



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

Winter 2025 Action Packet



Dear TRIO Colleagues:

The 119th Congress began on January 3rd, with Republicans taking control of both the House and Senate. With President Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20th, Republicans have at least two years of unified control in Washington to pursue their agenda, which includes making drastic cuts in federal spending. Starting immediately, it is critical we engage with both new and returning Members of Congress and Senators to ensure TRIO funding remains safe. As you may know, the President Trump is eager to shrink the size of the federal government and has called for the elimination of the Department of Education in the past.

With Republicans in control of both the House and the Senate, it will be extremely important to build relationships on both sides of the aisle. Congress will be making decisions now as to what funding is going to look like for the next two years. The time for advocacy is **now**. Reach out to your Members of Congress and Senators to share information about your TRIO Students, request they join the [TRIO Caucus](#) if they have not already done so, and invite them to visit your programs. It is through widespread bipartisan support that we will be able to protect TRIO from the large cuts to education funding that President Trump has promised.

We must work to engage TRIO personnel, students, parents, alumni, and other supporters at all levels to demonstrate that, TRIO Works! Many freshmen Democrats and Republicans will not have heard of TRIO, so we need to make sure we put our best foot forward in reaching them as soon as they are sworn in. For many, TRIO programs are critical to hundreds or thousands of students in their districts, and engaging with them early is a good way to make someone a supporter. You never know who may turn into a TRIO Champion.

To help you achieve this goal, this Congressional Outreach Packet includes the following:

- Sample in-person meeting request (Page 3)
- Help Turn Your Member of Congress into a TRIO Champion! (Page 4)
- Visit Roadmap (Page 5)
- Examples of outreach efforts by the TRIO Community (Page 6-7)

We encourage you to take advantage of the resources in this Congressional Outreach Packet, and to use the contact information for all congressional [education staffers and schedulers by state and district](#). Freshman members are in the process of hiring staff and will likely not have a complete legislative team until early February. For those offices, we suggest contacting the Chief of Staff and Scheduler. If you have any issues contacting the freshman offices, please reach out to us!

Let us know if you are planning or have already met with your Members of Congress so we can highlight your advocacy! Just send a quick report including your name, title, TRIO program, state, type of meeting (site visit, one-on-one, townhall, etc.) and the name of the Representative or Senator to owen.toomey@coenet.org and diane.shust@coenet.org.

Let's remind your Members of Congress that TRIO WORKS!!!

SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

Send via Email using the [Congressional Contact Information](#).

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE]

Dear [ELECTED OFFICIAL]:

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 invite [SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE NAME] to visit our [TRIO PROGRAM] program at [INSTITUTION] sometime this fall so that you can meet our students and learn about the impact of this program in their lives.

(House Recess: Jan. 27-Feb. 3; Feb. 14-21; March 13-21 and Senate Recess: March 17-21)

Since [YEAR], we have been serving students through [TRIO PROGRAM] at [INSTITUTION] and we know our current students would be honored to meet you and/or a member of your staff.

Please let us know when you might be able to visit our students sometime this spring. We are more than happy to work with your staff to identify a time that would work best for your schedule. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

The TRIO community is grateful for your continued support of educational opportunity. If your office has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact [POINT OF CONTACT NAME, EMAIL, and PHONE].

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE, TRIO PROGRAM]

[INSTITUTION]

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 of your idea. They may 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. Plan your event based on the legislator's availability. Contact your legislator's scheduler to find out precisely when your Member of Congress might be available to visit.
- **Send an official invitation to your Member of Congress.** E-mail a letter inviting your Member of Congress to visit. The contact information for your Member of Congress including contact information for the scheduler, press secretary, and links to social media platforms 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 week 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.** Have students greet your legislator when he or she arrives on campus and to escort him/her to the day's event site. If staff members accompany the Member, be certain to treat them with the same respect as the legislators themselves—staff often play a critical role in whether a legislator supports an issue or not!
- **Have an agenda.** Prioritize 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. Allow time for the Member of Congress to speak directly *with* the students and alumni.
- **Take photos!** Get photos of the event, especially of the Member with the students. These photos can be shared with the Member, posted on social media, and used in your newsletters.

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 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. Include pictures from the event and hand-written notes from students.
- **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!

2025 Visit Roadmap and Agenda

1. **Introduce yourselves.** 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.”** Thank the legislator and his/her staff for taking the time to meet. If they are a returning Member of Congress, thank the legislator and his/her staff for their past support of TRIO. Explain how critical an increase in funding will be, specifically focusing on how it will help serve students in the state or district.
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 [TRIO by State](#). Share your TRIO State Factbook
4. **Tell your stories.** Offer stories about the impact of TRIO for low-income, first-generation students. Include specific programs and list local projects in 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 [fact sheet](#) highlights TRIO successes.
6. **Make the Ask.** Don’t be shy about coming out and asking for increased funding. They’re here to listen to you!
7. **Respond to follow-up questions and listen.** Ask for and listen to responses. Search for opportunities to create a personal connection to your students, program, or institution.
8. **Share hard copies of information.** Designate a team member to give copies of TRIO information to staffers. Highlight any program-specific information you have.
9. **Express thanks.** Thank the legislator and/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. (This follow-up message should be sent 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: 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, in recognition of 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 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: CALIFORNIA

Horacio Aceves, Assistant Director of the Upward Bound program at **Occidental College**, invited **Congressman Jimmy Gomez (CA-34)** to visit campus and meet students. During the meeting, Congressman Gomez pledged to support TRIO funding. The Congressman tweeted a picture of his visit to his thousands of followers!



SPOTLIGHT: IOWA

Director of Talent Search Erica Frey and Valerie White hosted **Senator Joni Ernst** at **Southwestern Community College** in Iowa. Student, Abbe Baumfalk, shared how she learned about TRIO and the resources TRIO provides to help students overcome class, social, and cultural barriers. TRIO helped her find the money for college, including this \$1,000 scholarship from Southwestern.



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 118th 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 Government Relations team informed of your efforts by contacting Diane Shust (diane.shust@coenet.org) or Owen Toomey (owen.toomey@coenet.org) by email 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.*