



PENSACOLA
S T A T E C O L L E G E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Educational Opportunity Center grant renewed for another 5 years

EOC - TRIO program has served Escambia, Santa Rosa residents for 25 years

A federal program to help adults realize a dream of higher education has been refunded for another five years at Pensacola State College.

Pensacola State's Educational Opportunity Center was among 143 EOCs in colleges and organizations representing 42 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to receive a portion of \$48 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Education to help promote college readiness for adults.

At Pensacola State, the EOC will receive \$403,564 annually for a total grant award of just over \$2 million over the next five years, according to Rebecca J. Causey, the center's director.

The EOC is one of eight federal grant TRIO programs that identify and provide services for individuals with underserved backgrounds. They help low-income individuals, first-generation college students, homeless, and individuals covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act with the enrollment process for college.

The EOC program also targets veterans as well as unaccompanied youth or at-risk youths.

The Pensacola State program serves nearly 1,500 potential students from Escambia and Santa Rosa counties each year, Causey said.

“Our goal is to motivate and encourage individuals to believe that they can enroll in a post-secondary institution. The EOC is specifically designed to help clients work through challenges and any other barriers that may be prohibiting them from pursuing their dream of going to college,” she explained.

The EOC provides assistance with:

- admissions applications to any accredited college, university or vocational/technical center
- financial aid and scholarship applications, including FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- admissions applications to transfer to an upper-level college or university
- educational and career planning and exploration
- referral for additional support services

The program is well-received in the community. Causey noted that since starting in 1991, Pensacola State’s EOC program has helped more than 37,500 students enroll in college.

“A large part of what we do is outreach. We work with a number of social service agencies and organizations, philanthropic groups, other educational institutions throughout the two-county area in order for them to make individuals aware of our services and they refer them to us,” she said. “We would not be as successful without these connections.”

EOC Student Services Specialists attest to the program’s successful outcomes.

“A couple of years ago, I assisted a graduate of the PSC Adult Education program who had just passed her GED test. She is an adult learner, early 40s, with grown children. She’d had to delay high school completion and college enrollment for many years because, as a divorced, single mom, she had to work hard to support her children. Her dreams of going to college finally became a reality in 2014,” said EOC Student Services Specialist Wanda Wood.

“On the day of her appointment with me, this woman was so scared that she was almost sick. She kept saying, ‘I don’t know if I can do this.’ Most students are nervous when they enroll for the first time, but this lady was almost in a panic.”

Wood said she was able to assist the woman with enrollment and offer a few words of encouragement.

“I told her ‘You’ve got this,’ and ‘You’re going to be fine,’ “recalled Wood who also referred the new enrollee to Student Support Services - another TRIO program that provides academic tutoring.

Wood said the student excelled and maintained at least a 3.0 grade point average and even joined the PSC Jazz Ensemble.

“She was the oldest member in the jazz ensemble but was a constant inspiration to younger students and could often be heard encouraging them when they were struggling,” Wood said. “She received her associate’s degree in May and is now working on her BAS degree in Health Care Management at PSC.”

Causey calls the EOC a life-changing program.

“Many of the clients who come to us are looking for something better in their lives. They’ve done minimum wage or they’ve had difficulties finding employment,” she said. “Something snaps in their life, and they decide they are going to do something better for themselves and their family.We give individuals encouragement so they know they can do this, they can succeed.”

To schedule an appointment, contact one of the three EOC Office locations: Milton campus, 850-484-4455; Warrington campus, 850-484-2357; or Pensacola campus, 850-484-1961. For convenience, individuals residing in the Century or

Midway areas may be served via Skype by calling 850-484-1961 for an appointment at Pensacola State's Century Center or South Santa Rosa Center.

Office hours are 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday during the fall and spring terms and 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Thursday during summer term.

For more information, call PSC Marketing Director Sheila Nichols at 850-484-1428.

Cutlines:

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Ethan Krauss, right, speaks with Victor N. Looney Jr., a Pensacola State Educational Opportunity Center case manager. The grant for the federally-funded program was recently renewed for another five years.

Rebecca Causey.jpg

Rebecca J. Causey, director of Pensacola State's Educational Opportunity Center