



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

College access and success for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities

Our Vision

A vast educational attainment gap remains between rich and poor in the United States. Talented low-income students are severely underrepresented in our nation's colleges and universities. Consider this: the **lowest-achieving students from high-income families** participate in college at the same rates as the **highest-achieving students from poor families**.

We believe every young person and adult should have an equal opportunity to prepare for, attend, and graduate from college. Graduation from any category of postsecondary institution should be achievable and must not be limited by economic status, family background, or disability.

If the U.S. is to remain strong economically and assure its competitive global standing, we must improve the chances of the least advantaged students to access and complete a college education. As the leading national organization that focuses on college access and success for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities, COE has an critical role to play in developing and implementing solutions.

Our Approach

Nearly 1,000 member colleges and agencies of COE sponsor initiatives to increase college access and success for low-income, first-generation, under-represented students and students with disabilities in their local communities. We work with them to provide:

- **Needed Program Improvement and Development** for more than 3,000 college access and success programs nationwide.
- Research and policy analysis through the **Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education** to encourage policymakers, educators, and the public to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities.
- **Advocacy** for federally programs critical to college access and success including TRIO, GEAR UP, Pell Grants, and other college access and success programs that assist low-income and first-generation students.
- **Professional Development** for college access and success professionals—through COE's Annual Conference, seminars, workshops, video conferences, webinars, and other web-based idea exchanges.

“For more than 30 years, COE has made a difference in the lives of thousands of children. GE and COE are partners who want to prepare students to compete as workers, as entrepreneurs, and to succeed in this world. The work done by COE is amazing. We’re both dedicated to expanding educational opportunities. I am so proud to be associated with COE because of their passion and leadership.”

—KEITH SHERIN, VICE CHAIRMAN GE AND
CHAIRMAN AND CEO OF GE CAPITAL

“Our forefathers knew that in order to be free, you had to be educated. The work of COE is invaluable—advancing educational opportunities and ensuring that the least advantaged citizens have access to a postsecondary education.”

—U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TOM COLE (R-OK)

“As a TRIO alumna, I know personally how a college education opens doors and expands life’s possibilities. The critical work done by COE increases access to college, but also promotes the American ideal of improved prospects for a better life.”

—U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
GWENDOLYNNE MOORE (D-WI)

Our Initiatives

COE has continued to bring new thinking to program practice and development for the past 35 years. Some new initiatives:

- **Hit The Ground Running: Orientation and Professional Development Program for New College Access and Success Professionals** is a three-tiered process designed to help new college access and success employees learn about the field of work in which they are embarking. A program lasting up to eighteen months, it included both online and on-site components.
- **College Access and Success Online Certificate Program** is a joint initiative of COE and Colorado State University to offer a graduate-level certificate program for college access and success professionals and individuals preparing to work in the field.
- **Compliance Assessment (Monitoring Review) Services** review administrative, fiscal, and programmatic activities to examine compliance with applicable TRIO program laws, regulations, and policies as well as bring any applicable findings or deficiencies to the attention of the institution or agency.
- **Economic Impact Study** project extends the understanding of how increasing rates of high school graduation, college entrance, and college completion benefit individuals' positive life outcomes and enhance economic benefits for institutions and communities.
- **Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States—2016 Historical Trend Report** shows family income is a major indicator in college entrance, selection, and graduation.

Our Outcomes

College access and retention services are essential to providing true educational opportunity for all Americans, including low-income and first-generation students and students with disabilities. At present, college access and success programs reach only a small fraction of the students and families who could benefit from them. For the past 35 years, COE has worked to make the following outcomes a reality:

- More than 5 million students have graduated from college with the special assistance of TRIO programs.
- Annually, more than 3,000 access and success professionals received training and technical assistance either in-person, virtually, or both.
- Leveraged \$900 million to support TRIO Programs (up from \$156.6 million in 1981).
- An estimated 785,000 low-income students and students with disabilities receive college access and retention services through our member colleges and agencies each year.

The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) is a nonprofit organization whose membership includes more than 1,100 colleges and community-based organizations with a particular commitment to expanding college opportunity. COE, which was incorporated in 1981, is the only national organization with affiliates in all 50 states, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands focused on assuring that low-income and first-generation students have a realistic chance to prepare for, enter, and graduate from college.

Federal TRIO Programs (Talent Search, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math/Science, Veterans' Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program) help students to overcome class, social, academic, and cultural barriers to higher education.

TRIO services include: assistance in choosing a college, tutoring; personal and financial counseling; career counseling; assistance in applying to college; workplace and college visits; special instruction in reading, writing, study skills, and mathematics; assistance in applying for financial aid; and academic assistance⁴ in high school or assistance to reenter high school or college.



COUNCIL for OPPORTUNITY in EDUCATION

Council for Opportunity in Education

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