

# SOAR: Fostering Leadership, Resiliency, and Network for Students at Pitt-Johnstown

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## Motivation

Pitt-Johnstown is located in a rural area, and our students come from neighboring areas that include low income families and severely underbudgeted high schools. Many of these students also identify as underrepresented minority students (URM), who face more challenges and are under tremendous pressure when navigating college life.

Fortunately, most students from these socioeconomic backgrounds receive financial aid and enroll in the Pitt Success Program. The project SOAR, which stands for Students Overcoming Adversity through Resilience, will pioneer a Seed grant project at Pitt-Johnstown to strengthen their leadership skills, train, foster, and network with successful professionals, and build their career paths.

## Project Description

SOAR, will pioneer a Seed grant project at Pitt-Johnstown by, a) conducting research on students from the target group and seeking to understand their needs and experiences, and b) enrolling the students in a year-long enrichment program that offers a safe environment of peer and faculty mentors.

## Context

These students need help and support to better understand, manage, and/or magnify their unique circumstances and benefits.

Our campus has neither investigated these students' needs nor implemented any impactful program. Yet many research and leadership programs within the University, and select publications, have demonstrated successful results that students benefitted from these types of programs.



# With SOAR, excitement, support, and experience promote growing local teachers



## Project Deliverables

- Our students are the most important part of the project; therefore, we anticipate strong progress and development in their academic endeavors and high quality of life while living on campus
- For the development of intercultural and leadership skills, and global perspectives, these components can be measured using interviews and/or surveys during the first and the final evaluation cycles in combination with faculty and student mentors' observations
- Our program will be peer-reviewed by our faculty team members as well as at least two outside reviewers before implementing in October 2023

## Potential Impact

SOAR is a leadership and enrichment program that helps marginalized Pell Grant recipients succeed during their academic years at Pitt-Johnstown and early careers. The structure of a year-long enrichment program creates a safe environment made up of peers and faculty mentors.

- Our team will help these students strengthen their leadership skills, train with successful professionals, and build their career paths.
- This project will foster a sense of service and encourage these students to help more students on campus and in high schools.

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