Eastern Illinois University
Student Success Center
Fall 2025 Service Report

Dr. Michael D. Gillespie, Dean of Student Success

Amber Webb, Director, Academic Support Center

Danny Gourley Fischer, Director, Academic Advising Services

Jessie Shuemaker, Director, Office of Accessibility and Accommodations

Maggie Burkhead, Director, TRIO Student Support Services

Shannon Bell, Director, Testing and Evaluation Operations

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Executive Summary

During Fall 2025, the Student Success Center expanded both the reach and responsiveness of academic and access-support services through a combination of individualized student support, proactive outreach, and operational redesign. Across reporting units, three realities emerged that should inform institutional planning moving forward:

1. **Students engage when support is accessible and aligned with their lived schedules.** Our data reinforce that access design (hours, modality, time-to-service, and clarity of pathways) is not an operational detail—it is an equity strategy.

2. **Our student success model is becoming more proactive.** Academic alerts, midterm outreach, early advising campaigns, and related efforts position us to respond earlier to barriers that too often become stop-out triggers. We have significant room to grow, and a coordinated, campus-wide model would strengthen our ability to meet students' basic and academic needs consistently.

3. **The primary constraints are capacity and data infrastructure—not staff commitment or program design.** Current systems limit our ability to track equity of reach, timeliness, and outcomes with the precision needed for institution-level strategy. These lessons are directly informing our implementation of Navigate 360 (planned go-live May 2026).

Infographic Highlights and Key Outcomes

The Fall 2025 Service Infographic summarizes broad student reach and key outcomes across units, including:

- **Students served/registered** across core departments and programs

- **EIYOU** grade distribution and the course requirement for entering first-time students with HS GPA below 3.00

- **PACK** outcomes, including improved GPA distribution and a **69.3% fall-to-spring retention** indicator for the cohort

- **Testing Accommodations Center (TAC)** volume (730 exams scheduled) and **OAA** request volume (242 accommodation requests)

- **TRIO** semester success marker (83.5% earning a 2.00+ semester GPA) and **IDS** graduates (19, including one graduate from Danville Correctional Center)

Unit Highlights

1) Academic Advising Services (AAS) & PACK (Conditional Admission Program)

Academic Advising Services advised designated student populations until transition to departments or graduation (depending on major), while administering PACK as an equity-centered pathway designed to "unlock the promise" of students who enter with non-standard admission profiles.

- **Capacity and staffing.** AAS operated with three senior advisors and one advisor (.85 FTE advising duties) and reported operating at **67%–80% of advising capacity**, depending on program intensity and assigned majors.
- **Access during peak registration.** Advisors initiated appointment campaigns in late September; during peak periods, students often experienced 2–3 week booking windows. This is a structural driver of course progression risk— particularly for students with fewer schedule-flexibility options (work, caregiving, transportation).
- **PACK outcomes and momentum.** The infographic reflects early promise in PACK outcomes, including 69.3% fall-to-spring retention. Through the redesign and reinvigoration of a proven intensive-support model, PACK is trending as a stabilizing structure for at-promise students. A full academic year PACK report will follow in May.
- **PACK engagement as a systems signal.** Students attended 564 meetings out of 1,339 scheduled (42.1% attendance). We should interpret this not as a student deficit but as a participation-barrier signal—indicating the need for continued innovation in service design (evening availability, reminders, embedded meetings, modality flexibility, and transportation-aware options).
- **Data limitations.** Current platforms limit our ability to distinguish walk-in vs scheduled visits, fully capture outreach, or measure lag time from outreach to meaningful contact—reducing precision in timeliness and capacity reporting.

2) Academic Support Center (ASC)

The Academic Support Center served 517 unduplicated students and documented 2,549 service transactions, combining direct support, proactive outreach, and group engagement.

- **Program and relational capacity.** Graduate assistants were trained in NASPA's Certified Peer Educator curriculum, Mental Health First Aid, and solutions-focused problem solving. ASC also trained graduate assistants placed in TRIO

Student Support Services, the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations, and Academic Advising Services—strengthening consistency across student-facing supports.

- **Proactive intervention at scale.** ASC responded to 612 academic alerts (representing 400 unduplicated students) and completed 1,175 midterm grade follow-ups—evidence of a high-visibility, proactive model that meets students earlier in the risk cycle.
- **Engagement depth.** Among students with documented direct interactions, 29% were "ongoing" (4+ interactions), and ASC reported a 54.5% repeat-use rate (2+ visits), reflecting relational trust and sustained help-seeking when barriers are reduced.
- **Access-centered redesign.** ASC extended hours to 7:00 p.m.; usage data show peak utilization after 4:30 p.m., validating the shift as responsive to student schedules.
- **Continuous improvement.** ASC identified the need for better course-level tracking (gateway/DFW pressure points) and improved access to course outcome data so the Center can partner more strategically with academic departments.

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3) Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA)

OAA reported **414 active registered students** and processed high volumes of accommodation-related requests and communication.

- **Request volume.** The office reports 242 total requests across academic, housing, and ESA categories, noting that request timing can begin prior to the semester and is difficult to isolate strictly to the term window.
- **Interaction intensity (untracked but substantial).** While total service transactions were not available, OAA documented 663 emails received and 627 sent from the accommodations account alone—illustrating the labor intensity and relational complexity of access work (documentation review, compliance, and student-facing problem-solving).
- **Equity context (intersectional reach).** OAA's student distribution across identity and program flags (first-gen, TRIO, Freshman/Transfer Connection) reinforces a core institutional truth: academic access needs frequently intersect with other at-promise markers. This strengthens the case for integrated pathways rather than siloed referral loops.

4) Testing & Evaluation Operations (TEO)

- Testing & Evaluation Operations served 149 students through the Testing Accommodations Center; 92.6% had approved accommodations documented in submissions.
- **Operational scale.** Faculty scheduled 730 exam requests; approximately 80% were completed in the TAC Lab. This function directly supports access and progression during high-stakes assessment windows.
- **Timeliness benchmarks.** When exam requests are received through the portal, TAC processing typically occurs within 24 working hours, with student notifications commonly 48–96 hours prior to exam time (variability driven by faculty submission timing).
- **Capacity and stabilization.** Mid-semester staffing transitions created workflow strain; however, process improvements (e.g., faculty notification when students no-show) strengthened communication and follow-up reliability.
- **Course evaluation system limitation.** The current Scantron-based course evaluation system is outdated and inadequate for current volume and timelines. The Director, Shannon Bell, and Dean Gillespie have made it a priority to invest in a new course evaluation program with improved efficiency and reliability.

5) TRIO Student Support Services (SSS)

EIU's Federal TRIO grant was renewed just as the Fall 2025 semester started. With this news, there is rejuvenated energy around this program – not only at EIU, but across the country. EIU's TRIO SSS program is a recognized state leader, and under Director Maggie Burkhead, has cemented our program as leader.

- **High achieving students:** TRIO students recorded a mean semester GPA of 2.94, with 83.5% of these students completing the term with a 2.00 GPA or higher.
- **TRIO Annual Retreat:** TRIO hosted the annual student retreat, with tremendous participation from alumni, campus partners, and community agencies.
- **Director's Presidential Service Award:** TRIO Director, Maggie Burkhead, was award the Presidential Service Award in September. This award signifies 20 years of relentless commitment to our students at EIU.
- **Upcoming:** EIU will host the 2026 Illinois TRIO Student Leadership Conference, June 26-28, 2026. 200 student leaders from across the state will convene on campus to learn, grow, and play.

6) Interdisciplinary Studies Program (IDS)

IDS serves as the academic program anchor for the Student Success Center and remains a vital pathway for adult learners. In Fall 2025, IDS enrolled **207 students** across the traditional online program and the Danville Correctional Center program; IDS is currently the **second largest major** at EIU.

- **Program governance.** The coordinator is reestablishing an advisory body, launching Spring 2026, to strengthen program planning and stakeholder engagement.
- **Enrollment and success.** Across traditional (N=151) and Danville Correctional Center (N=53), **204 IDS students** were registered in Fall 2025. Traditional IDS students averaged a 3.17 GPA; Danville Correctional Center students averaged a 3.79 GPA.
- **Graduates. 19 students** graduated in Fall 2025, including one graduate from Danville Correctional Center.
- **Danville Correctional Center: scale and infrastructure.** IDS at DCC is the largest 4-year prison degree program in Illinois. A dedicated subcommittee has been charged with recruitment, faculty training/support, curricular needs, and advising the dean and program coordinator—strengthening program quality and sustainability in a complex instructional environment.

7) EIYOU: The Panther Experience

EIYOU is a belonging- and navigation-centered first-year foundations course required for entering first-time students with HS GPA below 3.00. The redesigned course includes a common curriculum, shared learning objectives, instructor training, and a dedicated program coordinator to support instructors throughout the term.

- **Student feedback.** Course evaluations are strong across instructional effectiveness and learning environment indicators (item means largely **4.3–4.7**).
- **Participation.** 238 students enrolled; 132 completed evaluations (55.46% response rate).
- **Grade outcomes (and what they suggest).** 70.3% earned an A, B, or C; 29.7% earned a D, F, or NF. While concerning, only **8 students** receiving a D/F/NF were not academically dismissed or on academic warning at end of term—an

encouraging indicator that many students experiencing course difficulty were already facing broader adjustment challenges common in the first semester.

- **Student experience and belonging signal.** Anecdotal feedback included student concern that the EIYOU requirement can feel like separation based on HS GPA—particularly when roommates or peers are not required to enroll. This is an important perception signal: the course design may be strong, but we should continue messaging and campus alignment so the requirement is understood as a support pathway rather than a label.
- **Continuous improvement infrastructure.** A new EIYOU Advisory Committee has been established to support continuous improvement and ensure the course remains responsive to student needs and institutional priorities.

8) Hope Scholars Program

The Hope Scholars Program is part of Hope Chicago's intergenerational economic mobility model. In Fall 2025, EIU welcomed **20 new Hope Scholars**, for a total of **34 scholars** across cohorts. Many scholars overlap with other success pathways (PACK, OAA registration, TRIO advocacy, Strong MAN/Strong SHE).

- **Staffing and support model.** The program coordinator provides academic support, case management, and system navigation, strengthening consistency and follow-through for a high-need student group.
- **Intentional programming.** First-year students attend weekly study tables in the Academic Support Center and are connected with a dedicated career counselor—integrating academic stabilization with future orientation and workforce planning.
- **Academic outcomes and persistence signal.** Mean Fall 2025 GPA for the group was 1.85, indicating significant academic need and transition challenges. Fall-to-spring retention remains the primary metric; this semester, seven students were academically dismissed (N = 2) or elected to transfer to a City College in Chicago (N = 5) to continue their education. This reinforces the importance of early academic stabilization, belonging support, and coordinated case management during the first year.

9) First-Gen Hub

The First-Gen Hub opened on November 7, 2025, as a visible commitment to identity-conscious, strengths-based support for students who are pioneering college for their families and communities. More than a physical location, the Hub

represents an institutional shift toward *ecological validation*—making belonging, navigation, and connection easier to access without requiring students to "earn" support through crisis.

The Hub is designed to function as a welcoming front door for first-generation students to build community, receive timely guidance, and connect to coordinated campus resources in a way that reduces referral fatigue and normalizes help-seeking as a strength. As we move into Spring 2026, with the support of the First-Gen Hub Advisory Committee, our priority will be to align Hub programming and referral pathways with existing student success infrastructure so first-generation students experience a coherent, relational network of support rather than a set of disconnected offices.

Cross-Unit Themes and What They Mean for Student Success Strategy

The themes below synthesize patterns across units into decision-relevant implications for the Student Success Center.

1) Access is an equity strategy

Demand clusters during predictable peak periods (registration windows, midterms, late afternoon). When we align staffing, hours, and appointment availability to students' lived schedules, we remove structural friction that disproportionately burdens at-promise students.

Dean's reflection: Designing for access is retention work and must be authentic and intentional. Meeting students where they are demands flexibility in the contours of the semester.

2) We are shifting from reactive support to earlier identification and outreach

Academic alerts, midterm follow-ups, and early advising campaigns, and expanded use of EdSights demonstrate a real move toward "signals-based" intervention—meeting students before difficulty becomes withdrawal.

Dean's reflection: Proactive models are working, but they require shared workflows (faculty referral timing, documentation standards, and shared definitions of "meaningful contact") to scale.

3) Reach is strong; the next step is equity of reach

We can describe volume well; we cannot yet answer—at scale and with confidence—who is receiving sustained support versus light-touch contact, and where gaps exist by student group or need category.

Dean's reflection: This is a measurement infrastructure issue, not a frontline performance issue. Building a data culture takes time.

4) Capacity constraints show up as time-to-service constraints

Advising peak windows, OAA case complexity and capacity, and testing volume all surface the same dynamic: service delays have uneven consequences for students with fewer buffers.

Dean's reflection: "Time-to-service" should be treated as an equity metric in Spring 2026 planning. This means working with campus partners and collaborating on efficiencies and innovative approaches to serving the complex needs of our students.

5) Engagement depth is meaningful—and it's an institutional asset

Repeat utilization (ASC) and the relationship between engagement and outcomes (PACK, TRIO, and Hope) reinforce that students are not avoiding support; they return when they experience validation, usefulness, and relational trust.

Dean's reflection: Our next step is reducing participation barriers so that designed intensity is feasible in students' real lives. We can prove that relationships matter,

6) Belonging-centered design is yielding strong student feedback, with important perception signals to address

EIYOU evaluations are strong, but the requirement structure can be experienced by some students as separating or labeling. This calls for thoughtful communication and campus alignment, so the course is positioned—and experienced—as a strength-based pathway rather than a deficit designation.

Dean's reflection: Belonging is essential for student success. We, as a university, need to continue to address institutionalized equity barriers – perceived and real.

7) Continuous improvement opportunities are clear: data, workflow, and cross-unit integration

Across units, we see consistent needs: clearer tracking of interaction types, better flags for priority populations, standard definitions for reporting, and improved access to outcome data (especially course-level context).

Dean's reflection: Navigate 360 is a major opportunity, but impact will depend on broad campus adoption and shared expectations for use.

Spring 2026 Priorities (Decision-Relevant Next Steps)

To build on Fall 2025 momentum while addressing systemic constraints, I recommend we prioritize:

1. **Adopt shared definitions and minimum reporting standards** (e.g., interaction type, time-to-service, meaningful contact) across student success units.

2. **Launch Navigate 360 and continue to advocate for a campus-wide coordination model** so proactive outreach is consistent, measurable, and not silo-dependent.

3. **Treat "time-to-service" as a central metric** during peak periods—especially for advising and accommodation workflows.

4. **Strengthen participation design in intensive programs** (e.g., PACK, Hope Scholars) using barrier-reduction strategies (embedded meetings, flexible modalities, targeted reminders, and schedule-aligned offerings).

5. **Build departmental partnerships using demand signals** (tutoring/alerts/testing patterns) to identify pressure points and align instructional and co-curricular supports.