

## **USI receives \$1.1 million for Student Support Services Program**

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The University of Southern Indiana has been awarded a five-year, \$1.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the Student Support Services (SSS) Program. USI was one of 968 facilities nationwide that received this grant, and one of 16 in the state of Indiana. SSS is a unit in University Division that provides support services for 140 students annually who qualify as first generation, income-eligible or persons with a documented disability. The objectives of the SSS program are to ensure students achieve timely graduation, persist from one academic year to the next and maintain good academic standing.

The SSS program serves students that need assistance in a variety of areas. The program helps to boost graduation rates and student's GPAs. With the implementation of the SSS program, which began in 2010, these students have persevered. According to the SSS program overview of the 2013-2014 academic year, 84 percent of all participants persisted from one academic year to the next and 94 percent were in good academic standing.

To help encourage eligible students, the SSS program provides services including: academic advising and monitoring, peer coaching and mentoring, financial counseling, career assessments and guidance, cultural enrichment activities, and student leadership opportunities. SSS also provides students who show additional financial need the opportunity to apply for a Grant Aid scholarship. USI also will match \$4,191 toward Grant Aid scholarships.

"We are the students' advocate." said Heather Bauer, director of the Student Support Services Program. "A lot of our students do not have that social support system at home, we always tell them that we are their family; we are a great support system." During the 2013-2014 academic year, the SSS staff made over 2,400 contacts, visits and communication efforts with their 140 enrolled students.