

# EQUALITY



TRIO alumna and U.S. House of Representatives Clerk Cheryl Johnson

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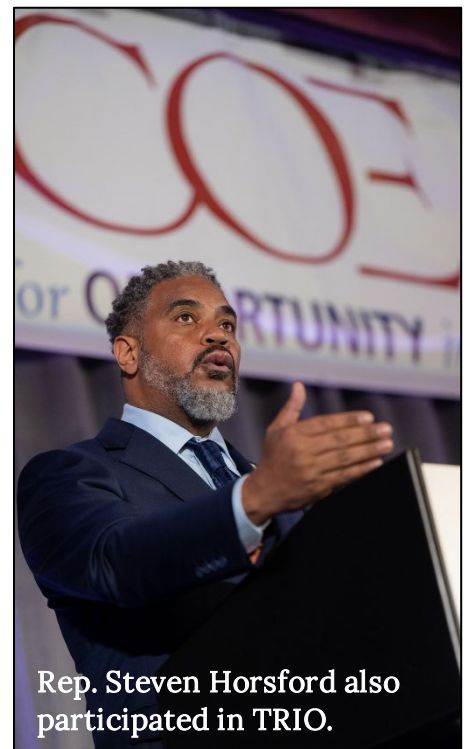
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## POLICY SEMINAR 2023

### **Legislative Conference Features History-Making Clerk and Leaders from Education Department and Congress**

To kick off the legislative conference portion of the 2023 Policy Seminar, TRIO alumna and U.S. House of Representatives Clerk Cheryl Johnson provided an insider's view of Capitol Hill via an interview with COE Executive Vice President Kimberly Jones.



Rep. Steven Horsford also participated in TRIO.

The audience also welcomed TRIO alumnus and Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Rep. **Steven Horsford** (D-NV-04). TRIO alumnus and former House Rep. **Henry Bonilla** introduced the audience to his congressional successor, a military veteran and House appropriator, Rep. **Tony Gonzales** (R-TX-23).

Undersecretary **James Kvaal** provided insight into higher education in the Biden Administration’s Fiscal Year 2024 budget proposal. Secretary Kvaal leads the **U.S. Department of Education’s (ED)** work on higher education, student financial aid, and career and adult education. His work has led to millions of borrowers receiving student loan forgiveness, more affordable repayment plans for future students, and more robust safeguards against future unaffordable loans. Senator **Joe Manchin** (D-WV) sent video remarks.

SEMINAR ON RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

During the ED Seminar, COE hosted **CJ Powell**, Chief of Staff in the Office of Postsecondary Education, and **Gaby Watts**, Senior Director of Student Service. Watts, who took the helm of the TRIO and GEAR UP division in 2021, illustrated her division's past, present, and future efforts in its oversight of TRIO. Long-time TRIO advocate **Linda Byrd-Johnson**, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs, joined Ms. Watts and gave brief remarks during Monday’s luncheon. ■



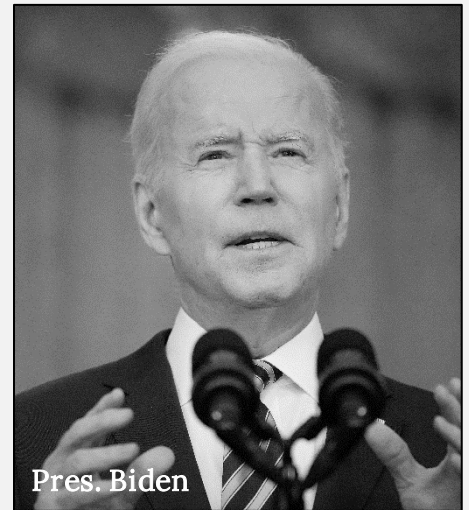
COE President Maureen Hoyler and ED Under Secretary James Kvaal

APPROPRIATIONS

## Biden-Harris Administration Proposed a Nine Percent Increase for TRIO in FY24

In March, the **Biden-Harris Administration** released its budget request to Congress for FY24 (Program Year 2024-2025). This proposal asks Congress to provide a \$107 million (or 9%) funding increase for TRIO, for a total proposed appropriation of \$1.3 billion in FY24.

The Administration’s budget would also increase the maximum **Pell Grant** by \$820 (or 11%), for a total maximum Pell Grant award of \$8,215. Additionally, the Administration is requesting a \$20 million (or 5%) funding increase for **GEAR UP**,



Pres. Biden

for a total proposed appropriation of \$408 million. The Administration has proposed “flat funding” the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and the Federal Work-Study grants at the FY2023 levels of \$910 million and \$1.23 billion, respectively.

COE applauds this proposed increase as it would allow TRIO programs to move closer to its goal of serving 1 million students and provide much-needed cost-of-living increases for all current programs to serve students more intensively.





Participants greet Rep. Tony Gonzales before his remarks.

POLICY SEMINAR 2023

## Marching Towards One Million

At COE's Policy Seminar, COE President **Maureen Hoyler** reminded attendees why their presence on Capitol Hill is critical: The people enrolled in TRIO programs don't have as many voices raised on their behalf as many other groups.

Congress, Hoyler reminded those listening, "found billions to save the tech world in a weekend. They will be heard. The defense contractors will be heard, too.

They have plenty of lobbyists and constituents." Baby boomers and those who depend on Social Security are protected, too, she said.

"So, who does that leave? It leaves the students in your programs, the young people who will run this country. Nobody else," Hoyler said. "You're probably the only group who will say anything about young adults, high school students, or middle school students. You are the only ones representing them."

Hoyler went on to tell them that they had two missions. One is to



ask for **\$107 million to get the TRIO budget to \$1.3 billion**. The other is to demand that education programs be protected against mandated across-the-board budget cuts. The latter message is essential considering the current budget stalemate, Hoyler stated.

Congress must raise the debt ceiling to protect the credit of the United States, and there is concern that to get an agreement to raise it, across-the-board budget cuts affecting education will be instituted. Congress has only reduced TRIO funding twice, Hoyler said; in both instances, this resulted from mandated cuts across all discretionary government programs.

Hoyler reminded attendees that congressional visits are not the time to argue, no matter how passionate one is about TRIO; instead, it's the time to start a relationship. And visits would be more effective if there were a follow-up a month or two afterward--primarily because of the message they will be bringing. "You get a student in front of a Member [of Congress], and it becomes hard for them to say 'No, this young person, this veteran, this underemployed person doesn't have a right to make his or her life better.'" ■



[Click here to watch remarks from President Maureen Hoyler](#)



COE Director of Alumni Relations Tommy Walls



TRIO alumni pose for a group photograph at the reception.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT  
**TRIO Alumna Cheryl Johnson: “Your Voice and Participation Matter”**



Early in January, the entire nation got to know **Cheryl Johnson**, the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, as she ran the proceedings through days of live television and 15 votes for the Speaker of the House. Before the 11th vote, the entire chamber rose to give her a rare bipartisan standing ovation for her serene even-handedness in leading the House without an elected leader. Johnson is a graduate of the **University of Iowa**, where she

participated in **Student Support Services** and **Howard University School of Law**. She grew up in Gretna, Louisiana. During the Policy Seminar, she said she gave “so much credit” for where she is today to her first exposure to TRIO -- the **Upward Bound** program at **Loyola University in New Orleans**. Every Saturday, she said she boarded a ferry, a bus, and a streetcar to arrive at her program five minutes early, for she was told, “If you are early, you are on time. If you are on time, you are late.’ So, I was never late.” Her advice to the members preparing for visits to **Capitol Hill** was simple. “Spend a small amount of time with Members who agree with you but spend most of your time with those who disagree. You are only here for one day. Go to those Members who are staunchly opposed to what you are advocating for. Give them examples. Tell them about the impact,” she said. “Your voice and participation do matter and does make a difference.” ■

ICYMI  
**Photos from the March National TRIO Alumni Association Reception**







## U.S. Rep. Steven Horsford Knows About Challenges

TRIO alum Rep. Steven Horsford (D-NV-4), the current Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, is the first in his family to get a college degree. “It took me a long time to finish a college degree, but I never gave up,” he said, recalling his youth as the son of a single mom.

His mother immigrated to the U.S. from Trinidad as a 12-year-old. The family worked hard to give him the opportunity.

College, he said, “is a lifetime of promise, wage gain, wealth creation, and legacy building. TRIO and programs like it are what bring our country together. So, your advocacy matters,” he said.

“Let’s just make college affordable for everyone; then we would not have to deal with the student loan crisis and the spiraling effect that has on people, their promise, and opportunity.” ■

### FOR THE CLASS OF 2023 As Graduation Season Nears, Be Sure to Plan Your TRIO Celebration

Here are some tips to get you started:

1. **Determine the date and time of the ceremony.** The date and time should be convenient for the graduates, faculty, and families. Consider any conflicts with other events on campus or in the surrounding area.
2. **Identify the location.** Consider the number of graduates, the size of the venue, and the accessibility of the location. Reserve the space and confirm availability for the day of the event.
3. **Decide on the ceremony’s format.** Will it be a traditional ceremony with speeches and the conferring of certificates? Will there be guest speakers or special presentations?
4. **Plan the program.** Plan the details once you have decided on the ceremony format. Select the speakers and their topics, determine the order of events, and decide on the length of the ceremony.
5. **Decide if you want a graduation speaker.** Consider alumni, faculty members, or other individuals with connections to the school or the graduates.
6. **Connect them with other program alumni.** Ronda McLelland, Director of Student Support Services at the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, has her students register to join the [National TRIO Alumni Association](#) as
7. **Order graduation regalia early to ensure they arrive on time.** Graduates will need caps, gowns, and hoods for the college or high school ceremony. [COE offers lapel pins, stoles, and medallions for purchase as well.](#) But if the regalia is to be worn at the institution’s event, it must be covered unless permission is secured in advance.
8. **Plan the logistics.** Coordinate with the school administration, security personnel, and any vendors involved in the ceremony. Arrange for parking, seating, and decorations.
9. **Send invitations.** Send invitations to graduates, faculty, family members, and guests attending the ceremony. Provide them with all necessary details, including the ceremony’s date, time, and location.
10. **Conduct a rehearsal.** Conduct a rehearsal with the graduates to ensure everyone knows what to expect and where to go during the ceremony.
11. **Host the ceremony.** Remember to involve the graduates and faculty in planning as much as possible to ensure a successful event.
12. **Help students say thank you.** Consider creating thank-you notes that your students can give to family members, faculty, and other supporters.

part of her celebration. “Including alumni in your celebration shows your students that they are a part of something bigger,” she says.

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

## Pell Institute Prepares to Unveil Updated Tool Promoting Equitable Program Evaluation



By Terry Vaughan, III, Ph.D.

The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, COE's research arm, is preparing to release a revamped evaluation toolkit focused on helping TRIO programs gather and use program data equitably for improvement, information sharing, and advocacy.

The toolkit will serve as a comprehensive resource to support academic and student affairs professionals in evaluating their programs and initiatives, particularly those aimed at increasing access to higher education and promoting success for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities.

The toolkit offers a variety of resources, such as evaluation guides, data collection tools, evaluation design templates, training materials, self-assessments, and additional resources to enhance the evaluation process.

In March, The Pell Institute held a full-day seminar with TRIO professionals about the evaluation toolkit, offering TRIO professionals the chance to learn new evaluation knowledge and skills. After completing the workshop, all participants reported that they would recommend it to other TRIO staff,

and all felt more equipped to conduct program evaluations. The Pell Institute looks forward to offering this seminar again and providing more support to the TRIO community throughout the year.

TRIO programs can use the toolkit to strengthen their evaluation processes, contributing to student success. The new evaluation toolkit provides TRIO programs with step-by-step guidance and customizable templates to aid equitable evaluation. TRIO programs can use the toolkit to develop evaluation plans, identify evaluation questions, collect and analyze data, and report findings. Using these resources will help TRIO professionals better understand the impact of their programs on student outcomes and make evidence-based decisions to improve program effectiveness. The toolkit will be available later this spring at [pellinstitute.org](https://pellinstitute.org). ■

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## INTERN SPOTLIGHT

## What It's Like to Be on the Other End of Advocacy: 2023 Wolanin Intern Cristalina Ramirez Reflects on Capitol Hill Experience



Cristalina Ramirez

Cristalina Ramirez is the 2023 Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Intern. Ramirez was born and raised in various small towns across the state of Washington but was excited to explore Washington, D.C. this spring.

Ramirez participated in the TRIO Student Support Services program at Washington State University and earned her bachelor's degree in Sociology with minors in Comparative Ethnic Studies, At-risk Youth, and Spanish.

"I credit many of my accomplishments to TRIO because of the fantastic staff who guided and supported me throughout my college career," Ramirez says.

"For COE to select me for this one-of-a-kind congressional internship on its fourth cycle means the absolute world to me, and I am thankful to learn and grow in this new era of my life." As part of the Wolanin Internship,

from February through April, Ramirez worked on Capitol Hill in the office of Representative Pramila Jayapal (D-WA-07).

What's astonished her most, she says, is "being on the other end of advocacy...where I'm taking so many calls, reading so many emails, and meeting with people." Sitting alongside constituents and legislative staffers has taught her that "the most effective communication is starting with a direct ask and then saying why it's important—then people are more inclined to listen."

Ramirez says she would encourage other TRIO students to pursue a D.C. internship. "I gained so much value—knowing how our laws are made, how congressional offices operate, what happens in briefings and hearings. So many people are coming to voice their concerns, needs, and wants—and it's all so powerful. We're all just trying to improve our little corner of the world." ■

# STUDENT OPPORTUNITY

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# LOCAL SPOTLIGHT New VUB Director Has Great Plans for D.C.'s Veterans

By Curtis Addleman



I fell into the TRIO **Veterans Upward Bound**

position. By sheer luck, I was interning for my master's at the **Catholic University of America (CUA)**. CUA had applied for the grant, and now we're lucky enough to be a new TRIO grantee. So, I started in December and have been doing everything I can to get this program up and running to help our veterans in D.C.

We've been fortunate enough to have a robust partnership with the D.C. Mayor's Office, the Mayor's Office of Veterans

Affairs, and the D.C. Department of Employment Services, Veteran Services. We're attempting to create an accurate wraparound service. We all want to set our veterans up for success.

D.C. is unique in that there are just an astronomical number of higher learning institutions within a small radius. We can help bridge that gap from the veteran to the institution. So thus far, we've been able to enroll individuals at **Catholic, Howard, and American Universities** and the **University of Maryland Global Campus**.

Our two most significant areas are Wards 7 and 8. Here is where we find the most individuals who need our assistance. The hardest thing for us is to break down barriers, build trust, and create new relationships.

Many of these individuals don't have a high opinion of the Veterans Affairs Department or

many programs that say they're here to support and help veterans. Once we present a unified, genuine wraparound approach to veterans' care, we can get the unsheltered veterans the assistance they need. Get them access to education to prevent them from ending up in a situation again.

I have contacted the D.C. Department of Corrections so that we can try to do the same for our incarcerated veterans. You have a mission set and direct orders in the military. But once you leave that environment, it's easy to lose purpose, drive, and sense of self. We want to prevent the re-incarceration of our veterans. Let's get them out and see what is happening. When we understand why they ended up there in the first place, we can prevent somebody from re-offending, which is a win for my VUB program and for D.C. ■

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