

TO: MAC Faculty and Staff  
FROM: Matt Sopko, EXCEL Director  
SUBJECT: EXCEL 2019 – 2020 Highlights  
DATE: October 1, 2019

EXCEL/Student Support Services (SSS) is beginning the fifth year of a five-year grant cycle funded by the United States Department of Education. The program has provided services to over 2,500 qualified Mineral Area College students since 1997, its first year of operation on our campus. EXCEL's effectiveness is assessed annually by the Department of Education based on retention, graduation, transfer, and academic standing rates for its participants.

Students are eligible for participation in EXCEL if they are low-income, first-generation, and/or have a disability that impacts their academic experience. Additionally, students must be citizens or nationals of the United States or meet the residency requirements for federal financial aid. Finally, all students must demonstrate need for academic support in order to be successful at MAC. Student referrals from faculty and staff are accepted throughout the year, so please do not hesitate to refer students to EXCEL if they need additional academic support.

Here is a quick overview of the services that EXCEL offers its participants.

**TUTORING SERVICES:** Rachel Neumeier, Tutoring Coordinator, and Rodney Wilson, Tutor-Advisor, along with EXCEL's other professional tutors, provide tutoring in all general education courses and many academic electives, including literature and other humanities courses, trigonometry and calculus, economics, chemistry and physics.

The primary goal of EXCEL's tutoring is to provide students with the techniques and skills to become independent learners. This goal is driven by the recognition that many EXCEL students need help not only in content matter but also in developing analytical and other higher thinking skills and in acquiring the basic study skills, techniques, and habits that will enable them to succeed at MAC as well as in a university setting.

**ADVISING SERVICES:** Matt Sopko, Director, and Rodney Wilson, Tutor/Advisor, provide all advising services. These services include academic, financial, career, transfer, financial, economic literacy, and personal advisement, including:

- ❖ helping students correlate career goals with academic interests, develop degree plans, select courses, identify academic objectives, and monitor their progress each semester.
- ❖ assisting students in completing the FAFSA, understanding different types of loans, and identifying and applying for scholarships.
- ❖ researching four-year colleges with students planning to transfer, visiting colleges in St. Louis and southeastern Missouri, and assisting students in the transfer process.
- ❖ disseminating information and educating students on a variety of topics including the basics of personal finance management, interviewing for a job, improving self-confidence, and other topics that are important to academic, career, and personal success.
- ❖ referring students to MAC faculty and staff when appropriate.

**FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT:** The EXCEL Computer/Study Lab is adjacent to the EXCEL offices in the Learning Center. Financial calculators and tape recorders are available for short-term loans.

**ACTIVITIES:** EXCEL's enrichment activities are designed to increase students' cultural awareness. Field trips to events in St. Louis and southeastern Missouri, as well as campus visits to SEMO and UMSL, are scheduled each semester.

**It is EXCEL policy that students not miss scheduled classes for any EXCEL activity, including advising, tutoring, group sessions, field trips, or other EXCEL-sponsored activities.**

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** The EXCEL grant includes \$15,000 in SSS Supplemental Grant Aid to be awarded to 25 students each spring. Additionally, two \$500 scholarships funded by Mineral Area College will be awarded during the fall and spring semesters each year. Students apply for the SSS Supplemental Grant Aid during the fall semester. The application specifies the Department of Education's eligibility requirements and other requirements set by EXCEL in order to qualify for this aid.

**MAC FACULTY/STAFF & EXCEL:** EXCEL depends on MAC faculty and staff to help EXCEL achieve its objectives in several important ways. First, please refer students to EXCEL if you think they need tutoring or advising support. You may call in advance (x 2131) if you are referring a student or you may simply suggest the student drop by the EXCEL office in the Learning Center to apply. EXCEL cannot guarantee that all students who apply will meet the federal eligibility requirements and EXCEL's requirements, but almost all students at MAC do.

Second, feel free to list EXCEL as a student resource on your syllabus. Some instructors already do this, and most EXCEL students are referred by faculty, staff, or other students. The earlier a student begins tutoring, the more likely he/she will benefit from it and since all EXCEL students sign a contract permitting EXCEL tutors or advisors to communicate with their instructors, do not hesitate to call EXCEL to discuss a student's progress if you think this will benefit the student.

Finally, an EXCEL advisor or tutor will be happy to make a short presentation about tutoring and other services in your classroom at any time.

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Please do not hesitate to call Matt or Rodney if you have any questions about EXCEL or if you would like additional information.

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