The Generation One Trailblazers (GOT) is a faculty resource group for first generation students – those who are among the first in their family to attend college – who face academic obstacles that "traditional" students do not usually face. The goal of this project is to support our first generation students via education of proper academic expectations, awareness of college procedures and resources, promoting a sense of community, and enhanced connectivity with peers, faculty, and the college as a whole. In short, connectivity through GOT enhances academic success and helps students “blaze a trail” for themselves and their families.

GOT actually began as a grassroots projects in 2010. The decision to create a resource group for first generation students stemmed from the fact that 34% of college students in the U.S. are first generation students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Further, recent CCSSE (2013) data shows that 59.3% of Columbus State students report that their mother had not completed a college degree, while 60.1% report that their father had not completed a college degree. In fact, recent FOCUS Early Alert numbers indicate approximately 6,700 first generation students enrolled in the college for the Spring 2014 semester.

Obviously then, first generation students are important constituents of the college. Relatedly, research has clearly illustrated that student engagement is key to the academic success of first generation students (with student success being an official college goal). The more actively engaged students are with their college, the more likely they are to achieve academic success, persist in their studies, and attain their degree (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2007). With such a large number of first generation students here at Columbus State, we felt it was very important to establish a concrete support network.

Project goals for this year include events focused on increasing connectivity, engagement with faculty, and consequently student success.

1) GOT Mentor Program - (re)launched this year. We have 27 mentors and 50+ metees. Contact was made last week and will continue through the semester. Ideally mentors will be in contact with their mentees throughout their time at Columbus State.

2) GOT Connectivity Event - A faculty/student social mixer is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15. At this mixer students will be able to interact with other first-generation students, faculty, and also at informational tables from different college resources. A similar event will be scheduled for the spring semester as well.

3) GOT Faculty Workshops - also this semester and next semester we plan on sponsoring workshops for faculty in order to educate them on how best to teach and reach our first generation students.

Formal evaluations for these events will be measured through student attendance. This project is part of the ATD Success and Innovation Grant process, so formal evaluation will also occur through the ATD Success Council.

1: PROJECT SUMMARY

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2: PROJECT RATIONALE

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3: PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

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4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT
GOT’s representatives are many -- currently there are GOT representatives in the following departments:

- Biological Sciences
- Business Programs
- Communications
- Computer Information Technology
- Dev Ed
- Early Childhood Development
- English
- Humanities
- Mathematics
- Modern Languages/ESL
- Physical Sciences
- Psychology
- Respiratory Care
- Social Sciences

GOT members will participate by attending GOT functions, by making themselves available to first generation college students, and by helping to run GOT related activities (Blackboard updates, OrgSync platform, Facebook, and other social media outlets). Further, GOT has partnered with other college resources such as Advising Services, Disability Services, Office of Student Conduct, the Regional Learning Centers, and Trio in order to help more students become a part of GOT and benefit through increased engagement.

5: PROJECT CONTROL

A: Project success will be assessed with both quantitative and qualitative data. Student survey reports can be created and distributed via the Blackboard organization. Important assessment data include:

- What and how many GOT connectivity events have you participated in?
- How engaged do you feel with fellow first generation students? (pre- and post-test Likert scale)
- How engaged do you feel with your instructors? (pre- and post-test Likert scale)
- How engaged do you feel with the college? (pre- and post-test Likert scale)
- What college resources have you used? (pre- and post-test Likert scale)
- How helpful has your GOT Online Mentor been?
- GPA
- Retention
- Event attendance
- Faculty education surveys and attendance

In addition to the measures mentioned in Question 6, the major outcome measures would be a) student retention, and b) feelings of connectivity to the college.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: The challenge of GOT, like the challenge for many organization seeking to increase engagement and connectivity, stems from the fact that our students are commuter students and attendance at after-school hour functions is a competition for the scarce resource of time. With a newly minted success and innovation fund budget, we are hoping to create events that are relevant and important to the students. Additionally, with the size of GOT growing, the administration of GOT may need to adapt to the increasing demand for this organization on campus.

7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A: No additional information at this time.