



At Ripon, it's not enough to simply provide an education. It's vital to provide the support that ensures student success — especially for students who come from challenging backgrounds.

Ripon's Student Support Services is in its 30th year as one of eight TRIO programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide opportunities for first-generation, lower-income and disabled students. Student Support Services was created as part of a consortium among Associated Colleges of the Midwest schools and later evolved into an autonomous program on the Ripon campus.

The program allows qualifying students access to the educational system at various points, eventually leading to graduation from college and possible post-graduate enrollment. First-generation students are individuals whose parents did not graduate from a four-year college or university.

Approximately half of Ripon's population potentially qualifies for Student Support Services, a program that provides numerous academic, professional/career and cultural opportunities to students in order to support transition to college, assist talented students in improving on academic performance and facilitate student paths to graduation and post-graduation success.

"Many students take advantage of the services and opportunities provided by the program," says Dan Krhin, who joined the College in 1985 and has been

Student Support Services

Offering
Unique
Opportunities
for
30 Years

the director of Student Support Services for 19 years. "They provide extremely positive evaluation comments on the benefits of the program in helping make their education at Ripon a very positive experience."

In light of the good results Ripon has been achieving, the College received extended funding from the Department of Education to support its services through the current school year. The funding is part of a total grant of \$244,735 for each year of a four-year grant, depending upon progress toward goals and objectives, services offered and submission of an annual report to the Department of Education.

"Students are oftentimes pleasantly

In addition to off-campus trips, Student Support Services hosts a number of programs on campus, like this welcome picnic held in the fall, to get and keep students engaged. "The first-year transition to college is particularly challenging for many students, and our program works initially with these students but then also continues this contact through graduation," says program director Dan Krhin.

surprised that so many services are offered to them," Krhin says. "The first-year transition to college is particularly challenging for many students, and our program works initially with these students but then also continues this contact through graduation."

Student Support Services staff — Krhin; Jessica Spanbauer, assistant director and tutor coordinator; and Patti Fredrick, secretary-technician — arrange and deliver services and programs for more than 150 students every year. Those services include academic, personal and career guidance and counseling; tutoring; résumé assistance; graduate school orientation; summer research placement; student peer contacts; supplemental grant aid; cultural, educational and leadership trips and conferences; laptop computer loans; and accommodation arrangements for students with disabilities.

"Our ultimate goal in the program is to make sure students are retained and graduated from Ripon," Krhin says. "The challenge with colleges is not necessarily getting the students to the college, but getting them to stay and graduate."

"We're not required to do grad school preparation, but we do it because it's important. That's unique among a



Director of Student Support Services Dan Krhin visits with Brandy Jager '07 of Holton, Mich., center, and Jolene Rueden '07 of Brillion, Wis. In addition to visiting the office for support and assistance, many students say it is simply a welcoming place to stop by and hang out between classes.

Geni Tucker-Balthazor '09 photo

lot of Student Support Services programs. It's facilitating the transition from one educational level to another. We put a lot of energy and time into it."

In the disability area, a new computer program is being introduced to help students who have difficulty reading, such as those with dyslexia. The program will scan in the text of a book and "read" it back to the student audibly.

"It's a very sophisticated computer reading program, and it's really neat," Krhin says.

Turning Students Around

Among the many students who credit Ripon's Student Support Services with aiding them through college is Jenny Reese '05. When Reese came to Ripon, she was a first-generation, lower-income student from Shioc-ton, Wis.



Jenny Reese '05

"During my first year at Ripon I wanted to drop out,

and Student Support Services really helped to turn me around," Reese says. "I received tutoring and individual counseling, and I also had a peer contact. I think just being in [the office] and having my individual counseling sessions really facilitated my personal growth. [SSS] provided direction to help me discover my own solutions and

opportunities, both at Ripon and outside of Ripon."

Reese later became a tutor and a peer contact for the program. Because of the help counseling had given her and the positive experience of helping others, Reese wants to become a career counselor. She learned such a goal would require graduate school.

"[SSS] helped me discover what I wanted to do and could do," Reese says. "The staff encouraged me to go to graduate school. They helped with applications, résumés and cover letters for jobs."

Student Support Services also assisted Reese in applying for and receiving a McNair scholarship to attend the University of Minnesota.

"There's no way I ever would have gone to grad school if I hadn't been involved in Student Support Services," Reese says. "I want to do the same for others that was done for me."

Help in the Transition

Stacy Krusa, a senior from Waupaca, Wis., also is enthusiastic about the benefits of participating in Student Support Services. Krusa, a first-generation student majoring in biology with a minor in history, wanted to go into the health-care field and knew she would need higher education for that.

"I always knew that, and my parents were very encouraging," she says. She was attracted to Ripon by its size. She felt great friendliness from the staff, and



Assistant Director of Student Support Services Jessica Spanbauer, right, reviews a graduate school application with Stacy Krusa '07 of Waupaca, Wis. Krusa says she's been able to accomplish things that would not have been possible without the program.

Geni Tucker-Balthazor '09 photo

Ripon has a great biology department, she says.

"No one on my dad's or mom's side went to college, and neither of my older brothers went," says Krusa. "At first my parents didn't really know what to expect, and they couldn't help me."

For her, Student Support Services was "a transition from high school life to college life," she says. "My peer contact introduced me to the program. The peer contacts really promote the services that Student Support Services offers for free and provide information about campus events and answer any other questions a student might have."

At the end of her first year, Krusa applied to be a peer contact but was offered an office position in Student Support Services instead. The next semester, she applied as a peer contact again and this time received the position. She also serves as a tutor for the program.

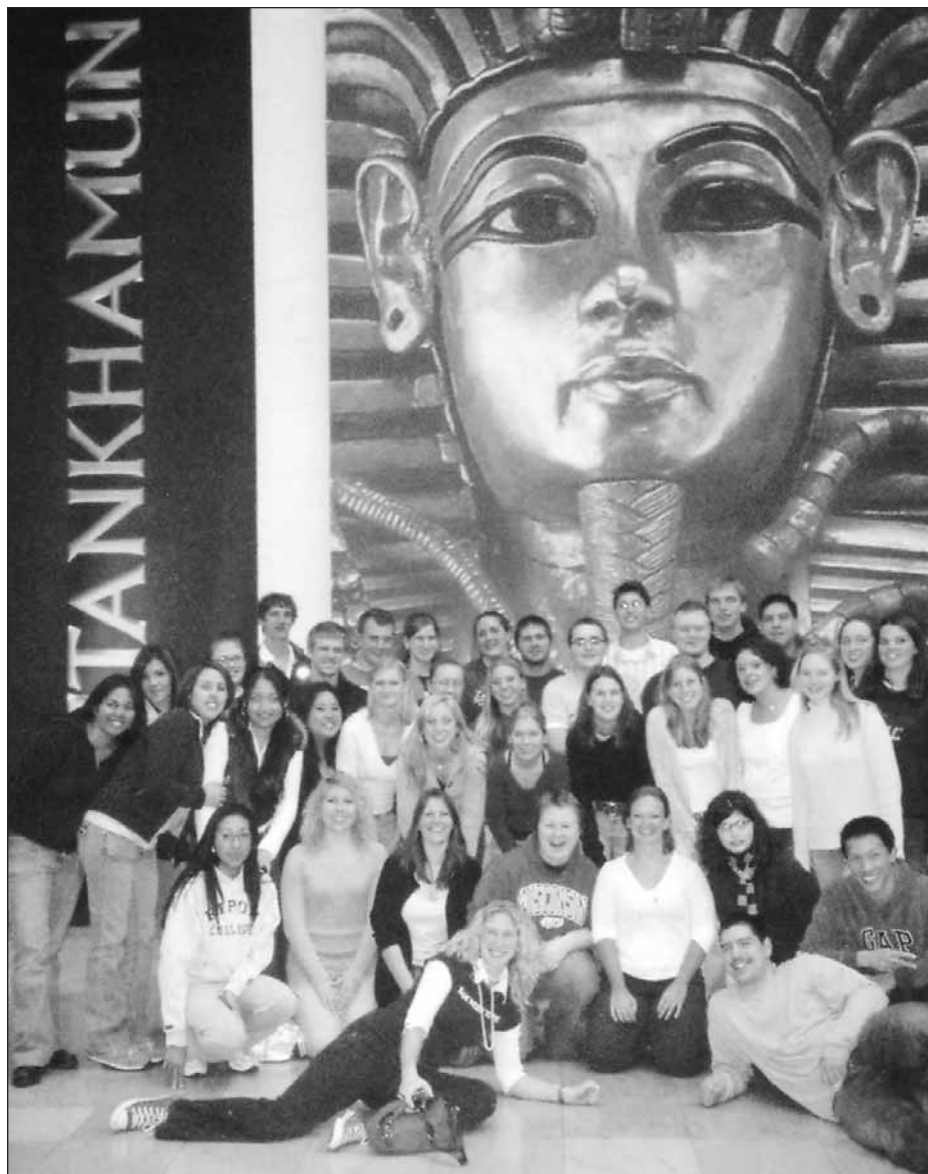
"My parents are extremely proud of me," Krusa says, "because I am here and doing extremely well. It's a pretty big accomplishment for my family."

Krusa recently received the 2006 state award for student leadership and achievement from the Wisconsin Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, the association of all U.S. Department of Education TRIO-funded programs. The award recognizes her activity in Student Support Services and what she has given back to the program, Ripon College and other students, says Spanbauer.

Spanbauer assisted Krusa in the application process. The program was very competitive, and Spanbauer spent many hours working with Krusa to submit a high-quality application.

"I think Student Support Services is very important because students who come from low-income or first-generation families don't have a lot of information or knowledge about how to succeed in college," says Krusa. For those students who can't turn to parents with college experience, Krusa says the Student Support Services program helps students make the transition much more easily. "They strive to keep people in college — not only to stay in school but to help them succeed," she says.

"Student Support Services plays a big role in retention of students. It's not a program of services but a program of opportunities for students to succeed in



This group of students took advantage of a Student Support Services-sponsored trip to see the "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs" exhibit at the Field Museum in Chicago. The program regularly offers such cultural excursions to experience Broadway productions, theatrical events and art exhibits.

college. I've definitely done things I would never have gotten the chance to do without the program."

Expanding cultural awareness

Because many students eligible for Student Support Services have had limited exposure to cultural offerings, Ripon's program offers about five free trips a year to its active students. These trips visit Broadway productions, theatrical events, art exhibits and similar offerings in Appleton, Oshkosh, Green Bay and Milwaukee.

In October, a busload of students went to Chicago for a weekend trip

that took in the "King Tut" exhibit at the Field Museum, an Imax presentation on Navy Pier and other offerings.

"We want to offer exposure to things many of these students probably haven't seen before or could afford to see," Krhin says. "It raises the bar for students and acclimates them to academia."

"At Student Support Services, we have a lot of different connection points for students — staff, guidance, counseling, tutoring. These trips are another contact point to make students feel comfortable and acclimated to the College so they will stay here. It's wonderful. We get tremendous feedback." **R**