



Rep. Boren's office helps preserve funding for NSU's Student Support Services

Thanks to the assistance of Rep. Dan Boren and his legislative aide, Jaryd Bern, funding has been maintained for Northeastern State University's Student Support Services program.

"We are very grateful to Congressman Boren and Jaryd for their persistence in ensuring Northeastern's at-risk students received a fair hearing," said Mark Kinders, vice president for university relations. "Student Support Services is critically important because this deals with at-risk students whom we provide several different programs and mentoring to help them through school. There would have been hundreds of students who didn't get help and we would have had to cut six positions."

Student Support Services provides academic tutoring and advice, personal counseling, financial aid information and mentoring assistance for enrollment in graduate programs to help low-income first-generation students gain a college degree. Federal funds for the services are awarded through a grant competition by the U.S. Department of Education.

However, NSU's renewal request for a program in existence for nearly 20 years was initially denied due to a technical processing error in the federal government's grant submission website. Boren and Bern worked continuously for over six weeks with the USDE and allied with other Congressional offices to persuade USDE to re-evaluate programs at 15 universities nationwide that were denied funding.

Connie Wright, director of NSU's SSS program, said it can be difficult for the USDE to rectify a problem because funds might have been depleted by the time the review was completed.

"We had students coming in all summer asking if we'd heard anything," she said. "Until the end of July we didn't know."

The USDE agreed to do a full review of SSS programs to which funding was discontinued. A second look at NSU's request resulted in the restoration of the grant.

"The USDE stepped up and did the right thing," said Kinders. "It was important that they acknowledge there was a problem with the grant submission through a glitch in the federal site that was not their fault."

Wright offered thanks for the assistance of others who helped make NSU's case including the Council for Opportunity in Education, a national nonprofit that works with TRIO schools, Dr. Tom Jackson, dean of NSU's graduate college and the university administration.

SSS is one of the original TRIO programs established during the Lyndon Johnson administration. Educational Talent Search identifies younger students with the potential to succeed in college and provides academic counsel. Upward Bound works to prepare high school upperclassmen for college entry and SSS assists students in college. All TRIO programs target students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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