

Students and faculty compete in first-generation dodgeball tournament

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Reporter

NSU first-generation faculty and students will dominate the courts at the WRAC Friday at 1 p.m. for the NSU first-generation dodgeball tournament, hosted by TRiO and the First Year Experience.

The event is part of a national initiative to highlight and celebrate first-generation students. The initiative attempts to encourage first-generation students to attend college. The national initiative has been ongoing for three years, but this is the first year that NSU will be participating.

Nov. 8 is the national day of recognition for the First-Generation College Celebration Initiative.

The official day was decided in recognition of the signing of the Higher Education Act of 1965. The first-generation status is based on a person's parents' college degree obtainment. If neither one of a student's parents obtained their bachelor's degree, their children are considered first-generation students.

The decision for dodgeball between the First Year Experience and TRiO offices was purely based on the fun factor since the national organization doesn't dictate specifics.

"You get to choose how you want to celebrate," said Jamie Flanagan, the assistant director, advisor and instructor for TRiO, said. "They don't dictate what you do. They just want you to show some level of recognition to support the initiative. They want you to do something that is beneficial at your institution."

Psychology Instructor Brittany Blackwell Broussard is excited and ready for the tournament.

"I'm looking forward to fun and lots of laughter," Broussard said. "I'm also competitive, so I'm ready to win."

To Broussard, being a first-generation student means success.

"It means that I can leave a legacy for my future generations and be a role model for people like



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me," Broussard said.

Darrel Doyle, senior electronic engineering tech major, is a first-generation student and participant in the dodgeball tournament.

"I want to have fun," Doyle said. "I don't know what to expect."

Doyle is happy to be a first-generation student

"You need a lot of help when you're a first-generation student, but you know it means a lot to be able to do something that other family members haven't done," Doyle said. "My mother and my father haven't done it, so it'll mean a lot when I do graduate."

The event is open and free to the public, so everyone is encouraged to go out and support their favorite team. Free t-shirts will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

"We just want to celebrate and let everyone know that first-generation faculty and students are here, and we're just like anyone else," Flanagan said. "We're trying to do great things."

Winners of the tournament will have a meal with NSU President Dr. Chris Maggio and First Lady Jennifer Maggio, who graciously accepted after being offered the opportunity to host a meal with the winning team.

On Thursday there will be a first-generation forum and panel in

the student union ballroom with a guest speaker and first-generation panel speaking from 11 a.m. to noon.

TRiO provides free academic services to qualifying students. This includes first-generation students, students from modest-income backgrounds and students with disabilities.

TRiO has academic advising, tutoring, mentoring, a health initiative, a service organization, classes, workshops, and a resource library. Everything is used to help students advocate for themselves and have the same access as the next person.

Services are free to students that are willing to invest in themselves and to come visit with their Student Support Services advisor. Flanagan said they strive to know students as both academics and as people with lives outside of school.

"We want them to know that there is someone in their corner who's supporting them and is going to help them along the way," Flanagan said. "We want to let them know they don't have to go through this alone."

TRiO's graduation rate, through their services, was 54% in the last graduation class.

Broussard wants students to utilize these resources and know they have other people who know what they're going through.

"I want other first-generation students to use the resources available to them," Broussard said. "They're not alone, and they can use their resources to remain successful. It's okay to use resources. It's not a handout."

Doyle recommends these services to eligible students since they have benefited him during his NSU career.

"I would say join TRiO," Doyle said. "They've helped me with classes. The advisors in TRiO are free, and they don't have trouble connecting. They're good people. They help you get to know people with their events."

Doyle also appreciates their other services such as their computer lab and their help with finding jobs.