

# 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 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 below.) Find the contact information for your Members of Congress's scheduler and legislative education assistants at <https://tinyurl.com/HillContacts2022>. 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 students in TRIO with hats, pins, stickers, etc. You may even want to present the Member of Congress with their own "TRIO Works" button!
- **Make the Member of Congress feel welcome.** Be sure to have students greet your legislator when they arrive on campus and escort them 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 staff members to accompany them to such events. Be sure 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 a plan.** 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 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 them 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 their 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 Congressional Meeting Request Letter

[DATE]

[Look up congressional contact info here.](#)

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 our program on [DATE]. We will have [STUDENTS/ALUMNI/TRIO SUPPORTERS] present to discuss the impact of this program in their lives.

Are you available for a program visit during these dates? [Note to TRIO staff: Try to suggest weekend dates or when the House or Senate will be back home on recess. Examples include House recess March 24-27, 2022, or both House and Senate recess April 9-24, 2022. [View House and Senate 2022 calendars here.](#)]

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

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]  
[TRIO Program, i.e. Upward Bound]  
[Institution]  
[City, State, ZIP]

## 2022 Congressional Visit Roadmap and Agenda

1. **Introduce yourselves.** Starting with the Team Leader (or their 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 their designated Representative) should thank the legislator and their staff for taking the time to meet – given the COVID-19 crisis and staff working from home. Also, if the legislator is a returning Member of Congress, thank them for continuing to support TRIO.
3. **Introduce or refresh TRIO.** 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. Share this [TRIO one-pager](#) and [TRIO by district and state](#). Share your [TRIO State Fact Book](#) and [Program One-Pager](#) (see links for templates to create or update yours).
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. Include specific programs and list local projects in the Representative’s district or Senator’s state.
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. [This factsheet highlights TRIO results.](#)
6. **Make the Ask.** The Team Leader should request the Member of Congress support a \$200M increase in FY23:
  - A. ***Will the Member of Congress support doubling the maximum Pell Grant and doubling TRIO (\$200 million increase per year) over the next five years?*** This investment will help meet the greater need for TRIO services to combat COVID-19 learning loss and drops in college enrollment. This increase could serve more than 1 million students in FY23.
  - B. ***Will the Member of Congress sign the TRIO annual funding letter for FY23?*** House leads include Reps. Gwen Moore (D-WI) and Vicky Hartzler (R-MO). Senate leads are Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Jon Tester (D-MT).
  - C. (If they are willing to request TRIO funding at ANY funding level) ***Will the Member of Congress include TRIO in their top five priorities in the Appropriations database for Labor-HHS-Education?***
  - D. ***Does the Member of Congress have a form I can use to submit a TRIO funding request? We will fill this out with information on how TRIO supports students in the community. Will you email me the form? What is the deadline to submit?*** (Note: COE Public Policy staff can work with you to complete these forms using a [template](#).)
7. **Respond to follow-up questions and listen.** Ask for and listen to responses to your request.
8. **Share hard copies of information.** If meeting in person, the designated team member should give copies of information about TRIO to staffers. Highlight any program-specific information you have.
9. **Express thanks.** Thank the legislator or staffer for taking the time to meet.
10. **Follow up with the staff.** E-mail (1) an additional thanks for the meeting, (2) electronic copies of all materials, and (3) follow-up on the ask. (Send this follow-up message 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: Georgia

University of Georgia TRIO hosted U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA), the first TRIO alum in the Senate, as part of his campus visit (top). To prepare for this, TRIO staff months earlier invited Senator Warnock's DC education staff member, Taylor Ware, to the University of Georgia to meet with students and parents (below).

### TRIO ALUMNUS AND U.S. SENATOR RAPHAEL WARNOCK VISITS UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA TRIO



Council for Opportunity in Education - COE

October 12, 2021 · 🌐

COE thanks Senator [Reverend Raphael Warnock](#) for visiting with [University of Georgia TRIO](#) students today. As the first TRIO alumnus in the U.S. Senate, your help to pay forward is most appreciated. [#TRIOWorks](#)



## Spotlight: Michigan

Hope College's TRIO Upward Bound program hosted Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) for a campus visit with students. Then they hosted a student session on election literacy, featuring Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI), Office of U.S. Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), Office of Rep. Bill Huizenga (R-MI), Ottawa County District Judge Juanita Bocanegra, and many other local elected officials.



Rep. Fred Upton   
@RepFredUpton



Today I met with folks from Hope College's TRIO Upward Bound Program. I have long supported this program that truly makes a difference. TRIO provides resources for students from diverse backgrounds who will be the first in their family to graduate from college. [#TRIOworks!](#)



## Spotlight: Rhode Island

Community College of Rhode Island hosted Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-ED that funds TRIO. From the college's Dean of Opportunity and Outreach: "CCRI's TRIO teams did an amazing job identifying and preparing participants and every student present hit a home run. I was so pleased that members of the college's senior leadership team and marketing were also present." From TRIO leader Stephanie Cruz: "The day was quite uplifting. The Senator spent an hour with the students. The President, our VP and Dean were all there. The room was overflowing. When he closed he remarked that he 'saw America' in the room. Not just in diversity, which was astounding (from age, background, field of study, country of origin, gender, etc.) but the fact that the future of RI and America and the importance of education. Said the afternoon was reaffirming and referenced President Lincoln on the role of education in the 'fair chance in the race of life.'"

Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) 16h

Yesterday, CCRI welcomed Senator Jack Reed to the Liston Campus to meet with and hear from students who are part of the college's TRIO programs.

With the support of Senator Reed, CCRI was recently awarded \$7.4 million in U.S. Department of Education TRIO grants to support low-income, first generation, and disabled students through the Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), Educational Talent Search (ETS), and ACCESS and ACCESS Plus programs. Thanks for visiting, Senator!



These are just a handful of examples of advocacy happening across the country! Please be sure to keep the COE public policy team informed of your efforts by contacting Jonathan Elkin ([jonathan.elkin@coenet.org](mailto:jonathan.elkin@coenet.org)) or Zach Farmer ([zach.farmer@coenet.org](mailto:zach.farmer@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.**

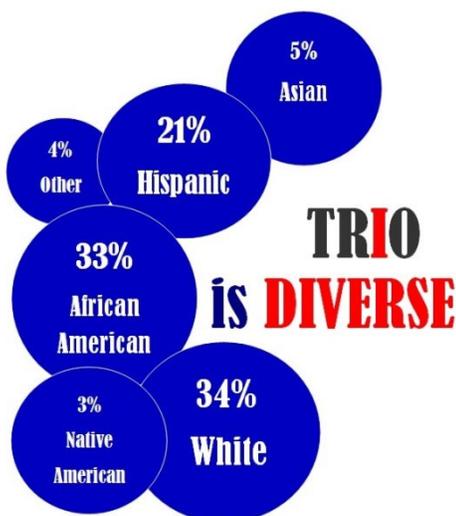
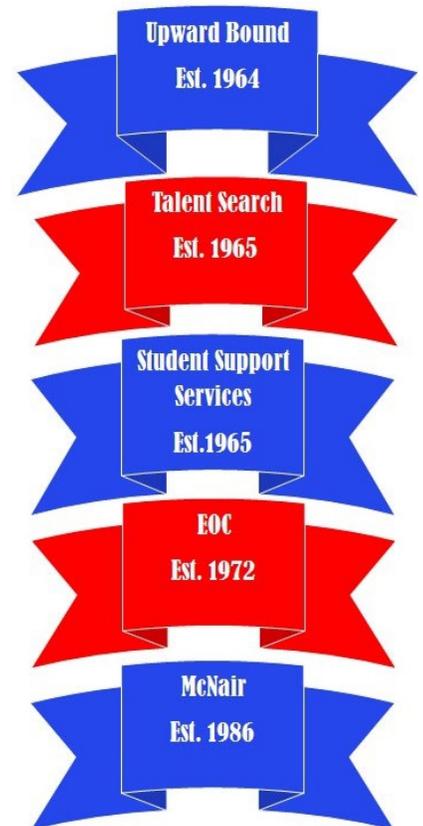
# TRIO

**Talent Search:** Talent Search focuses on early intervention, working with students deemed to have “college potential” in grades 6-12. Students receive information about college admissions, scholarships, and various student financial aid programs.

**Upward Bound:** Upward Bound is an intensive intervention program that prepares students for higher education through various enrichment courses. These campus-based programs provide students with instruction in literature, composition, mathematics, science, and foreign language during the school year and during the summer. Upward Bound also provides intensive mentoring and support for students as they prepare for college entrance exams and tackle admission applications, financial aid, and scholarship forms.

**Upward Bound Math/Science:** Using a model similar to the classic Upward Bound program, Upward Bound Math/Science aims to strengthen academic preparedness in math, science, and technology. The program assists students in a rigorous math and science curriculum in high school to encourage and enable them to major in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines in college.

**Veterans Upward Bound:** Veterans Upward Bound provides a unique service to veterans returning to college, aiding them in the transition process through intensive basic skills development and short-term remedial courses. Additionally, participants receive assistance in navigating the services offered by Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans associations, and other organizations that aid veterans.



**Student Support Services:** Student Support Services programs help low-income and first-generation students, as well as students with disabilities, to successfully begin and stay in college. Participants receive tutoring, counseling, and remedial instruction in order to achieve their goals of college completion. Colleges can also apply for additional targeted SSS grants for students with disabilities, who are English Language Learners, in STEM, who are Veterans, and who are in Teacher Education.

**Educational Opportunity Centers:** Educational Opportunity Centers target displaced or underemployed workers from low-income families. These centers help students achieve their high school equivalency and/or pursue postsecondary education options, guiding them through the often confusing admissions and financial aid processes.

**Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement:** The McNair program encourages and prepares low-income and minority students for doctoral study and to pursue careers in college teaching. The McNair program provides

research opportunities and faculty mentoring.

For more information about the Federal TRIO Programs, please e-mail Jonathan Elkin ([jonathan.elkin@coenet.org](mailto:jonathan.elkin@coenet.org)) or Zach Farmer ([zach.farmer@coenet.org](mailto:zach.farmer@coenet.org)) or call 202.347.7430.