



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF LEGISLATION AND CONGRESSIONAL AFFAIRS

Reference Grant Award Number: #P042A150004
MAINE

THOMAS COLLEGE has been selected to receive funding under the STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAM (84.042A). This grant will be in the amount of \$218,000.00 for the first budget period (09/01/2015 through 08/31/2016). It is anticipated that the grant will be for a total of 5 year(s). Please see the attached abstract for a brief description of the activities that will be funded under this grant.

The contact at the THOMAS COLLEGE is:

DEBBIE CUNNINGHAM
THOMAS COLLEGE
180 WEST RIVER ROAD
WATERVILLE, ME 04901-5066
(207) 859-1297

Purpose of the Program STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Through a grant competition, funds are awarded to institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements, and to motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. Student Support Services (SSS) projects also may provide grant aid to current SSS participants who are receiving Federal Pell Grants (# 84.063). The goal of SSS is to increase the college retention and graduation rates of its participants.

Abstract

Thomas College is a private, four-year, nonprofit, business and liberal arts college located in the economically-depressed mill town of Waterville, Maine. Thomas College embraces its role as an access institution and minimally selective private college with an emphasis on preparing students for success for careers in business, technology, criminal justice and education. Currently (AY 2014-2015), 78 percent of the 777 undergraduate students are first generation and/or low income. In AY 2013-2014, Thomas College **failed to retain 121 Student Support Services-eligible students**, a number nearly equivalent to the entire non SSS-eligible student enrollment (162) campus-wide. SSS-eligible students at Thomas College enter with more retention risk, persist at lower rates, graduate at lower rates, maintain eligibility for the Guaranteed Job Program at lower rates, and pursue graduate school at lower rates than their peers. The under-performance by SSS-eligible students is magnified by their over-representation. SSS efforts will focus on intensive individualized academic coaching, an intensive course for sophomores and juniors in May, and coordinated graduate school exploration and preparation. The project will also build student leadership, facilitate family understanding, and promote financial and economic literacy skills. Applying Tinto's Institutional Action Model (academic, social and financial), the SSS program at Thomas College will **increase both the number and rates of retention and graduation among 140 SSS-participating students**. Thomas College addresses its methodology in the competitive preference priority narratives: 1a, 1b,¹ 2a, and 2b.²

¹ Walton, G.M. & Cohen, G.L. (2011). *A brief social-belonging intervention improves academic and health outcomes of minority students*. Science, 331, 1447-1451.

http://web.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Publications_files/Walton_Cohen_2011_Science.pdf

² Bettinger, E.P., & Baker, R. (2011). *The effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring*.

http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/bettinger_baker_030711.pdf