

# Help Turn Your Member of Congress into aTRIO Champion!

*Follow these simple steps to plan a successful on-site visit and allow your Member of Congress to seeTRIO 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 above.) The contact information for the scheduler and education legislative assistants of your Members of Congress can be found [here](#). 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 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 the 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!

## 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: Alaska

Victoria Smith, Director of Student Support Services at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, hosts Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) on campus for a First-Gen Pinning Ceremony. The First-Gen Pinning Ceremony was part of a multi-day celebration, recognizing National First-Generation College Student Day. Over 50 students and their families participated in the ceremony.



### SPOTLIGHT: Kansas

Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) visits Emporia State University campus on in July 2022 to announce a new program. During his visit, he met with Upward Bound students during their Summer Institute afternoon activities and McNair students. Senator Moran serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, a key position for determining funding levels for TRIO. Senator Moran is also a member of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, which is responsible for TRIO law.



## SPOTLIGHT: Illinois

Senator Durbin (D-IL) shares a video to commemorate National TRIO Day. The Senator has long been a champion for TRIO thanks to the great advocacy work by Illinois TRIO. Senator Durbin serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee and the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, a key position for determining funding levels for TRIO.



## SPOTLIGHT: Nevada

Kimberly Williams, Ph.D. and Nevada TRIO met with Representative Steven Horsford (D-NV-04), who is the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress. The Representative met with current high school and college students, alumni, and faculty. Great work, Nevada TRIO!



These are just a handful of the examples of advocacy happening across the country! Please be sure to keep the COE public policy team informed of your efforts by contacting Diane Shust ([diane.shust@coenet.org](mailto:diane.shust@coenet.org)) or Owen Toomey ([owen.toomey@coenet.org](mailto:owen.toomey@coenet.org)) by e-mail or phone (202) 347-7430.

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