



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

Congressional

SUMMER

RECESS

PACKET

2021



July 21, 2021

Dear TRIO Colleagues:

It's time to show our strength and resilience during these challenging times. Over the next several weeks, all TRIO personnel, students, parents, alumni, and other supporters must demonstrate that TRIO Works! To do this, we must make our voices heard. COE is challenging the TRIO community to host as many local or virtual visits with Representatives and Senators as possible **between August 1 and September 12**, while they are back home in their States and Districts for the Summer Congressional Recess.

To help you achieve this goal, this Summer Recess Packet includes the following:

- Tips for planning a successful local visit with Members of Congress (Page 3)
- Sample in-person meeting request (Page 4)
- Sample Virtual meeting request email (Page 5)
- Lobby Visit Roadmap (Page 6)
- Examples of outreach efforts by the TRIO Community (Page 7)
- List of local events hosted Members of Congress (Page 10)

We encourage you to take advantage of the resources of this Summer Congressional Recess Packet, and to use the contact information for all congressional [education staffers and schedulers by state and district](#). Let us know if you are planning or have already met with your Members of Congress so we can highlight your advocacy! Just send a quick report including your name, title, TRIO program, state, type of meeting (site visit, one-on-one, townhall, etc.) and the name of the Representative or Senator to stephanie.salvador@coenet.org. Any questions? Feel free to contact Jonathan Elkin (jonathan.elkin@coenet.org) or Stephanie Salvador (stephanie.salvador@coenet.org) via e-mail or phone (202-347-7430).

Let's remind your Members of Congress that TRIO WORKS!!!

Help Turn Your Member of Congress into a TRIO Champion!

Follow these simple steps to plan a successful on-site visit and allow your Member of Congress to see TRIO programs and students in action!

PLANNING THE VISIT

- **Talk to your institution's Government Relations/Public Affairs Office about inviting your Member of Congress to Campus.** Be sure to involve your institutional officers to ensure campus buy-in and support of your idea. Quite often, they will want to assist in the planning to ensure a successful visit by your Member of Congress.
- **Find out when your Member of Congress is available to visit.** Be flexible. Members of Congress' schedules fill up quickly while at home. Take care to plan your event based on the legislator's availability. Contact your legislator's congressional scheduler to find out precisely when your Member of Congress might be available to visit. (COE can help with this, too!)
- **Send an official invitation to your Member of Congress.** E-mail a letter inviting your Member of Congress to visit. ([A sample letter is available here.](#)) COE can provide you with the contact information for the scheduler of your Member of Congress. COE can also assist you in following up with the legislator's Washington, D.C. office.
- **Follow up, follow up, follow up!** If you haven't heard back in a few days – a week at most – be sure to follow up on your request to finalize a time and date for the big day!

DURING THE VISIT

- **TRIO, TRIO, Everywhere TRIO!** Be sure to outfit all of the students in TRIO hats, pins, stickers, etc. You may even want to present the Member of Congress with his/her own "TRIO Works" button!
- **Make the Member of Congress feel welcome.** Be sure to have students greet your legislator when he or she arrives on campus and to escort him/her to the day's event site. You may even wish to have the students prepare signs or a banner to welcome your guest to the program. Also, legislators often bring their own staff members to accompany them to such events. Be certain to treat them with the same respect as the legislators themselves—for the staff often play a critical role in whether a legislator supports an issue or not!
- **Have an agenda.** Craft a formal program agenda that prioritizes the legislator's time. Ideally, the Member of Congress should speak first. The program should also include remarks by any institutional officials and program participants.
- **Showcase students and alumni.** Now is the time to let your students and their stories shine! Hand-pick student and alumni representatives to share testimonials about their experience in TRIO. Be sure to limit each student to two to five minutes. If at all possible, allow time for the Member of Congress to speak directly *with* the students and alumni.

AFTER THE VISIT

- **Publicize the event.** Share pictures from the event with COE and on social media using the hashtag #TRIOWORKS. Be sure to ["tag" your Member of Congress on social media](#) and thank him/her for visiting.
- **Send a thank you letter.** Be sure to send a follow up letter thanking your Member of Congress for taking the time to visit your program. (You may even want to have students hand-write thank you notes for the legislator.) It would be wonderful to include pictures from the event with your message(s).
- **Share any media coverage with COE.** Let us highlight and celebrate your work! We will be sure to feature your efforts in our Weekly Summary and social media outlets.
- **Keep the relationship going!** After a successful visit, be sure to maintain contact with your Member of Congress and his/her staff. Provide the office with periodic updates on student successes and other events happening at your program. Remember, it's better to make a friend before you need a friend!

SAMPLE IN-PERSON MEETING REQUEST LETTER

[DATE]

The Honorable [SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE NAME]

U.S. [SENATE] or [HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES]

[ADDRESS]

Attn: [SCHEDULER NAME] and [EDUCATION LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT NAME]

Dear [SCHEDULER NAME] and [EDUCATION LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT NAME]:

My name is [NAME] and I am the [TITLE] for the [TRIO PROGRAM] at [INSTITUTION]. Over the years we have had a number of students come through our program and go on to earn college degrees. I would very much like to meet with [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE NAME] at [his/her] office on [DATE] and also bring along [STUDENTS/ALUMNI/TRIO SUPPORTERS] to discuss the impact of this program in their lives. I expect to bring about [NUMBER] individuals with me to the meeting.

Click to view a list of our local TRIO programs by [State](#) or [District](#), with funding levels and students served at each program.

I would appreciate your feedback to let me know if [SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE NAME] and/or a member of [his/her] staff would be able to meet with us during the requested time or any other time that is convenient. Thank you for your assistance with this request.

Sincerely,

[Name, National/Regional/ State TRIO leadership title, Institution title, Institution, location]

SAMPLE VIRTUAL MEETING REQUEST EMAIL

Subject: COVID-19 virtual meeting request with Senator/Representative [last name] [Suggested Date(s) in the subject line]

Dear [Scheduler name] and [Education Legislative Assistant name],

I hope you are doing well. My name is [INSERT NAME], I am a TRIO college access professional from [institution and state]. TRIO supports more than 800,000 students nationwide, including over [INSERT NUMBER OF TRIO PROGRAMS IN YOUR STATE] in [INSERT STATE NAME]. Click to view a list of our local TRIO programs by [State](#) or [District](#), with funding levels and students served at each program.

I would like to schedule a video meeting with Senator/Representative [LAST NAME] for our TRIO students to share their educational experience during COVID-19.

We would be available on **SUGGESTED DATES AND/OR TIME WINDOWS.**

Please let me know which time frame works best for you.

In terms of logistics, please let me know if you have a preferred software for a videoconference. Alternatively, we can use [my work Zoom or other video conference account. We have found recently that most Hill offices prefer the requesting organization to set up the video conference to save time, with the exception that some offices forbid Zoom due to security reasons. Nearly all Senate offices have their own Skype or WebEx video accounts but may be reluctant to take the time to set up the meeting.]

Thank you very much and I look forward to meeting you virtually.

Sincerely,

[Name, National/Regional/ State TRIO leadership title, Institution title, Institution, location]

2021 Lobby Visit Roadmap and Agenda

1. **Introduce yourselves.** Starting with the Team Leader (or his/her designated representative), begin a round of introductions. Share who you are and your relevant TRIO affiliation (e.g., “*My name is Jim Smith and I’m the Director of the Educational Opportunity Program hosted by New State University.*”).
2. **Say “thank you.”** The Team Leader (or his/her designated representative) should thank the legislator and his/her staff for taking the time to meet – given the COVID-19 crisis and staff working from home. Also, if a returning Member of Congress, thank the legislator and his/her staff for their past support of TRIO. Look up whether your Members of Congress signed onto the annual TRIO funding letter [here](#).
3. **Introduce or Refresh TRIO.** If you’re meeting with a new Member of Congress or a new congressional staffer who is unfamiliar with TRIO, take a few moments to explain how TRIO works on your campus/in your community to increase college access and success for low-income, first-generation students. Even experienced staffers could use a refresher, especially with district and state-level data.
4. **Tell your stories.** Designated team members will offer stories about the impact of TRIO and the immediate harm low-income students are facing in the COVID-19 crisis.
5. **TRIO students graduate!** Share with the legislator or staffer that a new report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education is only the latest to show that TRIO students persist, complete credits, and graduate at higher rates than nonparticipants with similar characteristics.
6. **Make the Ask.** The Team Leader (or his/her designated representative) should explain that you are here to request that the Member of Congress ***Support a funding increase for TRIO in FY 2022***. Explain that the 18% increase of \$200.8 million in FY 2022 will help meet the huge increase in need for TRIO services as COVID-19 increases unemployment and poverty. This historic increase could serve nearly 1 million students next year.
7. **Respond to follow-up questions and listen.** Ask for and listen to responses to your request.
8. **Repeat the Ask and include the funding letter, if applicable.** The designated team member should remind the legislator and their staff that past support has helped make these stories possible. The team member should also ask if the legislator would be willing to sign the TRIO funding request letter for FY 2021 and prioritize TRIO within their individual submission to the Appropriations Committee.
9. **Share hard copies of information.** If meeting in person, the designated team member should give copies of information about TRIO in the State/District, program-level data, and any other handouts to the congressional staff (NOT the legislator). Highlight any program-specific information you have.
10. **Express thanks.** The Team Leader (or his/her designated representative) should thank the legislator and/or staffer for taking the time to meet.
11. **Follow up with the staff.** The Team Leader (or his/her designated representative) should follow-up with an e-mail to the staff that includes (1) another thanks for the meeting, (2) electronic copies of all materials, and (3) an inquiry as to when the legislator and/or staff would be able to visit a program within the next six months. (This follow-up message should be sent within three days.)

Examples of TRIO Advocacy from Across the Community

Specific examples of TRIO students and staff making the most out of opportunities to promote TRIO!

SPOTLIGHT: CALIFORNIA

Horacio Aceves, Assistant Director of the Upward Bound program at Occidental College, invited Congressman Jimmy Gomez (CA-34) to visit campus and meet students. (They followed all campus protocols for a safe in-person visit during the COVID-19 pandemic.) During the meeting, Congressman Gomez pledged to support TRIO funding. The Congressman tweeted a picture of his visit out to his thousands of followers on twitter!



Rep. Jimmy Gomez  @RepJimmyGo... · 10h ...

Honored to swing by @Occidental yesterday to address this year's senior class from Upward Bound — a college prep program for low-income, first-generation students.

Incredibly proud of these #CA34 students from Franklin, Lincoln, Wilson, and Belmont HS for all their hard work!



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SPOTLIGHT: KANSAS

As part of the National Student Leadership Congress, Emporia State University high school TRIO students met virtually with then-Representative Roger Marshall, M.D. (R-KS-1), while he was running for Senate. The students told the Congressman about their educational experience in COVID-19 and how TRIO has helped. The Congressman shared how he himself was a first-generation college graduate and overcame obstacles to eventually complete medical school and run for office. After the Congressman left the meeting, students asked staff member Zach Lowry about his own college experience and how he got involved in politics. Zach gave the students info on how to intern in the Senator's Kansas or DC offices. Fast forward and now Roger Marshall is a U.S. Senator – and he has been a strong supporter of TRIO funding in the Senate! [Watch Senator Marshall promote TRIO](#) during the confirmation hearing of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.



SPOTLIGHT: ARKANSAS

Ronda McLelland, a COE Board Member and Director of Student Support Services at the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, highlights her TRIO students during the National Student Leadership Congress. Students can share their stories and accomplishments during Congressional meetings. Invite your students to participate virtually by sending them the meeting details and login information in advance. Also offer to practice and rehearse with them in advance if they would like to do so.



SPOTLIGHT: NEVADA

Kimberly Williams, Ph.D. and Nevada TRIO met with Congresswoman Susie Lee (D-NV), who is a member of the House Appropriations Committee that funds TRIO annually. The Congresswoman agreed to join the TRIO Caucus right during the call! Afterward, she tweeted out a picture of their meeting to her thousands of followers. Great work, Nevada TRIO!



Rep. Susie Lee ✓
@RepSusieLee

Great talking with @UNLVTheCenter about supporting the TRIO Training Institute and providing direct services and assistance to Nevada students during #COVID19.

I'm glad we've been able to get federal support to our higher ed system, but we've got more work to do.



These are just a handful of the examples of advocacy happening across the country! Please be sure to keep the Government Relations team informed of your efforts by contacting Jonathan Elkin (jonathan.elkin@coenet.org) or Stephanie Salvador (Stephanie.salvador@coenet.org) by e-mail or phone (202.347.7430).

NOTE: The Council for Opportunity in Education is a non-profit, non-partisan organization and, as such, does not endorse any candidates or political parties. The piece above is for informational purposes only and should not be construed otherwise.

Town Hall Events Hosted by Members of Congress

Below you will find a sample of upcoming virtual or in-person town hall events that will be sponsored by Members of Congress. If your legislator is not listed, please be sure to contact them and ask where s/he will be appearing virtually or locally over the next several weeks. Contact information for all Members of Congress is available via the COE website at http://www.coenet.org/congress_web.shtml#/legislators. A partial list of submitted town halls can be found at the Town Hall Project's website (<https://townhallproject.com>).



Rep. Bruce Westerman (Republican) AR-4

- Tue, Jul 27 2021
- 8:00 PM CDT
- Telephone Town Hall
- Ozark, AR 72949



Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (Democratic) OR-1

- Tue, Aug 3 2021
- 11:00 AM PDT
- Telephone Town Hall
- Beaverton, OR 97005

To schedule the call and for updates on Town Hall schedule check: <https://bonamici.house.gov/>



Rep. Joe Neguse (Democratic) CO-2

- Sat, Aug 7 2021
- 10:00 AM MDT
- Service Town Hall
- Chautauqua, Boulder, CO



Rep. John Curtis (Republican) UT-3

- Mon, Aug 30 2021
- 6:00 PM MDT
- Cedar Hills Town Hall
- The Vista at Cedar Hills Golf Club
- Clubhouse Dr, Cedar Hills, UT 84062



Rep. John Curtis (Republican) UT-3

- Tue, Aug 31 2021
- 6:00 PM MDT
- Woodland Hills Town Hall Meeting
- Summit Creek Community Center
- 770 Nebo Cir, Salem, UT 84653



Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (Democratic) OR-1

- Thu, Sep 9 2021
- 6:00 PM PDT
- Telephone Town Hall
- Beaverton, OR 97005

To schedule the call and for updates on Town Hall schedule check: <https://bonamici.house.gov/>