agreed to serve as guides to our first generation students. Currently we have 54 GOT Contacts representing departments from all divisions in the college. The goal is to surround the college with contact points in order to reduce the campus for first generation students.

- **GOT Online Mentor program** – This year we rebooted the GOT Online Mentor program by renewing a call for GOT Mentors while also utilizing the first generation Blackboard community to solicit for students who would like an online mentor – a GOT Contact who engages with the student online (e.g., email) to provide support as necessary. As a result of our efforts, we added 19 new GOT Mentors who are overseeing the mentorship of 58 first generation students.

- **GOT Assessment** – When GOT was chosen to be an action project, we refocused our efforts on collecting more data about our first generation students that would then inform us of how to better serve them. An online survey was conducted in autumn 2014 to obtain students’ feedback about their experience at the autumn social mixer. Thirty students completed the survey a few weeks after the social mixer. Overall, they had a positive experience and benefited from the event. For example, they felt more connected with other first generation students after the event, gained valuable campus resources, and felt more connected and supported in general. In the spring 2015 semester, we created and launched a survey via the first generation Blackboard community – a group of 6,700+ students. In just two weeks, we have almost 300 responses. A preliminary analysis by our GOT Assessment leader, Nicole Brandt (Psychology), revealed very useful data. For instance, one goal of GOT is to enhance connectivity between first generation students and their peers, instructors, and the college in general. Early data report:
• **GOT Connectivity Events** – To help students feel more connected, GOT sponsors connectivity events to give students opportunities to fraternize with their peers and instructors while educating them on college resources. In the autumn 2014 semester we held a very successful social mixer where 80+ students came and connected with each other and their instructors. We also made available information tables from different resources from around the college (e.g., Advising, Trio, Seal, Wellness) that students could browse through during the mixer. Another larger event is scheduled for March 11, 2015 in the WD ballroom.

• **GOT Educational Events** – Plans are in the works to incorporate workshops or lecture sessions that help address those issues that students mention most in our surveys. Also, we provide opportunities for students to realize that they do not have to navigate through the college experience alone, and that there obstacles are shared by many. To this point, we are excited to announce that we have been granted rights to screen “First Generation” – a documentary about first generation students and their struggles of entering and succeeding through college. It’s an award winning documentary that has won multiple awards and is screened at colleges and high schools around the country. ([View trailer here.](#)) We will be inviting not only students from Columbus State, but we will encourage them to invite their family and friends as well. In addition, we hope to promote this event to the community at large in order to reach as many current and prospective students as possible. The GOT screening of First Generation will be on April 8, 2015, in the Nestor Hall Auditorium.

• **GOT Web Presence** - To extend our reach to first generation students, we are administrators of several web resources that together provide our students with a central hub of relevant information. Through the GOT blog ([http://www.gotnetwork.wordpress.com](http://www.gotnetwork.wordpress.com)), GOT Facebook page ([http://www.facebook.com/GOTCSCC](http://www.facebook.com/GOTCSCC)), OrgSync/Columbus State Hub, and the First Generation Student Blackboard community, we are able to provide academic advice, support, relevant links, and all other pertinent information to all students (currently enrolled or not). In fact, Blackboard community essentially makes us the primary link to all first generation students at CSCC.

• **GOT Faculty Educational Event** – In addition to educating our first generation students on the expectations of college, we also aim to educate our faculty on their plight and how best to serve them. On February 25 and February 26, 2015, we offered a professional development workshop for the Columbus State community titled, “Supporting the Success of First Generation College Students.” The plan is to continue having these professional development opportunities for our faculty and staff.

The preceding is a sample of some of the initiatives that have been implemented. Moving forward, we will use the experiences to continue to inform us of how to better serve our first generation students. We are excited with the progress thus far, and will continue to follow our plan deliberately. In particular, the final analysis of our college survey will give us a better idea of the needs of our students. There is no
completion date for this project, as GOT will continue to be a resource for first generation students and hopefully establish ourselves as a staple of the college for the foreseeable future.

We appreciate being included as part of the college’s action projects. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

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