COE Welcomes New Leaders in Public Policy and Communications. Jonathan Elkin, a longstanding advocate of TRIO during his days on Capitol Hill working for legislators Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), joins COE from the DC Office of the State Superintendent to serve as COE’s Vice President of Public Policy. Meanwhile, Terrance Hamm leaves the National League of Cities to take on the role of Associate Vice President of Communications and Marketing.

Students and Alumni Celebrate National TRIO Day. Each year, communities across the country commemorate the annual achievements of the students and alumni of the Federal TRIO Programs on the fourth Saturday in February, which Congress formally recognized as National TRIO Day in 1986. On February 21, 2020, thousands of students at institutions nationwide take part in service activities, rallies, and other celebrations to recognize the contributions of low-income, first-generation college students and graduates to their communities.

COE Hosts First Virtual Policy Seminar. As the entire country begins to quarantine in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, COE quickly pivots to transition its annual Policy Seminar into a fully virtual experience. Over 700 college access and success professionals participate in the event, which includes video messages by Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), and Representatives Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Mike Simpson (R-ID). The seminar also includes interactive sessions with the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. At the center of the Policy Seminar are more than 225 virtual Hill visits with Members of Congress and their staff.

COE Responds to Student Need by a Launching a Robust Professional Development Webinar Series. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, COE begins hosting a series of free and paid webinars titled “Connect, Discuss, Learn” and “No Better Time to Reinvent Your Program” to ensure that services to TRIO students continue during this time of crisis. These webinars, which take place several times a week throughout the spring, summer, and fall, bring people together as the pandemic shuts down schools and communities. Trusted practitioners and experts share innovative and creative ways to approach student services, and professionals lean on each other to stay strong through this time.
**2020 Year in Review**

**May 2020**

**COE Partners with Mid-Eastern Association to Host Presidential Candidate Forum.** COE and the Mid-Eastern Association for Educational Opportunity Program Personnel (MAEOPP) hosts a joint Presidential Candidate Forum. Representatives from both major presidential campaigns participate in the forum. The forum features Carmel Martin, Senior Advisor for Joe Biden’s campaign and Paris Dennard, Senior Communications Advisor for Black Media Affairs for the Republican National Committee. The panelists discuss the presidential candidates’ education platforms and respond to questions submitted by members of the TRIO community.

**COE Establishes TRIO STEAM Club.** Determined to overcome instructional obstacles and connect TRIO participants, COE establishes the TRIO STEAM Club with the support of Comcast Internet Essentials. In the STEAM Club, pre-college program professionals provide hands-on math and science lessons for their students by virtually partnering with other pre-college programs and business mentors.

**Pell Institute Releases the 2020 Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States Report.** COE’s research arm, the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, along with the Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy at the University of Pennsylvania (“PennAHEAD”), releases the seventh edition of the Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States — 2020 Historical Trend Report and conducts an online Shared Solutions Dialogue. The 2020 report and data sheets analyze college entrance and completion by family income, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity from 1970 to the present. The 2020 report also includes state-level data on indices of access and equity.

**June 2020**

**Pell Institute Co-Hosts the 37th Annual Student Financial Aid Research Network Conference with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.** Traditionally a two-day, intimate in-person conference, this year SFARN moves online and draws over 180 participants. Session topics address issues such as trends in tuition discounting, the impact of credit hour policies on college completion, and the effect of different College Promise models. Presentations from the SFARN conference are available here.

**COE and Partner Organizations Work to Assure COVID-19 Does Not Negatively Impact Diverse Enrollment in Graduate Education.** COE begins partnering with the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Council for Historically Black Graduate Schools on a study to address the challenges for McNair graduate students and directors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is supported in part by the National Science Foundation. COE also begins work with CGS to enable McNair students and staff to remain on course through graduate school admission in spite of the pandemic.
2020 Year in Review

More Than 100 TRIO Students Debate National Priorities at Virtual National Student Leadership Congress. Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Talent Search students meet virtually with more than 100 congressional offices and take part in workshops on topics such as diversity and inclusion, the selective college application process, and a bipartisan panel on running for political office. The centerpiece of the event is the Mock Congress, during which students debate issues like whether the District of Columbia and/or Puerto Rico should be granted statehood, what types of speech should be considered protected as “free speech” and whether immunization should be nationally mandated.

July 2020

COE Relocates. COE moves to the fourth floor in the same building at 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW. This newly-renovated suite provides more efficient use of space and upgraded technology. To adapt to the pandemic, the design also includes modern installations to protect the health of employees returning to work in the office.

August 2020

Democratic Convention Makes Commitment to Double TRIO in Party Platform. For the first time, a national party calls for doubling funding for TRIO Programs – in concert with doubling funding for the Pell Grant program. This recommendation occurs as a direct result of the actions of TRIO professionals organized at the state level—particularly in Vermont, Ohio, New Mexico, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, and New York.

September 2020

COE’s 39th Annual Conference Goes Virtual. A full program of dynamic speakers, interactive sessions and fun virtual receptions keep over 2,000 college access and success professionals engaged from September 21-23. Since the conference was originally slated to take place in San Antonio, it showcases music, cultural sites, and TRIO projects from the San Antonio area. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas challenges participants to consider their perceptions of diversity and inclusion and the implications of those views on immigration and refugee policy in the opening plenary session. His remarks set the tone for a conference that demands community engagement and introspection during sessions such as “TRIO and the Black Lives Matter Movement,” “Racial Justice Framework in TRIO Programs,” and “First-Generation v. First-Generation: Recruiting and Serving the Most Challenging Students.”
2020 Year in Review

October 2020

COE Continues to Promote International Access. COE concludes its series of Global Access to Postsecondary Education (“GAPS”) webinars, which focus on the experiences of students, faculty and administrators from underrepresented groups in Brazil, Great Britain, Jamaica, South Africa and the U.S. Presenters share experiences during COVID-19 and recommend steps to make postsecondary education more equitable and inclusive post-COVID. More than 150 McNair and Student Support Services students and staff participate.

November 2020

Thousands Take Part in National First-Generation College Celebration Day and Welcome First-Generation President-Elect Biden. COE continues to work in partnership with NASPA’s First-generation Center for Student Success in promoting innovative First-Generation College Celebrations each year. Given the challenges of the pandemic, institutions employ more creative tactics to assure inclusion for students both living on campus and studying remotely. From a First-Gen Drive-in-Movie night to workshops on historical research on black male development, these events coincide with the election of the most recent first-generation college graduate as President.

December 2020

Over 75 TRIO Alumni Now Serving as Faculty Re-envision Research on College Access and Success. Facilitated by Waldo Johnson of the University of Chicago and Shaun Harper of the University of Southern California, COE convenes working groups of faculty with first-hand knowledge of college access and success programs and the obstacles facing low-income and first-generation students. Participants begin the process of ensuring their voices are central to research on equity and diversity.

The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) is a nonprofit organization, established in 1981, dedicated to furthering the expansion of college opportunities for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities. Through its myriad membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host federal TRIO programs that help more than 800,000 low-income students and students with disabilities each year receive college access and retention services.

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 overcome economic, social, academic, and cultural barriers to higher education. TRIO services include: assistance in choosing a college and tutoring; personal, financial, and 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 assistance in high school or assistance to reenter high school or college.