

COE'S 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY DINNER

SEPTEMBER 9, 2025 • CHICAGO, IL



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL



COE'S 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY DINNER

COE STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

Your support is vital to the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) as we strive to empower and uplift low-income, first-generation students. By donating to COE's Educational Opportunity Campaign, you directly invest in transformative programs that open doors to success.

The **National Student Leadership Congress** unites TRIO students nationwide for an immersive experience in leadership development, civic engagement, and college readiness. Through the **Keith Sherin Global Leaders Program**, students explore international cultures and develop global perspectives through study abroad experiences. The **Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship** offers students firsthand experience in public policy and advocacy by working in the halls of Congress. The **Keith Sherin Semester in Washington Internship** allows students to intern in Washington, D.C., gaining valuable insights and experience in federal government operations and public service.

Your contribution will help sustain and expand these vital programs, ensuring that more students have the chance to achieve their full potential. Join us in making a lasting impact—because every student deserves the opportunity to succeed. **Donate today and be part of the journey to transform lives through education.**



Join the COE

**EDUCATIONAL
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PROGRAM



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Henry Bonilla

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

MEMBER OF CONGRESS 1993-2007 AND PARTNER, THE NORMANDY GROUP

Alumnus, TRIO Talent Search, Project Stay, Inc., San Antonio, TX

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RECIPIENT, 2013 National TRIO Achiever Award

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Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, Chicago State University, Chicago, IL

DINNER & PRESENTATION OF THE 2025 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

RECIPIENT

Barry C. Cosgrove

Founder, DaVita, and Chairman and CEO, Blackmore Escrow, Inc.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2025 NATIONAL TRIO ACHIEVER AWARDS

RECIPIENTS

Beverly Black

*Program Manager B2B Technology Engagement,
Delta Airlines*

Frankie Cordero

Sesame Street Puppeteer, Director, and Writer

Natalia Giraldo-Santiago

*Instructor and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow,
Harvard Medical School, and Massachusetts
General Hospital*

Richard LaDouceur

*Associate Professor and Interim Department Head,
Mechanical Engineering, Montana Technological
University*

Leticia Silva

*Senior Vice President, Human Resources,
Minnesota Twins Baseball*

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2025 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT

Barry C. Cosgrove

TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
Founder, DaVita, and Chairman and CEO, Blackmore Escrow, Inc.



Barry C. Cosgrove has spent a lifetime proving that where you start should never define how far you can go. A business executive, attorney, and steadfast champion for educational access, his journey weaves together entrepreneurship, healthcare innovation, and a deep commitment to giving back.

Raised in Brockton, Massachusetts, by a single mother, Cosgrove was the first in his family to attend college. A chance connection with the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at Marquette University changed everything. “EOP was pivotal for me,” he recalls. “It gave me the focus, confidence, and community I needed.” That lifeline became the foundation for a career spanning industries, continents, and causes.

Cosgrove helped launch DaVita, growing it into one of the largest dialysis providers in the world, co-founded the Kidney Care Council, and helped the American Kidney Fund expand its need-based programs to assist millions of dialysis patients. Today, his board service spans corporate, nonprofit, and advocacy organizations dedicated to health equity, environmental justice, and mental wellness. He previously served in executive leadership roles at Total Pharmaceutical Care (now Apria) and The Kendall Company (now Medtronic).

But Cosgrove’s greatest passion has continually been expanding opportunities for students like he once was. A devoted supporter of TRIO programs, he has testified before Congress on the Higher Education Act, funded scholarships and endowments, and made transformative gifts—most notably to the Council for Opportunity in Education to ensure sustainable funding for student services nationwide. His leadership in education includes serving as Chairman Emeritus of Cardinal Spellman High School and advising Marquette University and Suffolk University Law School.

Educated at Marquette University, MIT, Suffolk Law, and the Harvard Business School Advanced Management Program, Cosgrove has built a life on two simple truths: mastery opens doors, and generosity keeps them open for others. His message to the next generation is clear—*get good at something, stay curious, and give back*. Whether through mentorship, internships, or financial support, he believes that every person has the power to make opportunity possible.

2025 NATIONAL TRIO ACHIEVERS

Celebrating the success of TRIO students and the TRIO programs, the Council for Opportunity in Education and members of the college access and success community are proud to honor the 2025 National TRIO Achievers.

These men and women have distinguished themselves in their chosen professions and are making remarkable contributions to their communities. The public recognition of TRIO alumni is an exceptional opportunity to acknowledge that TRIO has made a difference in the lives of thousands of individuals whose future success depended on their access to higher education.

We congratulate this year’s TRIO Achievers and past award winners who continue to inspire college access, success professionals, and current students.

Beverly Black

TRIO TALENT SEARCH AT SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS AND TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA LAFAYETTE
Program Manager, Delta Airlines



Beverly Black’s journey from TRIO participant to national leader is a powerful testament to the life-changing impact of TRIO. A former TRIO Talent Search student at Southern University–New Orleans and Student Support Services participant at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette—Beverly credits TRIO with giving her the confidence, mentorship, and academic foundation that launched a thirty-year career in corporate and nonprofit leadership.

At Delta Air Lines, Beverly leads B2B technology engagement and implementation for Global Sales, driving digital transformation initiatives, field sales training, and performance optimization. Her career also spans international resource development, donor strategy, and startup leadership—most notably launching Haiti’s first aeromedical service as Director of Development for Haiti Air Ambulance—and founding her consultancy, Beverly Black, Inc., which supported mission-driven organizations with strategy, fundraising, and communications.

Beverly’s commitment to TRIO extends beyond her student experience into sustained advocacy and philanthropy. She founded the Robert L. Carmouche TRIO Alumni Chapter and an endowed scholarship in 2024 at the University of Louisiana Lafayette, spearheaded the creation of an employer-based TRIO alumni group at Delta as a national model, and has served on local, state, and national TRIO boards and committees. Her awards and recognitions—spanning regional TRIO Achiever honors to alumni leadership distinctions—reflect a career built on service, resilience, and lifting others.

Rooted in faith and family, Beverly is a devoted mother and mentor who deeply believes that “kindness is everything.” She continues to invest in the next generation of first-generation and low-income students by creating pathways, resources, and institutional partnerships that make higher education attainable and sustainable for students who follow in her footsteps.



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2025 NATIONAL TRIO ACHIEVERS

Frankie Cordero

TRIO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
Sesame Street Puppeteer, Director, and Writer



Frankie Cordero is an award-winning puppeteer, director, and creative force whose extraordinary career in children's media traces directly back to the life-changing support he received as a TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) participant at the University of Connecticut. While a student, Frankie earned a BFA in Puppet Arts and was the only SSS student in program history to do so—an achievement he attributes to the academic guidance and personal advocacy of his SSS counselor, Marie McCain. That mentorship proved lifesaving after a near-fatal hit-and-run accident in college. Frankie credits SSS staff with helping him recover physically and academically and keeping his dream alive.

Frankie's professional credits span over two decades of film, television, and live performance work. He is best known to young audiences as "Rudy Monster" on *Sesame Street* and for his puppetry, directing fabrication, and storyboard work on acclaimed programs including *Donkey Hodie*, *Fraggle Rock: Rock On! Wembley*, *Daniel Tiger*, and numerous national commercials and live television events. He has directed and contributed to projects for Sesame Workshop, The Jim Henson Company, Fred Rogers Productions, and PBS Kids, bringing joy and representation to millions of children.

His artistic excellence has been recognized with honors such as the Jim Henson Memorial Prize in Puppetry and multiple Emmy nominations for puppetry performance and puppet design. He continues to expand his role as an educator, teaching youth puppetry and mentoring emerging artists. Frankie consistently centers diversity and accessibility in his work, using storytelling to ensure children from all backgrounds see themselves reflected on screen.

A proud TRIO alumnus, Frankie remains deeply committed to giving back—mentoring young performers, sharing his creative process, and advocating for programs that provide the same lifeline he received. His story vividly shows how targeted support, caring advisors, and sustained opportunity can turn talent and grit into a transformative career.

2025 NATIONAL TRIO ACHIEVERS

Natalia Giraldo-Santiago

TRIO UPWARD BOUND AT UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO, RIO PIEDRAS
Instructor and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Harvard Medical School, and Massachusetts General Hospital



Natalia Giraldo-Santiago's path from Río Piedras, Puerto Rico, to the research labs of Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital is a powerful testament to the life-changing impact of TRIO. As an Upward Bound participant at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, she gained the academic foundation, mentoring, and confidence that launched her into social-work graduate study, doctoral training, and a research career focused on health equity for Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities—work she explicitly credits to the opportunities and resilience fostered by Upward Bound.

A social-work scientist and licensed clinical social worker, Dr. Giraldo-Santiago earned her PhD in Social Work from the University of Houston and completed competitive postdoctoral fellowships that led to her current faculty appointment and research roles at MGH/HMS. Her scholarship centers on culturally tailored, community-delivered interventions—particularly mind-body and pain-management programs for older Latino adults—and she serves as principal investigator or co-investigator on multiple NIH-funded and foundation-supported projects to reduce health disparities.

Dr. Giraldo-Santiago's publication record and awards reflect scholarly rigor and community impact. She has co-authored more than two dozen peer-reviewed manuscripts, received multiple dissertation and research awards, and been recognized for advancing health equity and mentorship. She is committed to translating research into practice—training community health workers, mentoring students from underrepresented backgrounds, and building pathways that mirror the support she once received as an Upward Bound student.

A proud TRIO alumna and emerging clinical research leader, Dr. Giraldo-Santiago is a vivid example of how early, targeted supports—academic tutoring, mentoring, and pathway programming—can convert potential into measurable impact for individuals and communities. Her work continues to expand the science of culturally responsive interventions while recruiting and preparing the next generation of Latinx researchers and clinicians.



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2025 NATIONAL TRIO ACHIEVERS

Richard LaDouceur

TRIO UPWARD BOUND AT UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

Associate Professor and Interim Department Head, Mechanical Engineering, Montana Technological University



Richard LaDouceur is a first-generation college graduate, researcher, and teacher whose path from a working-class upbringing in Butte, Montana, to a Ph.D. and a leadership role in engineering was made possible by his early participation in TRIO Upward Bound. The summer bridge experiences at University of Nevada, Las Vegas gave him the college-going skills, confidence, and exposure to new possibilities that ultimately pulled him back to higher education after a decade away and set the foundation for a career in teaching and research.

After returning to school, Dr. LaDouceur excelled academically—making the Dean’s List throughout his undergraduate work, joining Tau Beta Pi (the nation’s oldest and most prestigious engineering honor society), completing competitive internships, and earning a Ph.D. in Materials Science at Montana Technological University. He helped establish and now directs the Carbon High-Temperature Advanced Research Laboratory, leads interdisciplinary projects that secure multi-million dollar funding, and translates applied materials research into solutions for sustainable processing, environmental remediation, and mining industry needs.

A scholar-teacher at heart, Dr. LaDouceur has earned campus teaching and research awards while mentoring dozens of undergraduate and graduate students in hands-on laboratory research and senior design projects. His students routinely present at national and international conferences, and several have continued into advanced degrees and professional careers—evidence of his commitment to turning opportunity into tangible outcomes for the next generation of scientists and engineers.

TRIO’s influence remains central to Dr. LaDouceur’s mission: he intentionally connects his lab and classroom to TRIO pipelines, creating research experiences for Upward Bound students and modeling the kind of intrusive advising and access that sustained him. As he reflects on his journey, he credits TRIO with teaching him what success requires and instilling the belief that he could succeed—a conviction he now works to pass on to every student in his care.

2025 NATIONAL TRIO ACHIEVERS

Leticia Silva

TRIO UPWARD BOUND AT ST. OLAF COLLEGE

Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Minnesota Twins Baseball



Leticia “Leti” Silva’s story is a powerful testament to how TRIO Upward Bound transforms potential into lasting professional leadership. A first-generation college student and child of Mexican immigrants, Leti joined St. Olaf’s Upward Bound program in high school and credits that hands-on support—academic preparation, mentoring, and unwavering encouragement—keeping her on the path to college even after becoming a teen mother. Thanks to the TRIO staff who guided her through the application and financial aid process, Leti earned admission to the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Management and received scholarships that made her higher-education goals possible.

Leti parlayed that foundation into a two-decade career with the Minnesota Twins, beginning as an intern in 1998 and rising through roles in benefits and HR to become Senior Vice President of Human Resources. Here, she now shapes organizational strategy, talent development, and inclusive workplace practices for a major professional sports franchise. Her professional accomplishments reflect both strategic rigor and a commitment to people-centered leadership.

True to TRIO’s spirit, Leti has given back consistently to the programs that launched her. She has mentored Upward Bound students, helped coordinate career days at the Twins for TRIO participants, supported fundraising and outreach events, and remains an active champion for first-generation learners in Minnesota. Her sustained engagement demonstrates how early investments in students pay lifelong dividends—turning one TRIO participant’s opportunity into many more for the next generation.

Leti’s journey—from a determined TRIO student in St. Paul to a senior HR leader in Major League Baseball—embodies the power of targeted support, mentorship, and institutional partnerships to open doors, foster resilience, and build careers that give back.



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MISSION

COE's mission is to achieve college access and success for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities.

VISION

We believe every young person and adult should have an equal opportunity to prepare for, attend, and graduate from college. Graduation from any category of a postsecondary institution should be achievable and must not be limited by economic status, family background, or disability.

OUR APPROACH

COE works to improve educational opportunity for low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities by advocating and providing resources and services to support colleges and community agencies around the country. We address this mandate by:

- Implementing evidence-based program improvement and student development services for more than 3,100 college access and success programs nationwide;
- Advocating for federally-funded programs critical to college access and success, including TRIO, GEAR UP, Pell Grants, and other college access and success programs that assist low-income and first-generation students;
- Providing professional development for college access and success professionals--through COE's annual conference, seminars, video conferences, online courses, webinars, communities of practice, and other web-based idea exchanges; and
- Conducting research and policy analysis through COE's Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education to inform policymakers, educators, and the public on issues impacting educational opportunities and outcomes for low-income, first-generation students, and students with disabilities.



INITIATIVES

- Promote leadership development and global citizenry through student leadership programs such as the National Student Leadership Congress, the Thomas R. Wolanin Congressional Internship, and the Keith Sherin Global Leaders Program;
- Develop partnerships with business and government to introduce low-income and first-generation students to 21st-century careers and to prepare them for the workforce better;
- Strengthen the academic preparation of TRIO pre-college students to ensure they have the mathematics and writing skills necessary to excel in disciplines of their choice--through curriculum development for STEAM Clubs and Book Clubs available for free to over 4,000 college access and success programs nationwide;
- Through the annual First-Generation College Celebration, uplift and expand the visibility of first-generation students on campuses across the country to increase institutional campus-wide engagement in providing comprehensive support to this student population;
- Annually publish the Pell Institute's *Indicators Report*, which increases public awareness of disparities in college opportunity for low-income, first-generation students and provides data to help develop educational policies and programs targeting these students, and ensure that state leaders can use this data to inform policy at the state level;
- Cultivate college access and success program alumni to serve as mentors and role models for current program participants, act as advocates for the programs, and serve as ambassadors to the broader community;
- Convene leaders of COE-affiliated state associations for executive leadership training to advance college opportunity efforts at the state and national level through partnerships with institutions such as Cornell University, Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University, the University of Kansas, and Yale University;
- Connect college access and success programs and community partners to COE's cloud-based data system—empower™—for effective real-time tracking and analysis of student outcomes.

OUR OUTCOMES

College access and retention services are essential to providing true educational opportunities for all Americans, including low-income and first-generation students and students with disabilities. At present, college access and success programs reach only a small fraction of the students and families who could benefit from them. For more than 40 years, COE has worked to make the following outcomes a reality:

- More than 6 million students have graduated from college with the special assistance of TRIO programs.
- More than 3,100 access and success professionals receive professional development and technical assistance annually, either in person, virtually, or both.
- Garnered \$1.2 billion in federal appropriations to support TRIO programs (up from \$156.6 million in 1981, the year the Council for Opportunity in Education was founded).
- Nearly 870,000 low-income students and students with disabilities receive college access and retention services annually through our member colleges and agencies.

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2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

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Fall Counselor Workshops 2025

Our annual Fall Counselor Workshops provide timely information and resources to support your work. Register to view relevant updates on College Board programs and services so you're ready to support your students for the 2025-26 school year.

Topics include:

- SAT® Suite of Assessments
- BigFuture School Mobile App
- AP® Program
- BigFuture™ College and Career Planning Resources

Attend online or in-person

FOR EXPERIENCED COUNSELORS (ONLINE)

- Tuesday, August 26 1–2:30 p.m. ET
- Thursday, September 4 10–11:20 a.m. ET
- Wednesday, September 10 2–3:30 p.m. ET
- Thursday, September 11 10–11:20 a.m. ET

FOR NEWER COUNSELORS (ONLINE)

- Thursday, August 28 2–3:30 p.m. ET
- Tuesday, September 9 10–11 a.m. ET

Explore our in-person locations by scanning the QR code.



Register at cb.org/ccefcw

or scan the QR code below





Connecting education with opportunity.

We're helping clear the path between education and work, especially for those with the most standing in their way, because we believe it's possible to create a world where every person – no matter where they start – can see a future they want, and get there.

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Make a planned gift. When you make a planned gift to COE, your generosity has an impact far beyond your lifetime. Your gift supports generations of students whose lives will be forever changed by their college experience.

Join the COE **LEGACY** *Society*

Members | Cheryl Arnold | Joan Becker | Henry Bonilla | Ann Coles | Barry and Ingrid Cosgrove | Brenda Dann-Messier and Dan Messier | Earl Farrow | Roger Grant | Sam Hart | Oscar Hernandez and Laura Thompson | Maureen Hoyler | Lucy and Thomas Jones | Arnold and Freda Mitchem | Deborah Northcross | Jennifer Perdue | Alvin Phillips and Tia Johnson | Andrea and Archie Reeve | Bruce and Sharyn Schelske | Jerinae and Welmon Speed | Marilyn and Paul Thayer



Contact Alvin Phillips at alvin.phillips@coenet.org or (202) 347-7430.