2024-25 Evaluation Report: Transportation Scholars Program at Pennsylvania College of Technology

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Introduction

This evaluation report provides a formative and summative assessment of the Transportation Scholars Program, covering the period from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025. The evaluation measures the program's implementation, effectiveness, and progress toward its objectives based on participant feedback, program activities, and academic outcomes.

Formative Evaluation

Program Implementation

- **Outreach and Marketing**: The program implemented a targeted social media marketing campaign ($4,000 from January to March 2024), an enhanced website, and direct email campaigns in February 2024. The emails were a key source of awareness for students, as many participants cited them as their initial introduction to the program. Subsequently, flyers were made to promote the scholarship program and distributed at recruiting events.
- **Student Participation in Support Services**: Student participation in support services was moderate. In Fall 2023, only one student attended a tutoring session, while three students attended a total of 17 tutoring sessions in Spring 2024. This suggests an increase in engagement with academic support services over time. Due to administrative information system implementation, tracking tutoring sessions and participation in other support services is not readily available at this time.
- **Student Feedback**: Participants expressed positive opinions about the program, citing its role in helping them build industry connections and providing financial assistance. Students also appreciated the opportunity to participate in industry tours and career-related activities. One noted benefit was how the program enabled students to focus more on their academic and career goals. Likewise, students report positive experiences with summer employment in related fields, gaining hard and soft skills that will enhance their studies when they return for the Fall semester.

Recruitment and Diversity Initiatives

- **Cohort Demographics**:
    - Fall 2023: 14 total applicants including 3 students of color and 3 females (or both), with 5 qualified scholars selected.
    - Fall 2024: 31 total applicants including 6 students of color and 6 females (or both), with 9 qualified scholars selected.

      This data shows growth in recruiting a strong and diverse applicant pool, particularly with an increase in female applicants and students of color.

- **Scholarship Awards**: In Fall 2023, five students received scholarships of $10,000 each, distributed in two installments of $5,000 across the Fall and Spring semesters. Likewise in Fall 2024, all nine awardees received the full $10,000 in two installments. This financial support was frequently mentioned by students as a significant factor in reducing barriers to academic success.

Effectiveness of Program Components

- **First-Year Experience (FYE)**: All Fall 2023 cohort scholars (5 of 5) completed the FYE course, with each earning an 'A'. Eight of nine (89%) of Fall 2024 cohort scholars completed FYE or transferred-in equivalent coursework. Additionally, participation in other cohort activities, such as career seminars and mentoring, was consistent throughout the academic year.
- **Math Contextualization**: The program emphasized the importance of math in transportation-related fields. Students shared examples of math used in their majors, and the data collected is expected to inform future curriculum development. However, no formal curricular changes have been made yet.

Faculty and Student Engagement

Faculty involvement was consistent, with regular meetings and feedback provided to students. Faculty assessments indicated that students were performing well academically, with no major issues reported. The average GPA of the cohort was 3.53 for the 2023-24 academic year. The average GPA of the cohort was 3.00 for the 2024-25 academic year.

Summative Evaluation of Project Objectives

Objective 1: 50% of Scholars Complete Required Math Courses with a Grade of B or Better

- **Achievement**: A total of 67% of scholars achieved a grade of B or better in their math courses for 2023 and 2024 cohorts. Data is incomplete as some students took a developmental course to remediate a deficiency, some postponed enrollment in the required math course, some transferred in the course equivalent, others withdrew and plan to retake.
    - Fall 2023 cohort: 67% (4 of 6)
    - Fall 2024 cohort: 67% (2 of 3)
    - Total: 67% (6 of 9), exceeding the 50% target rate

Objective 2: 90% of Transportation Scholars Entering as Freshmen will be Retained until their Second Year

- **Achievement**:
    - Fall 2023 cohort: 100% (5 of 5)

- Fall 2024 cohort: 78% (7 of 9)
- Total: 86% (12 of 14), falling just below the 90% target rate.

Objective 3: 75% of Transportation Scholars will Complete an AAS Degree within Three Years

- **Progress**: The target of 75% of scholars completing an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree within three years is too early to measure as the program is still in its early stages. The first chance to report on this objective will come in the 2025-26 report when Fall 2023 cohort students reach the 3-year point of completion.

Objective 4: 95% of Scholars will be Employed Full-Time in their Field or Continue their Education within Six Months of Graduation

- **Progress**: This objective is also too early to assess. Post-graduation surveys will be conducted six months after the first cohort graduates. First available data for the Fall 2023 cohort reporting three years post-graduation outcomes will be available in the 2026-27 report.

Objective 5: 33% of Scholarship Applications are from Females and/or Students of Color

- **Progress**: At present, the cumulative target is achieved as 33% (15 of 45) of applicants report as females and/or students of color.
  - Fall 2023: 43% (6 of 14) unduplicated
  - Fall 2024: 32% (10 of 31) unduplicated
  - Total: 36% (16 of 45) unduplicated, exceeding the 33% target

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Conclusion

The Transportation Scholars Program is successfully achieving its formative goals, including outreach, diversity recruitment, and student support. Initial academic outcomes are sold, with retention rates just below targeted expectations and satisfactory completion of key coursework. Progress toward long-term goals, such as degree completion and post-graduation employment, is on track, but further evaluation is required as cohorts advance through the program and beyond. The program is well-positioned to continue supporting scholars in achieving their academic and career aspirations in the transportation industry.

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