S.O.A.R.
(Support Options for Achievement and Retention)

ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

Mayland Community College
www.mayland.edu
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DIRECTOR’S ADDRESS

Welcome to the S.O.A.R. Program! Taking the initiative to apply for academic support shows you are serious about pursuing your goal of earning a diploma, degree and/or transferring. Research has shown that when students participate fully in the S.O.A.R. Program, they have better grades, stay committed to their college goals, and have higher rates of graduation and transfer.

Your motivation and initiative in using S.O.A.R. services is the key to your success at Mayland and beyond. The S.O.A.R. staff will assist you in getting the resources and information you need to be successful in your academic experience. So, use us, and together, we will be successful.

Debbie Stafford
S.O.A.R. Director

S.O.A.R.’s HISTORY and PURPOSE

S.O.A.R. is a Student Support Services Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education and one of several programs referred to as “TRIO Programs.” It is part of Student Development at Mayland. TRIO Programs are designed to improve academic performance, increase student motivation, and assist in the transition from one educational level to the next.

S.O.A.R. Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for S.O.A.R. participation, students must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at Mayland Community College, be pursuing your first degree or diploma, and be able to accomplish that goal within a 4-year period. You must meet one of the following criteria:

- First generation college student (neither of your parents graduated from a 4-year college)
- Low income by federal guidelines
- Have a documented physical, mental, or learning disability that may impact college progress.
S.O.A.R. Staff and Contact Information

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You may also make an appointment by signing up on schedules posted outside each person’s office door.

**PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The S.O.A.R. Program protects the confidentiality of information you share with your counselor, whether it is personal or academic. While a certain amount of personal information is needed to adequately assess your needs, you have the right to ask your S.O.A.R. counselor why this information is requested and what it is used for. Information related to your attendance, schedule, the classes you are taking, or any personal information cannot be revealed to anyone without your permission. Your written consent must be obtained before we release any information to anyone outside of Mayland.

New S.O.A.R. applicants are discussed in a staff meeting consisting of the S.O.A.R. Counselor, the Transfer Specialist, the Director, the Administrative Assistant and the S.O.A.R. Supplemental Instructors in order to assess their eligibility. In this case, the information that is discussed does not require your permission.

It is important to know that certain information is not considered confidential and can be shared without your permission. This includes the following: **in the judgment of the counselor, you are dangerous to yourself or others, or there is evidence or reasonable cause to suspect child or elder abuse/neglect.** By law, we must report such information to the appropriate authorities. Please talk to your counselor if you have any questions about this.

**S.O.A.R. Orientation and Peer Advising**
Once accepted into the S.O.A.R. Program, you will meet with a Peer Advisor for an orientation who will review this handbook and introduce you to all available services. The Peer Advisor is familiar with the resources on-campus and will assist you while you are here. Peer Advisors provide support and offer helpful suggestions and information. As students, they may have experienced some of the challenges and barriers you are facing and have learned ways to overcome them. A Peer Advisor in your major can also provide specific information about that major. The Peer Advisors follow the same confidentiality and privacy rules as the S.O.A.R. staff.

Needs Assessment

After the S.O.A.R. Orientation, you will meet with your assigned counselor for an assessment of your needs. In this meeting your counselor will determine your specific needs and develop an Action Plan with your assistance. This plan may include a number of services, including the following:

- College Adjustment/College Resources
- Study Skills Assessment/Study Skills Training
- Tutoring
- Academic Advising and Periodic Progress Reviews
- Career Counseling Referrals
- Exposure to Cultural Events
- Financial Aid Referrals
- Lending Library Materials
- Reading, Writing and Math Skills Assistance
- Referrals to other programs/agencies for help
- Transfer Assistance
- Use of the N.E.S.T. computer lab/tutorial software
- Reasonable Accommodations for a Disability

The Needs Assessment is reviewed each term and updated, as needed, to address your changing needs and keep track of your progress. Remember, we are here to help you cross the finish line and achieve your goals.
Counseling Services

The S.O.A.R. Program provides both academic and personal counseling related to your educational and personal goals.

Academic Counseling Services:

Although this does not replace the services you receive through your academic advisor for your major, the S.O.A.R. counselor can assist you with:

- Strategies for improving grades in specific subject areas
- Study skills assistance
- Tutoring
- Basic skills assistance
- Use of Lending Library materials to supplement course material
- Course selection/planning
- Mid-Term progress checks (designed to monitor and ensure your progress and assess your need for services.)

*Mid-Term progress checks are mandatory for all S.O.A.R. students.*

You are required to schedule an appointment with your counselor each mid-term to review report forms which are filled out by all of your instructors. The mid-term progress check is an ideal time to discuss with your counselor any problems or questions you have. **But, don't wait until mid-term to get help when you have difficulty in any of your classes!** If, at any time, you experience problems in your academic program, see your S.O.A.R. counselor. We are here to help prevent short-term problems from becoming long-term.

Study Skills and Personal Development Modules

In an effort to promote the development of good learning skills and personal development skills to ensure academic success, the S.O.A.R. Program offers modules that can be completed either online or in hard-copy. Your counselor will help you choose which modules will benefit you the most.

To access the online modules, login to LEO, click on **My Clubs – SOAR – Shared Files – Study Skills Modules.** You will have the option of taking a quiz after completing each module and by sending it via email to Jeannette Murray, your name will be entered in a monthly drawing for a door prize!
**Modules topics include:**

- Assertiveness Training
- Conflict Resolution
- Goal Setting and Decision-Making
- Improving Reading
- Managing Anger
- Managing Math
- Memory Power
- Money Management
- Next Step: Your Career
- Note-Taking
- Proper Punctuation
- Self Esteem Building
- Stress Management
- Study Skills
- Test Anxiety
- Test-Taking
- Test-Taking for Nursing Students
- Time Management
- Writing College Research Papers

**English and Math Assistance**

To assist you in English and Math, S.O.A.R. provides supplemental instruction through the developmental English and Math instructors who work with you individually outside of class. See your counselor for more information.

**StudyPlus Groups**

StudyPlus groups are specially designed to provide you with proven learning strategies and techniques to ensure your college success. As a member of a StudyPlus group, you will benefit from counselors’, Peer Advisors’, and other students’ knowledge and experience in making the learning process effective and rewarding. See your counselor about joining a StudyPlus group.

**Tutoring**

S.O.A.R offers both professional and peer tutoring services. Peer Tutors are students trained and ready to assist you in any classes in which you are experiencing difficulty. To request a tutor, see your counselor and fill out a tutoring request form. At the end of the term, or when tutoring is completed, your evaluation of your tutor will provide essential information for continued improvement of tutoring services.
Personal Counseling

Your S.O.A.R. counselor is here to counsel and support you in any matters related to your academic success, including personal issues that may affect your progress. Other areas considered in the counseling process include:

- Day-to-day support for issues interfering with your progress
- Improvement of specific personal goals, such as stress management, time management, self-esteem building, etc.
- Lending Library materials to address personal issues
- Peer Counseling/Advising
- Referrals to area agencies to receive assistance with emergencies, crises or long-term problems
- Workshops for personal growth and development

Financial Counseling/Resources

One of the goals of the S.O.A.R. Program is to ensure that eligible students receive sufficient financial assistance to make college attendance possible. The Financial Aid Coordinator and S.O.A.R. Counselors can provide information about financial resources available to you. Financial aid packages may consist of Pell grants, work-study assignments, and scholarships. Students who receive a Pell Grant may also apply for scholarships to meet the costs of education. Cash Course is an online financial management program accessible through this link: www.cashcourse.org

Financial Aid Tips:

- **Apply early each year** (preferably by March 1) online at www.fafsa.gov to receive the Federal Pell Grant.
- **Apply for Scholarships** and keep up with the scholarship periods and deadlines posted on LEO.
- Visit www.mayland.edu/foundation for more information on scholarships.
NC Division of Veterans Affairs Scholarships are available to children of deceased, disabled or POW/MIA veterans. For further information, contact the Veterans Service Officer in your county or the Veterans Benefit Coordinator in the Financial Aid office.

Community Assistance:

**WIA** is designed to assist students with class tuition, fees, books, material and other services. The qualifications for WIA are: low income (receiving AFDC and/or Food Stamps), disability, displaced homemaker, or pregnant youth (ages 16-21). Call 765-1195 (Mitchell Workforce Center), 737-5419 (Avery Workforce Center), and 682-6618 (Yancey Workforce Center) for more information.

**Childcare Project Funding** is available to assist with childcare costs through a special grant for general education majors and transfer students. Childcare assistance covered by this program must be provided by a registered/licensed home or center. See the Financial Aid office for information. Assistance with childcare is also available through your local Department of Social Services.

**Vocational Rehabilitation**: Students with physical, emotional or learning disabilities may be eligible for financial assistance under the provisions of U.S. Public Law 565. Vocational Rehabilitation is a public service program that assists individuals in preparing for and obtaining gainful employment.

**Veterans Administration Benefits**: Most curriculum programs offered by the College are approved for Veterans Administration education assistance benefits. Veterans, dependents of veterans and war orphans may be eligible for VA benefits.
Transfer Counseling

Transfer counseling prepares students academically and socially for the challenges they will face at four-year colleges and universities. Transfer counseling facilitates the process of transfer and assists with problem-solving and coping skills.

Services provided:
- Assistance with college applications, paperwork, deadlines
- College visits (both group and individual)
- Development of personalized transfer plans to meet specific student needs
- Information on careers/college majors
- Tracking progress both at MCC and four year colleges
- Personal/academic counseling
- Researching financial resources for attending four year schools
- Transfer Handbook, which gives essential information to students considering transfer to a four-year institution.
- Transfer Lending Library

Services for Students With Disabilities

Mayland Community College complies with regulations of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act in order to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. The S.O.A.R. Program assists Student Development in serving its eligible members with disabilities. These services include:
- Academic/personal counseling
- Accommodation plans to fit individual student needs (such as taped
Computer Lab (the “N.E.S.T.”)

The N.E.S.T. (A Nurturing Environment for Student Training) is a computer lab that is available for S.O.A.R. students ONLY in Room 237. It provides Microsoft Office and a variety of computer software related to your courses. Check the listing above each computer to see what software is available. Ask a Peer Advisor or Lab Technician for assistance in using the N.E.S.T. computers.

Each time you use the N.E.S.T., sign-in the logbook (the black notebook on the desk to the left as you enter). Include your name, time in and out, and software used. You can use the same sheet to log all of your use for each semester. Please commit to signing in because it could affect the availability of funding for this lab.

The N.E.S.T. is open days and evenings for S.O.A.R. students only. If you need to use the N.E.S.T. between 5:00 – 7:00 PM., Monday – Thursday, please let your counselor know so they can inform Security to unlock the door. You will be responsible for locking up when you leave. The N.E.S.T. is not available after 4:00 PM on Fridays.

Lending Library

The S.O.A.R. Program offers materials to assist you with academic and personal concerns. These include: audio tapes, text books, recorded texts, college catalogs, self-help and wellness books and videos, pamphlets, and adaptive equipment to aid students with disabilities. A complete listing of Lending Library materials is available through the S.O.A.R. Administrative Assistant.

To use the Lending Library, see your counselor to request any item and sign it out with S.O.A.R.’s Administrative Assistant.

LEO: Linking Everyone Online

LEO is Mayland's portal for online information sharing. All students have e-mail accounts through LEO and are able to check grades, request transcripts, get information on clubs and events at MCC, and register for classes. S.O.A.R. has a
Cultural Trips & Social Events

Each year S.O.A.R. sponsors a number of cultural trips/events. Cultural trips are “by invitation only,” for students who actively participate and use the services of the S.O.A.R. Program. Some of the benefits of our trips are to relax, be “carefree,” explore new horizons, and get to know your peers and the S.O.A.R. staff. S.O.A.R. also sponsors social events on campus, such as Spring Fling activities and the S.O.A.R. Social.

S.O.A.R. Student Responsibilities

As a member of the S.O.A.R. Program, you must commit to using the services designed to meet your goals within a four-year timeframe from the time you joined S.O.A.R. If you stop attending or do not attend for one or more semesters, you may not be eligible for S.O.A.R. membership when you return.

We serve only a limited number of students, therefore we want to serve students who will truly benefit and actively participate. As a S.O.A.R. student, your responsibilities are to:

1. Meet regularly with your assigned counselor, including during the first few weeks of the semester, at mid-term for the mandatory mid-term progress check, and during the last four weeks of the semester.
2. Keep your counselor informed of your situation and needs, especially when you need help, your situation changes, and when good things happen, too. We love to hear good news!
3. Call or stop by to let us know if you have to miss an appointment.
4. Use the services outlined in your Needs Assessment, which were determined by agreement between you and your counselor.
5. Talk with your counselor if you are thinking of dropping out. Many times, alternate solutions can be found.
6. Keep us informed of changes in your phone number, name, address, or change of major.

Your S.O.A.R. Program counselor can assist you only if you carry your share of the responsibility. It is extremely difficult to “go to bat” for a student who has missed class for a week and hasn’t called anyone! Students with continued unexcused absences from counseling or tutoring sessions, or who fail to participate, may be asked to leave the program to allow other eligible students a chance to participate. Again, our main concern is to provide services to those most likely to benefit from them.

The Importance of S.O.A.R

As a member of the S.O.A.R. Program, you are part of a group committed to achieving educational goals and getting the most out of their college experience. From feedback we have received over the years, S.O.A.R. makes a huge difference in the lives of its members and many have told us that without our services, they would not have reached their goals, and would not be where they are today. S.O.A.R. is committed to giving you the best possible advantages in making your college career and future life fulfilling and successful.

By taking this step you are demonstrating a commitment to hard work and responsibility in your college program. Whether your goal is to complete a two-year program, or transfer on for a bachelor's, master’s, or doctoral degree, the S.O.A.R. Program will assist, encourage, and support you along the way.

We wish you the very best in your time at Mayland Community College and look forward to seeing you succeed, persist, graduate, and transfer!