

Student Retention Outcomes Utilizing TruMotivate with TRIO Program

An Integration Story with Knox College



TRUMOTIVATE

Knox College TRIO Program
TruMotivate, LLC

Challenge

Imposter syndrome challenges students' ability to tell their story and form external connections.

Solution

Empowering students to tell their story while bringing intention to career exploration.

Impact

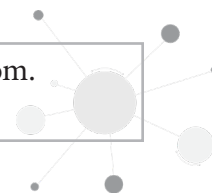
A jumping-off point for campus wide engagement and student support.

Background of TRIO at Knox College

Knox College has had a federally funded TRIO Student Support Services program since 1974. The integration of TruMotivate into the TRIO Achievement Program started with a pilot during 2021 with their TRIO Peer Leaders. After a successful pilot, TRIO expanded TruMotivate to the larger TRIO roster (185 students); they plan to expand use with their Pre-Arrival TRIO Bridge Program, where new first-year students are invited to arrive on campus five days before other students to orient to campus and learn and experience the benefits of the TRIO program.

TRIO is a bundle of federally funded programs that aid higher education outreach by motivating and supporting students from often under-resourced backgrounds. Serving college students who are either income-eligible, first generation, or students with documented disabilities, TRIO assists students through their academic journey with educational access and retention programs. At its roots, TRIO is a social change program with the philosophy that through educating individuals, they are more likely to move out of low-income status and into strong careers.

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Imposter Syndrome Challenges Students' Ability to Tell Their Story and Form External Connections

Laura Bush, the Assistant Director for Knox College's TRIO program, notes that many students from this program enter college with imposter syndrome around belonging and low confidence in their academics. As a result, these students generally don't feel empowered to tell their stories and connect their experiences or narratives that would help them find their place (and voice) in life design. "In our program," relays Laura, "a critical emphasis is placed upon career development because these students may not have a full picture of career opportunities while simultaneously facing higher student loan debt than their non-income eligible peers. Strategic initiatives to help students actualize their career potential is critically needed. If students can make a connection between how they intrinsically operate, they're more likely to externally thrive."

Empowering Students to Tell Their Story While Bringing Intention to Career Exploration

Introduced to her by the campus's career center in Spring of 2020, Bush piloted TruMotivate with staff and TRIO Peer Leaders in the TRIO program. Bush was hoping to capture students' narratives that would help them not only feel welcomed and heard, but also with a starting point for written personal reflection. "I have taken many assessments, and none have offered as much insight and depth that allows the individual to continue exploring by making connections about themselves as TruMotivate has," says Bush. "After taking the assessment, students start to recognize how impactful their stories are and how their motivations highlight strengths they may not have recognized before. It's important for our students to pay attention to these details, and it empowers them to tell their story while bringing intention to the exploration process."

Melina Minaya, a TRIO Peer Leader, shared that TruMotivate was not predictable like other assessments. "It's easier to adapt to assessments because you know what they're asking for based off the options they give you," shares Melina. "With TruMotivate, though, I did not know what to expect from sharing my story. The results were telling and not only reinforced the way I felt about myself, but more importantly, they pointed me towards an understanding of how and why I show up in the world the way I do."

"TruMotivate tells students that we want to hear their story. It empowers them."

Laura Bush
Assistant Director, TRIO



Melina Minaya
Student at Knox College

"It made me realize that my motivations do have a place in my future career."

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Since taking the assessment, Melina attests to witnessing the value of seeing her motivations in real life. “I shared my report with my admissions counselor, and as we were discussing what kinds of internships or jobs I may like, my counselor was able to better support and guide the conversation; she pointed out how certain opportunities may not play into my motivations, and it became easier to refine my career options,” says Melina. Bush’s team plans on continuing to implement TruMotivate on campus to collectively support students. She shared that it has been an ideal tool to utilize as a jumping off point for students to engage with other departments on campus. “Whether it is for post graduate programs, study abroad, or career development, the report has been helpful in offering TRIO students further insight into how their motivations are activated in a variety of contexts and environments,” Bush notes.

For example, one student Bush worked with was struggling with graduate school exploration and a hesitancy around the best fitting degree.

“A lot of students have traditional and uniformed ideas on grad school programs. This particular student had a family story that was awakening for her

to see how that experience could connect with her motivations and impact her career choice. TruMotivate helped put the puzzle pieces together and integrate her past to arrive at a decision based off the environment and program she’s most likely to flourish in.”

“If students had access to their core motivations, they could spend less time trying to fit into a mold that may not work for them and more time designing and envisioning themselves in a future job.”

As a TRIO Peer Leader with a wide range of interaction with this population of students, Melina supports this idea and thinks her peers would benefit from knowing their core motivations. “There is a lot of focus on the money a career could bring,” says Melina. “If students had access to their core motivations, they could spend less time trying to fit into a mold that may not work for them and more time designing and envisioning themselves in a future job.”

Since the pilot, Bush administered a soft rollout of the assessment with her staff, undecided sophomores and juniors in the TRIO program, and other post-traditional students. She found that TruMotivate is helpful regardless of the phase of exploration individuals are in and “has an appeal that’s ageless and is

“It truly stands apart by obtaining the narrative and voice of students, which is so important to the ethos of TRIO programs.”

insightful for personal development and workplace flow.” Bush has implemented TruMotivate into the program’s first-year experience initiative and looks forward to following these students over the course of the next four years.

When asked if she thinks this would be effective for other schools with TRIO programs, Bush said “I would definitely recommend other TRIO programs and college access/support programs to use TruMotivate. “It truly stands apart by obtaining the narrative and voice of students, which is so important to the ethos of TRIO programs.”

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