DESOUSA-BRENT SCHOLARS PROGRAM
St. Mary's College of Maryland

SIGNATURE COMPONENTS

- 9-day college immersion program in July. Students move into a residence hall, attend classes, eat in the dining hall and participate in social activities
- 2-credit course featuring short academic experiences in many disciplines
- Evening spent in reflection groups, social programming and completing course assignments
- Staffed by 20 undergraduate mentors, De Sousa-Brent (DB) staff and part-time College faculty
- Structured introduction to college and the beginning of community building

CORE 101 (FYE Course)

- Scholars take specific sections of FYE courses focused on issues facing marginalized students

Leadership Projects

- Students implement project of their own/group design. Structured within a 2-credit academic course during spring of their first year
- Assisted by faculty and upper class mentors. Project reinforces campus leadership, grit and resilience and understanding available resources

ROOTING SOLUTIONS IN THEORY

Theory of Challenge and Support - Neil E. Sanford

- Challenge refers to situations in which an individual does not have the skills, knowledge, or attitude to cope.
- Support are aid in the environment that helps students cope with the challenges they face.
- Sanford speculates that with too much challenge students can regress but with too much support they don’t learn the skills to successfully cope with challenges.
- It is the balance of challenge and support that is the key to student success.

Fixed Versus Growth Mindset - Carol Dweck

- Fixed Mindset:
  - Basic qualities like intelligence or talent are fixed
  - Success results from brains rather than effort
  - If fail, it’s because I wasn’t good enough
  - Less adaptable to change
- Growth Mindset:
  - "Most basic qualities can be developed through dedication and hard work"
  - Success results from learning, embracing challenges and developing resilience
  - If fail, I need to work harder or find a new way to attack the problem
  - More adaptable to change and growth

CHALLENGE

- Overall four year graduation rate of 70%
- Underrepresented and marginalized students' graduation rate in the 40%-50% range
- Conversation about how to address this issue started in 2005
- A program was created to focus on students' deficiencies in 2006, "College 101"
- 2009 the transition to the rigor based model of De Sousa Brent Scholars Program

BACKGROUND

- St. Mary’s College of Maryland is the state’s public honors college (since 1992)
- 1,400 students
- Rural, waterfront location
- Faculty/student ratio of 1:10
- Ranked as one of the best public arts schools in the nation by U.S. News and World Report

CULTURE OF MENTORSHIP

Mentors are recruited for:

- Summer Bridges
- DBConnect (full-year mentoring program for first-year students)
- First Year Seminar Courses
- Leadership project course
- Study groups
- Approximately 30 scholars per year serve in a mentoring role

PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

Events and Workshops

Program Coordinator organizes workshops aimed to help scholars expand awareness of topics such as Imposter Syndrome, Financial Literacy, Applying for Graduate School, Intersectional Identities, etc.

Study Groups

- All first year students are required to attend 5 study sessions per semester
- Study groups are facilitated by upper class DB students

Connect Mentors

- Yearlong mentoring program for first-year students
- Mentors are upper class DB students who are chosen by departmental leadership. They meet bi-weekly with their mentees in one on one meetings to maintain connections to the program and help provide important student updates to DB program leadership