

DESTINATION: GRADUATION

Executive Summary Report

When students are asked what led them to drop out of college, they overwhelmingly respond “life gets in the way”. But, what exactly do they mean by that? Some examples of how life gets in the way include: losing a job or getting their hours cut, losing access to transportation, having a car accident, or other unexpected expenses. A significant percentage of Americans don’t have enough savings to help them weather such emergencies. In the case of students who are juggling education and life responsibilities, such an emergency may push them to choose between subsisting or staying in school. Seminole State College of Florida, in partnership with Heart of Florida United Way and with the support of SunTrust Foundation make possible **Destination: Graduation** –An innovative program to connect at-risk students to the resources they need to stay in college and achieve their dreams.

How It Works

1. Seminole State students are referred to DG through timely identification –faculty and advisor referrals, peer endorsements, and e-mail communications.
2. DG houses a program navigator and a case manager at two campus locations, so students can receive immediate help.
3. Students are connected to 2,000+ community and campus resources through the 2-1-1 information and referral database. If eligible, students may receive an average of \$750 in emergency aid.

Results in 2017

- ✓ 288 students served/ 53 received funding
- ✓ \$39,052.00 in emergency aid disbursed
- ✓ \$24,877 in food, transportation, and tuition related expenses disbursed as a result of DG referrals to college resources.
- ✓ 70% of students who received aid re-enrolled or graduated in the next semester. Low-income persistence increased by 23%.

Next Steps

HFUW and SSC are working in partnership to launch a food pantry with a variety of nutritious food through Second Harvest. HFUW is developing a toolkit to help other communities replicate the program.

Student Quotes

“Everyone was extremely helpful and able to help resolve my problem and lessen the stress”

“The entire experience was very inspirational and supportive. Navigator provided emotional support.”

“They were very helpful to connect me with the right resources.”

“Immediate response, great to work with staff. They show interest in those they help and my need was met in a couple of days. Without that, I wouldn’t be able to graduate this semester.”