

TRiO Talking Points

TRiO Programs are very effective and many students from low-income families depend on these programs to succeed academically in high school and college. In fact, since 1965 an estimated 2 million students have graduated from college with the special assistance and support of our nation's TRiO Programs. In addition, one TRiO Program in particular, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, is one of only a few programs in America that encourages low-income and minority undergraduates to prepare for doctoral study.

"Although 11 million Americans critically need to access the TRiO Programs, federal funding permits fewer than 7 percent of eligible youth and adults to be served."

The TRiO Programs were originally established by the federal government in 1965 to ensure equal educational opportunity for all individuals, regardless of race, ethnic background, or economic circumstance. In many communities, the TRiO Programs are some of the only programs available that help students to overcome the class, social, academic and cultural barriers to higher education. The educational and human services offered through the TRiO Programs are distinguishable from all other counseling programs in America because TRiO Programs are:

One-on-One - As most TRiO Programs serve fewer than 250 students, TRiO counselors have an opportunity to work one-on-one with each student. Unlike traditional counseling programs, TRiO professionals get to know each student on a first-name basis. TRiO counselors are personally committed to the success of their students.

Performance Based - Each TRiO Program operates against specific, measurable outcome objectives as clearly defined in each approved grant proposal. TRiO Program Directors are held accountable and must meet their stated objectives each year if they expect to remain funded and able to help participants in their targeted service area.

Focused on Early Intervention - Two of the TRiO Programs, Talent Search and Upward Bound, are early intervention programs. These programs effectively reach students in grades six through 12 who have "college potential" but often do not recognize or understand their academic and career options beyond high school. Each year, these two programs keep thousands of promising young low-income and minority students in school and focused on career and college success.

Targeted Toward First Generation and Low-Income - Two-thirds of the students in the TRiO Programs come from families with incomes under \$28,000 (family of four), where neither parent graduated from college. In most cases, parents have no higher education experience, do not understand the postsecondary process and do not necessarily value a higher education.

Built on Relationships - Over a period of several months or years, TRiO Professionals build both personal and professional relationships with their students. Such positive relationships are critical to the success of every TRiO Program. The staff of each TRiO Program creates a climate of support for students as they strive to move out of poverty and dependence. As a result of these strong positive relationships, many TRiO college graduates periodically return to their programs to encourage and inspire current students.

Committed to Tough Cases - In most cases, students in the TRiO Programs are poor and are desperately trying to climb out of "the vicious cycle of poverty in America." Many students come to TRiO from neighborhoods that are filled with violence, discouragement, negativity and hopelessness. A single parent raising several children, an older child helping to raise younger siblings, a physically-disabled person with few financial resources and a struggling high school student trying to escape a life of poverty describe the young people and adults who turn to the TRiO programs for help and special assistance.

Consistent and Intense - TRiO Programs and TRiO Professionals are consistently available to their students. In fact, some TRiO programs enable students to meet with counselors during the summer, in the evening or on weekends. Many TRiO Professionals, as part of their specified program objectives, visit students at home to

discuss courses or career plans.

Comprehensive and Cultural - The academic and human services as administered through the TRiO Programs are comprehensive and must go far beyond the traditional services offered by high school or college counselors. Many students in the TRiO Programs receive instruction in literature, composition, foreign languages, mathematics and science. In addition, students receive assistance in completing college admission and financial aid applications, tutorial services and exposure to cultural events.

Reality Based - Like their students, many TRiO professionals had to overcome class, social, academic and cultural barriers to succeed in higher education. As a result, they can effectively relate to their students and know how to motivate young people and adults in spite of the obstacles that often serve to discourage students from low-income families.

Community Based - Community need is determined by the community, not the federal government. TRiO Programs are funded based on clear evidence that the program is needed in a particular community or town. Criteria used in determining need in a specific area include income level, education attainment level, dropout rates, student to counselor ratio, social and economic conditions, and overall demographic data.

Non-Bureaucratic - TRiO Programs do not involve a large federal bureaucracy because they are direct grant programs funded in rank order on the basis of competitive proposals. In fact, there is no more than one federal employee for every 28,000 TRiO students now being served. In addition, TRiO Programs only exist where local organizations see the need for such services and have successfully applied for federal support. Despite substantial increases in the number of TRiO students and programs, fewer federal employees are working with TRiO today than 20 years ago.

* * *

TRiO Programs protect our federal investment in student financial aid and have helped to reduce defaults in the federal student loan program. Additionally, the federal investment in the TRiO Student Support Services Program is just \$825, \$242 per student in the Talent Search Program and only \$156 for each student enrolled in a Educational Opportunity Center.

Access and retention services are and must continue to be an absolutely essential component of the Federal strategy to ensure equal education opportunity in America. All existing research indicates that very few states are willing to help low-income students overcome class, social, academic and cultural barriers to higher education. In fact, the TRiO Programs were established in 1965 because most states were blatantly ignoring students from low-income families who needed "special services" to successfully finish high school and prepare for college.