

EQUALITY



At COE's Policy Seminar, Secretary Cardona urged education advocates to action, stressing the importance of advocacy, inclusivity, and collective effort to advance educational equity, drawing from his personal journey as a first-generation college student.

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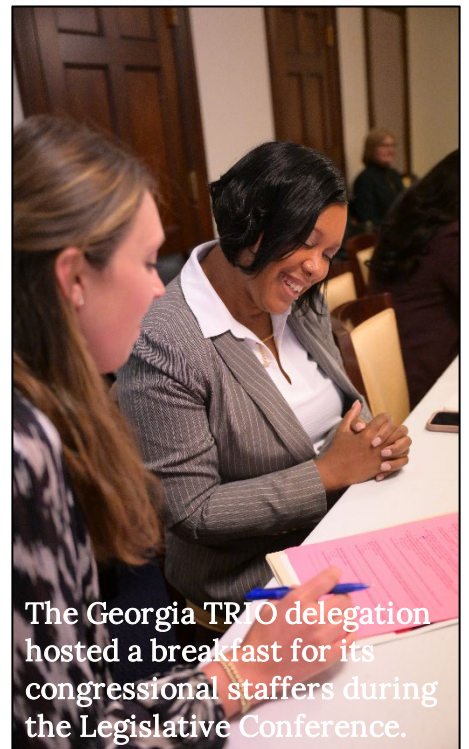
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POLICY SEMINAR 2024

Secretary Miguel Cardona Calls TRIO Advocates to Action

At COE's 43rd annual Policy Seminar, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Miguel Cardona delivered impassioned remarks, praising TRIO educators and advocates for their pivotal role in shaping America's education landscape.



The Georgia TRIO delegation hosted a breakfast for its congressional staffers during the Legislative Conference.

Expressing gratitude for their dedication, he stressed the need for unwavering support, drawing from his journey as a first-generation college student. Secretary Cardona emphasized the importance of advocacy in advancing educational equity and reaffirmed his support for TRIO.

Valuing diversity and multiculturalism, he championed inclusivity and urged educators to empower all students. Despite challenges, he remained resolute in his commitment to students' success, encouraging advocates to share their most impactful stories on Capitol Hill. His words resonated with the over 600 professionals in attendance, igniting a call to action for a more equitable education system.

Secretary Cardona emphasized the need for collective effort in advocating for students' needs, acknowledging the widespread bipartisan support for TRIO on Capitol Hill. Reflecting on his experiences, he highlighted the importance of understanding and addressing the challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds. He stressed that his journey as a first-generation college student and his wife's experiences as an Upward Bound alumna deeply influenced his role as Secretary of Education.

Throughout his conversation with COE President **Kimberly Jones**, Secretary Cardona urged educators and advocates to continue their vital work in educational opportunity, emphasizing the significant impact they have on the lives of students across the country.



Pictured from left: COE President Emeritus Arnold Mitchem, Vice President of Public Policy Diane Shust, President Kimberly Jones, Education Department Secretary Miguel Cardona, COE Senior Vice President Angelica Vialpando, and Executive Vice President Aaron Brown

APPROPRIATIONS

Congress Averts Shutdown, Levels Funding for TRIO and GEAR UP Programs in FY24

In late March, Congress passed the final appropriations bills for FY24, thus avoiding a government shutdown. The "minibus" encompassed six appropriations bills, covering nearly 75 percent of the federal budget. The passage of this legislation marked the end of the very long, drawn-out fight over FY24 funding almost six months into the fiscal year.

Funding levels for the Federal TRIO Programs and GEAR UP remained unchanged at **\$1.191 billion** and **\$388 million**, respectively, due to the Fiscal Responsibility Act capping federal spending at FY23 levels. The agreement maintained a maximum Pell Grant award of



\$7,395 for the 2024-2025 award year. Federal Work-Study received \$1.2 billion, while the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant program (SEOG) received \$910 million.

In April, Congress began the FY25 appropriations process. In FY25, we are asking for a **\$68 million increase** for TRIO, totaling **\$1.26 billion**, with **\$15 million** designated for expanding TRIO Student Support Services programs, **\$5 million** for "national activities," and **\$48 million** for a 4 percent across-the-board inflationary increase to current programs.



Click here to watch remarks from President Kimberly Jones.

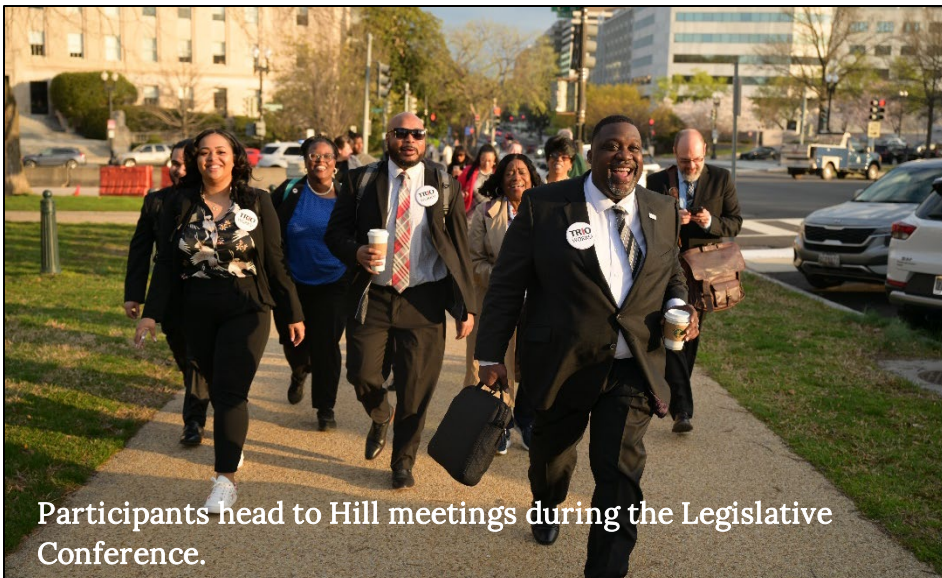
POLICY SEMINAR 2024
**Level Up: Unite
 Voices, Create
 Change.**

President Kimberly Jones set the tone for COE's 43rd annual Legislative Conference, highlighting its historical significance as a platform for TRIO educators' advocacy since COE's inception in 1981. She credited their efforts for the existence of TRIO programs, tracing their roots back to President Johnson's War on Poverty in 1964.

Jones emphasized the unity needed across racial and geographical lines in advocating for low-income, first-generation college students, noting TRIO's role in coining the term "first-generation college student" during the 1980 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Highlighting TRIO's bipartisan support, Jones emphasized its ability to transcend political divides, stressing the importance of sustained advocacy efforts. She called for a **\$68 million increase** in FY25 to support program expansion and inflationary adjustments, rallying

attendees to continue advocating for TRIO's mission beyond the Policy Seminar.

Jones concluded with a firm commitment to ongoing advocacy throughout 2024, symbolizing COE's dedication to advancing the Federal TRIO Programs. Her speech resonated with the audience, demonstrating COE's unwavering commitment to advocacy and collaboration in pursuit of TRIO's goals."



Participants head to Hill meetings during the Legislative Conference.



TRIO alumni pose for a group photograph at the reception.

ICYMI

Photos from the March National TRIO Alumni Association Reception



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

There's a New TRIO Alum in Congress: Rep. Hoyle's Personal Journey and Policy Priorities



In a heartfelt address to TRIO professionals at the Oregon state meeting in March, Congresswoman Val Hoyle (D-OR-04) shared her deep-rooted commitment to critical programs like TRIO and outlined her

priorities for education and economic development. As a freshman representative of a coastal district, she emphasized the challenges her constituents face, including housing affordability and job scarcity, echoing concerns felt across the nation.

Highlighting her journey as a first-generation college student and overcoming dyslexia, Hoyle underscored the transformative impact of the TRIO program in her life.

She credited TRIO Student Support Services at Bunker Hill Community College for equipping her with skills and support that paved the way for her success, ultimately leading to her current position in Congress. "With the TRIO program, it pulled me in. I didn't even go looking for it. It found me. It is why I was able to be successful. It is why I'm in Congress," she said. "There is zero chance that I would be here if I had not been able to get the skills to learn and to see myself as a scholar."



Congressional Staffer Reflects on the Impact of TRIO

By *Emmanuel Kimble*

As a first-generation college student, I attribute much of my educational success to the invaluable support of TRIO programs. Beginning with **TRIO Upward Bound**, I was introduced to a world of possibilities that I hadn't imagined before. TRIO not only prepared me for college but also supported me throughout my undergraduate and graduate degrees, ensuring I stayed on track. The **TRIO Student Support Services** and **TRIO Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Programs** were instrumental in guiding me through every stage of my academic journey. The dedicated staff served as mentors, refusing to let me falter in my pursuit of higher education. From my first visit to Washington D.C. as a 14-year-old **TRIO Upward Bound** student to my current role as a staffer in the U.S. House of Representatives, TRIO has been a driving force, providing me with opportunities and shaping my trajectory. I am forever grateful for its unwavering commitment and support. *Emmanuel Kimble is the professional staffer for the Democratic staff of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.*

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Empowering Futures Through COE's TRIO Career Development Program and Paving the Way to Career Success

By *Tommy Walls, Jr.*



At the heart of COE's **TRIO Career Development Program (TCDP)** is a commitment to reducing income and wealth disparities, ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has access to the tools and resources necessary to thrive in today's competitive job market. Through targeted coaching, supplemental skill development, career exploration, and invaluable connections to employers and professionals, TCDP empowers students to secure competitive jobs as well as embark on fulfilling career trajectories. From mastering elevator pitches to expanding professional networks, TCDP empowers

students to navigate the complexities of the professional world with confidence and determination. Let's delve into the firsthand experiences of students who have been profoundly impacted:

A **TRIO Student Support Services** participant at **Middlesex Community College**, **Guy Bastien**, reflecting on his journey, said, "Choosing to go back to college, to further my education and career as an older adult and parent has been one of the best decisions I made in my life. I have benefited a lot from TCDP. My mentor has been a very helpful person for advice, connections, and resources toward my career goals."

Kaniya Williams, a **TRIO SSS** participant at **Morris College** and legislative intern with **Congressman James Clyburn**, emphasized, "Thanks to the guidance and support of my mentors within TCDP, I've found myself welcomed into rooms and spaces I never would have imagined stepping into otherwise."

So, let's pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive tomorrow, one student, one dream at a time. By becoming talent-sourcing partners for TCDP, **TRIO SSS** and **TRIO McNair Scholar** programs have the chance to further amplify their impact, ensuring that every student has the support they need to soar to new heights of success.

Learn more about COE's Career Opportunities Initiative at coenet.org.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Navigating the Better FAFSA: Insights and Updates from COE's College Initiatives Director



By Woodrow Lewis

COE has been closely monitoring the developments surrounding the 2024-25 **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** process. The recent changes and challenges have brought about significant implications for students, families, and institutions alike. **Federal Student Aid (FSA)** has processed

over 7.3 million FAFSA applications, completely addressing the digital backlog. Unfortunately, there continues to be a backlog in processing paper FAFSA submissions. We look forward to receiving notification when this issue is addressed and sharing the resolution with our TRIO family. In the meantime, **COE urges those who have submitted paper FAFSAs to consider switching to the electronic version to expedite the processing of their applications.** Federal Student Aid also announced that FAFSA corrections are now broadly available for applicants and their contributors after verifying that each stage of the FAFSA processing is thorough and accurate. FSA recently released guidance that enables state grant agencies to disclose FAFSA Filing Status Information to eligible nonprofit college access organizations, including TRIO and GEAR UP grantees.

For those from mixed-status families, the challenges have been particularly pronounced. Issues with the **FSA ID and Direct Data Exchange (DDX)** have complicated the process, leading to delays and frustrations. Steps are being taken to mitigate these challenges and provide support where needed. I'm encouraged by the efforts being made to address these issues, including the allocation of funds toward FAFSA processing support. By deploying personnel with expertise in financial aid to these institutions, the goal is to expedite the processing of applications and minimize delays in producing award letters. As we navigate these challenges together, COE is committed to supporting students and ensuring that they have access to the financial aid they need to pursue their educational goals. Stay informed and stay ahead using the **Better FAFSA Support resources at coenet.org.**

A large teal graphic with a blurred background of a woman in a white lab coat holding a clipboard and talking to a group of people. The text is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

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INTERN SPOTLIGHT

Navigating Capitol Hill: A TRIO Success Story



By Ni'Aisha Banks

As a first-generation, nontraditional college student and single parent from a low-income background, navigating higher education presented numerous challenges. However, the **TRIO Student Support Services** program at **Georgia Southern University** became my beacon of hope, providing essential resources, guidance,

and unwavering support that propelled me toward academic success. Motivated by my passion for policy issues affecting working families, I applied for the **Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship**. This unique opportunity allowed me to delve into education policy at the national level, contributing to meaningful policy discussions and witnessing firsthand the legislative process in action. During the internship, I attended hearings, conducted legislative research, drafted memos, and collaborated with fellow interns on special projects. Despite the rigorous demands of parenting alongside my internship responsibilities, the unwavering support from COE staff and colleagues at the **House Education and Workforce Committee** helped me navigate these challenges effectively. One of the most memorable moments during my internship was preparing for and attending a

committee hearing on DEI programs, where I witnessed lawmakers debate critical issues impacting students and DEI programs across the nation. This experience solidified my aspirations to pursue a career in education policy advocacy and public service. The internship significantly enhanced my understanding of the federal policymaking process. I gained firsthand experience in tracking legislation, analyzing policy proposals, and observing how constituent feedback informs legislative decisions.

The experience of engaging with legislative staff and policymakers highlighted for me the value of empathy, collaboration, and flexibility in professional settings, especially in federal policymaking and advocacy. Ni'Aisha Banks is an alumna of the TRIO Student Support Services program at Georgia Southern University and the 2024 Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Intern.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITY

LEARN MORE AT [COENET.ORG](https://www.coenet.org)

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT
Empowering Dreams in New York: Our Role in Increasing Access to Financial Aid



By *Michelle Danvers Foust*

As a longtime advocate for TRIO programs, I had the privilege of representing our community at a recent panel hosted by the **New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus**. It was a unique opportunity, as TRIO is typically discussed among federal lawmakers. I expressed gratitude for the invitation, highlighting the importance of TRIO in supporting low-income and first-generation college students throughout their educational journeys. Over the past four decades, I've witnessed the evolution of the

FAFSA. It's a crucial document, albeit often daunting in its complexity. While the simplified version represents progress, there are still glitches that need addressing. I emphasized the need for legislative backing to ensure universal access to FAFSA—a step that would greatly benefit our students.

At **Bronx Community College**, where I serve as **TRIO pre-collegiate programs director**, we start preparing students for college as early as middle school. As mandated by law, TRIO programs provide essential workshops on financial literacy, aid applications, and college admissions. This ensures that completing these forms becomes second nature to our students. By the time our students reach their senior year, they're well-equipped to navigate the college application process.

Our success is a testament to the collaborative efforts of TRIO

programs, public schools, and charter schools. By working together, we've achieved remarkable results, including a 100% FAFSA completion rate and high college enrollment rates among our graduates.

As we advocate for universal FAFSA access in New York, we must prioritize timeliness and accessibility. Access to financial aid information is essential for students to make informed college decisions. I urged New York's policymakers to prioritize the dissemination of updated information on FAFSA and financial aid to students and their families. By ensuring access to vital resources, we empower our students to pursue their educational aspirations without barriers. *Michelle Danvers is the TRIO pre-collegiate programs director at Bronx Community College. She served as the 2016-17 chair of the COE board of directors.*

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