



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

COE's 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Dr. Mara Luna

We celebrate your remarkable leadership as you conclude your service as Chair of the COE Board of Directors.

Your dedication and impact at the national level have been truly inspiring, and we are proud of all you've accomplished. Wishing you continued success in the journey ahead — your legacy will continue to uplift and empower!

Thank You!
¡Gracias!





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 WELCOME LETTERS

4 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

5 2025 CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

6 CONFERENCE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

7 2025 CONFERENCE EXHIBITORS

10 CONFERENCE MAPS

13 CONFERENCE TECHNOLOGY

14 CONFERENCE STRANDS

15 CONFERENCE EVALUATIONS

17 SPECIAL EVENTS

20 SESSIONS GRID: SUNDAY OVERVIEW

21 SESSIONS GRID: MONDAY OVERVIEW

25 SESSIONS GRID: TUESDAY OVERVIEW

29 SESSIONS GRID: WEDNESDAY OVERVIEW

30 CONCURRENT SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS

61 2026 CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

62 ADVERTISEMENTS

WELCOME



September 2025

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Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Council for Opportunity in Education Board of Directors, it is my privilege to welcome you to the 2025 COE Annual Conference — Opening Doors, Changing Lives: The Transformative Power of Education, taking place in Chicago, September 7–10. This year’s gathering is especially meaningful as we mark the 60th anniversary of the Higher Education Act, a milestone that invites both celebration for the progress we’ve made and renewed resolve for the work still ahead.

Over four days, you’ll find a powerful program of plenaries, timely policy briefings, hands-on workshops, and sector-specific strands designed to strengthen practice and advocacy across TRIO programs. From our Washington update to sessions on technology, evaluation, graduate-school pathways, and civic engagement, the lineup is built to give you immediate tools to advance student success—and the context to defend and expand opportunity in challenging times.

This conference is also a moment to gather as a community. Reconnect with long-time colleagues, meet emerging leaders and alumni, and build partnerships that turn ideas into action. We’ve planned networking events, wellness offerings, and special commemorations of TRIO’s legacy so you can return to campus recharged, resourced, and ready to lead.

As you engage over the coming days, I encourage you to bring your questions, your innovations, and your stories of impact. Your voice matters—in session rooms, on the exhibit floor, and at the Capitol—and together we amplify the promise of higher education for first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities.

Chicago provides a vibrant backdrop for these conversations — a city of innovation, history, and community that echoes our mission to make higher education more equitable and transformative. During such a consequential year, we are honored to convene this community of practitioners, advocates, scholars, and alumni.

Thank you for being here and for everything you do to open doors and change lives. I look forward to meeting you in Chicago and to the progress we will make together.

Warmly,

Mara Luna
Chair, 2024-2025 Board of Directors
Council for Opportunity in Education



September 2025

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the **2025 COE Annual Conference — Opening Doors, Changing Lives: The Transformative Power of Education**, taking place **September 7–10 in Chicago**. We are thrilled to invite you to four days of learning, advocacy, and community as we mark a landmark year: the **60th anniversary of the Higher Education Act**. That history reminds us why our work matters, and it renews our commitment to expanding opportunity for first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities.

This year's program is crafted to be practical, provocative, and deeply relevant to the challenges you face on campus. We've organized content into focused strands so you can build skills, borrow promising practices, and leave with concrete plans to strengthen student outcomes. Highlights include:

- **Creating Global Citizens** — practical how-tos for expanding study-abroad access and global learning for TRIO students.
- **Leadership in a Changing Landscape** — strategies for sustaining teams, navigating institutional change, and scaling program excellence.
- **Measuring What Matters** — hands-on evaluation workshops and evidence-based approaches to demonstrate impact.
- **Navigating the Selective College Experience** — admissions, affordability, and graduate-school roadmaps for our students.
- **Opening Doors, Changing Lives** — career development, workforce alignment, and student empowerment strategies grounded in research.
- **Start Smart** — director-level primers on recruitment, retention, branding, and financial wellness for TRIO professionals.
- **Tech Pathways** — real examples of AI, VR/AR, assistive tech, and digital advocacy that expand access and scale services.

Beyond sessions, this conference is built around connection. Bring your questions, your data, and your student stories — the hallway conversations, roundtables, and wellness events (yes, the morning walks and yoga are back!) are where partnerships form and new initiatives are born. You'll also hear from policy leaders and scholars who will help you translate today's headlines into tomorrow's strategy, especially as we defend TRIO through challenging policy waters.

Thank you for the work you bring to this field and for joining us in Chicago. Together we will learn, strategize, and return to our campuses equipped to open more doors and change more lives.

Warm Regards,

2025 Annual Conference Co-Chairs

Cynthia Ayala

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2025 CONFERENCE MAPS



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HOTEL MAP

HYATT REGENCY CHICAGO GUEST MAP

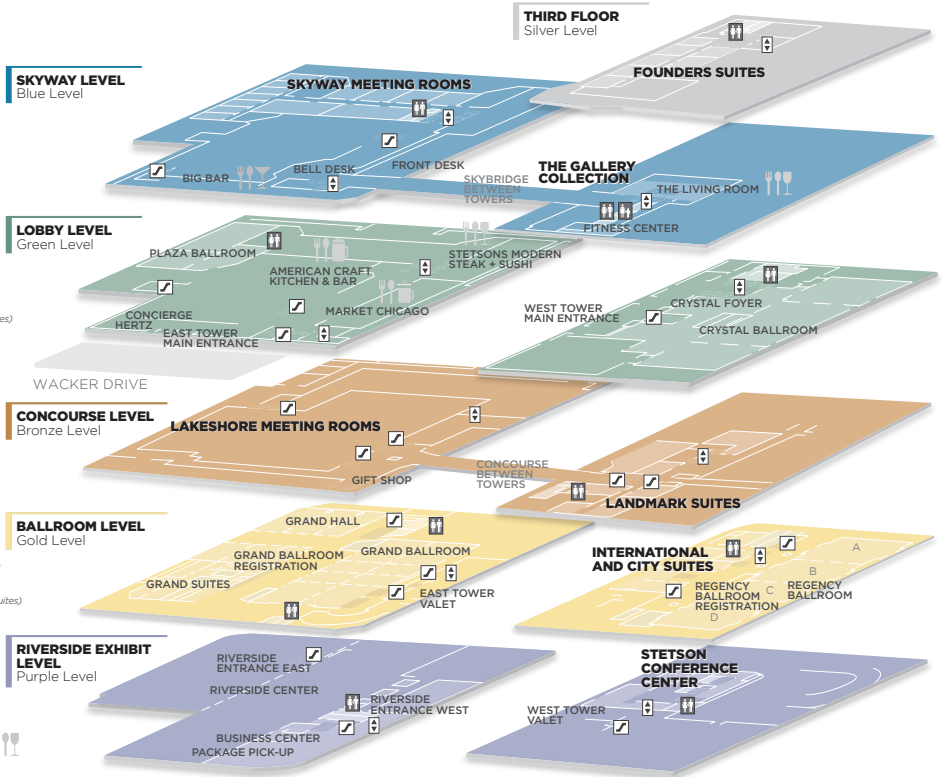


WELCOME TO HYATT REGENCY CHICAGO. Meeting rooms, ballrooms, restaurants and guest amenities are listed in alphabetical order and color coded by floor. For help, dial Guest Services at Extension 52.

EAST TOWER

WEST TOWER

- ACAPULCO (*International and City Suites*)
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- ADDAMS (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- ADDAMS FOYER
West Tower, Third Floor
- AMERICAN CRAFT KITCHEN & BAR
East Tower, Lobby Level
- ATLANTA (*International and City Suites*)
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- BELL DESK
East Tower, Skyway Level
- BIG BAR
East Tower, Skyway Level
- BURNHAM (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- BUSINESS CENTER, PACKAGE ROOM
East Tower, Concourse Level
- COLUMBIAN (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- COMISKEY (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- CONCIERGE
East Tower, Lobby Level
- CRYSTAL BALLROOM
West Tower, Lobby Level
- DUSABLE (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- EAST TOWER MAIN ENTRANCE
East Tower, Lobby Level
- EAST TOWER VALET
East Tower, Ballroom Level
- FIELD (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- FITNESS CENTER
West Tower, Skyway Level
- FRONT DESK
East Tower, Skyway Level
- THE GALLERY COLLECTION
West Tower, Skyway Level
- GIFT SHOP
East Tower, Concourse Level
- GOLD COAST (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- GRAND BALLROOM
East Tower, Ballroom Level
- GRAND HALL (ROOMS G-N)
East Tower, Ballroom Level
- GRAND SUITES
East Tower, Ballroom Level
- HAYMARKET (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- HERTZ
East Tower, Lobby Level
- HONG KONG (*International and City Suites*)
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- HORNER (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- THE LIVING ROOM
West Tower, Skyway Level
- MARKET CHICAGO
East Tower, Lobby Level
- MCCORMICK (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- MICHIGAN (*Lakeshore Meeting Rooms*)
East Tower, Concourse Level
- MONROE (*Lakeshore Meeting Rooms*)
East Tower, Concourse Level
- NEW ORLEANS (*International and City Suites*)
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- OGDEN (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- PICASSO (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- PLAZA BALLROOM
East Tower, Lobby Level
- RANDOLPH (*Lakeshore Meeting Rooms*)
East Tower, Concourse Level
- REGENCY BALLROOM
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- RIVERSIDE CENTER
East Tower, Exhibit Level
- ROOSEVELT (*Lakeshore Meeting Rooms*)
East Tower, Concourse Level
- SAN FRANCISCO (*International and City Suites*)
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- SKYWAY MEETING ROOMS
East Tower, Skyway Level
- SOLDIER FIELD (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- STETSON CONFERENCE CENTER
West Tower, Exhibit Level
- STETSONS MODERN STEAK + SUSHI
East Tower, Lobby Level
- TORONTO (*International and City Suites*)
West Tower, Ballroom Level
- WATER TOWER (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level
- WEST TOWER VALET
West Tower, Exhibit Level
- WRIGHT (*Founders Suites*)
West Tower, Third Floor
- WRIGLEY (*Landmark Suites*)
West Tower, Concourse Level



SCAN FOR MOBILE MAP



- ELEVATORS
- ESCALATORS AND STAIRS
- RESTROOMS
- MOTHER'S ROOM

ESCALATORS, ELEVATORS AND RESTROOMS are indicated on each floor. Elevators are conveniently located throughout the hotel for guests with disabilities or where no escalator is present.

CROSSING BETWEEN TOWERS: Cross between towers via the Skybridge or the Concourse. You may also cross from the lobby level via the crosswalk on Stetson Drive.

2025 CONFERENCE MAPS



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EXPO HALL MAP



2025 CONFERENCE MAPS



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715.....	Fair Share
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521.....	Foundation for Impact on Literacy and Learning
623.....	Four Winds Tours
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424.....	Grammarly
211.....	Heiberg Consulting, Inc

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509.....	Method Learning
307.....	My College Basics
617.....	National TRIO Alumni Association (NTAA)
317.....	Paradigm Shift
517.....	Peterson's Test Prep
323.....	PhotoStudy Tutoring
411.....	PreDegree LLC.
422.....	Proforma Green Marketing
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519.....	Woven Learning and Technology
215.....	Zion Leadership Group

Stay connected at the annual conference and download the COE Works app in the [App Store](#) and [Google Play Store](#)! In the app, you can easily register, access important information and resources, collaborate with other participants, build out your agenda, and get quickly notified of any announcements. Don't miss out!

PROFILE FEATURES

Your username is the same as the one you use to log in to the COE website, register for events, and donate.

Upon logging in, users are encouraged to add a profile picture. Instructions for accessing the Profile section are provided by clicking "More" and then "Profile." You can save COE News feed content as bookmarks and create private notes.

APP NAVIGATION

The Home screen features the COE News feed, where users can share content with other TRIO professionals. Accessing Events and managing personal agendas is made easy. The Member Directory, messaging, and curated information from other chambers are accessible from the More tab. Use the messaging feature to send direct messages, start group chats, attach photos or files, and manage conversations efficiently.

[CLICK HERE](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)



CONFERENCE CONNECTION

Introducing the COE Works mobile app, your all-in-one companion for maximizing your experience and staying ahead at this year's annual conference. Seamlessly designed with you in mind, COE Works empowers you to make the most of your conference journey in just a few taps.

Here are key ways to use the app during the conference:

1. **Personalized Planning:** Say goodbye to juggling paper schedules. COE Works allows you to tailor and organize your agenda, ensuring you catch every session that matters most. Create a customized conference itinerary that perfectly fits your interests and availability.
2. **Instant Resources:** No more shuffling through stacks of paper handouts. With COE Works, all conference materials and session resources are available at your fingertips. Download presentation slides, session handouts, and related documents directly to your device for easy reference during and after the sessions.
3. **Presenter Insights:** Get to know the speakers before you enter the session. Browse through photos and read bios of session presenters on COE Works. This feature provides valuable context and enhances your engagement with the content being shared.
4. **Feedback Made Simple:** Your opinions matter, and COE Works makes sharing them effortless. Complete overall conference evaluations and rate individual sessions directly through the app. Your feedback helps us continuously improve and tailor future events to meet your needs.
5. **On the go? Stay in the know!** The COE Works app delivers instant push notifications to stay informed with real-time updates, important announcements, and session reminders sent directly to your device throughout the conference.

COE Works is your conference toolkit, streamlining your experience so you can focus on networking, learning, and making the most of this exceptional event. Download the app now and embark on a conference journey like never before.

SEVEN EXCITING CONFERENCE STRANDS ARE ALL FOR YOU!

This year's Annual Conference strands are designed to work together as a practical playbook for impact. Start Smart helps new and returning directors solidify the foundations—team culture, branding, and personal financial wellness—so programs run smoothly. Leadership in a Changing Landscape builds skills to guide those teams through tough decisions, delegation, and career pathways. With stronger operations, Measuring What Matters shows how to turn data into action: evaluate what works, tell your story with evidence, and move students to completion.

At the same time, Tech Pathways equips you with AI and assistive tools that scale your reach without losing the personal touch. Navigating the Selective College Experience demystifies competitive admissions and affordability for first-gen, low-income students. Opening Doors, Changing Lives connects TRIO's history and workforce futures, anchoring career development in genuine partnerships. Finally, Creating Global Citizens expands horizons through study abroad and global opportunities, making college access borderless. Map your schedule across strands, compare notes with colleagues, and bring back a cohesive strategy your campus can use on Monday.

The strands appear below for your convenience. COE notes specific sessions in the strands in the conference overview and their descriptions. Please take full advantage of these sessions and come ready to share your ideas.

CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS

- Celebrating 25 Years of the COE Keith Sherin Global Leaders Study Abroad Program
- Unlocking Global Opportunities Part 1: The Nuts and Bolts of Helping Your Students Pursue Study Abroad
- Unlocking Global Opportunities Part 2: Securing Financial Resources for Study Abroad
- Creating Global Citizens: Expanding Horizons through TRIO and Opportunity Programs

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

SPONSORED BY **GMA Construction**

- Navigating Career Paths: A Guide for Higher Education Professionals
- Delegate Like a Pro: Passing the Baton Without Dropping It
- Empowering TRIO Personnel to Stay the Course
- The Impact of Student Support Services: The COE Award for Institutional Effectiveness

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

- The Snowball Creating the Meltdown of Higher Education
- Actionable Evaluation Strategies to Measure in McNair
- Be Your Own Evaluator: A How-To Session on Conducting Your Own TRIO Mini-Study
- Degree Bound: Evidence-Based Strategies to Help TRIO Students Cross the Finish Line

NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

SPONSORED BY **Princeton University**

- Graduate School Admissions: What Your Students Need to Know
- Demystifying Selective College Admissions for TRIO Students
- The Best Kept Secret: Selective College Affordability for Pell-Eligible and Lower Income Students

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES

SPONSORED BY **Ascendium Education Group**

- Communities in Action: The Early Years of the Upward Bound Program
- Opening Doors to New Possibilities: Career Development Strategies for TRIO Students
- Empowering TRIO Students for the 21st. Century Workforce: A Research-Based Enhanced Collaborative Student Empowerment Career Services Model

START SMART STRAND, KICKSTART YOUR JOURNEY AS A TRIO DIRECTOR

SPONSORED BY **College Board**

- From Recruitment to Retention: Building Strong TRIO Teams That Thrive
- TRIO Branding 101

CONFERENCE STRANDS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

TECH PATHWAYS

- Unlocking Insights: How AI Transforms TRIO Data into Actionable Strategies
- Transforming Learning: The Impact of Assistive Technology in Education
- Beyond the Hashtag: Advocacy in the Digital Age
- Empowering TRIO Students with AI: Practical Strategies for Success
- Utilizing Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality to Enhance Student Professional Opportunities
- You Down with GPT?... Yeah, You Know Me!
- Tricks, Treats, and Threats of Artificial Intelligence: Strategies for Success

CONFERENCE EVALUATIONS

All attendees are encouraged to provide their thoughts and recommendations about the Annual Conference by completing these online conference evaluation forms:

- **To evaluate an individual session**, please complete the form here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5JG7C8T>
- **To evaluate the overall annual conference**, please complete the form here:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JVC2HLL>

CLICK HERE TO EVALUATE AN
INDIVIDUAL SESSION

CLICK HERE TO EVALUATE THE
OVERALL CONFERENCE



Sponsored by Princeton University

College Fair for TRIO Professionals

Meet with undergraduate admissions officers of selective institutions interested in attracting low-income, first-generation college students. Learn what colleges are doing to attract and retain first-generation, low-income students to campus. Cultivate relationships with college admissions officers to learn how to increase the number of successful applications submitted by TRIO students to these institutions.



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY

Location: Riverside East
(Exhibit Level East Tower)
Hyatt Regency Chicago

Date: Monday, September 8
Time: 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Snack Break

Time: 3:15 - 4:00 p.m.

Are you up for the challenge? Don't miss this chance to rewrite destinies, create pathways, and illuminate possibilities. The Selective College Fair awaits your presence – where dreams are nurtured, futures are transformed, and change is ignited. **Be part of a movement that's defining the future of education – one student at a time!**

SPECIAL EVENTS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

MEALS

Please note that your conference badge is your official meal ticket to the Chair's Reception on Sunday, Walter O. Mason Awards luncheon on Monday, and the Educational Opportunity Dinner on Tuesday. Please display your badge before entering all conference sessions, receptions, and other events. Persons without an appropriate conference badge will not be permitted in these areas.

EXHIBIT HALL

TRIO WORKS X GENIUS POTENTIAL LOUNGE | Riverside East (Exhibit Level East Tower)



Struggling to get your students truly excited about STEM? Come visit Genius Potential's inflatable STEM Pop-Up Museum in the Exhibit Hall! From designing your own AI superhero avatar to exploring culturally relevant, real-world STEM applications, this museum is built to engage every type of learner in a way traditional approaches can't. This immersive experience shows how to use VR, AI, and hands-on stations to meet your students where

they are, moving them from consumers of tech to creators of tech in ways that feel relevant and fun. And in today's climate, where career readiness is a federal priority tied directly to grant outcomes, this is a powerful tool for TRIO programs to spark curiosity and connect students to real STEM career pathways. Stop by to see how co-founders Bert (a former science teacher and Boys & Girls Club director) and Det (a former mechanical engineer and first-gen college grad) designed this culturally relevant approach to finally solve the STEM engagement problem!

SPECIAL EVENTS

MONDAY - 7:00 AM | Sunrise Yoga | Hong Kong (Ballroom Level - West Tower)

RISE AND SHINE WITH SUNRISE YOGA!

Start your day on a refreshing note with Sunrise Yoga! Join us for an invigorating morning filled with the serenity of yoga. Greet the day with gentle stretches, calming breaths, and a peaceful mind. Our yoga instructor will guide you through poses that awaken your body and spirit, setting a positive tone for the day ahead. This is the perfect opportunity to connect with your body, embrace the morning sun, and share laughter with fellow participants. Bring your positive energy and a willingness to try something new. Let's breathe, stretch, and dance together as we enthusiastically greet the day.

MONDAY - 3:30-4:00 PM | COLLEGE FAIR AND EXHIBIT HALL WALKTHROUGH | Riverside East (Exhibit Level East Tower)

JOIN US FOR A HIGH-IMPACT COLLEGE FAIR FOR TRIO PROFESSIONALS



Meet with undergraduate admissions officers of selective institutions interested in attracting low-income, first-generation college students. Learn what colleges are doing to attract and retain first-generation, low-income students to campus. Cultivate relationships with college admissions officers to learn how to increase the number of successful applications submitted by TRIO students to these institutions.

MONDAY - 4:00-5:00 PM | Hot Topic Sessions

SPECIAL EVENTS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

MONDAY - 6:30-8:00 PM | SALSA DANCING | Regency C (Ballroom Level West Tower)

FEEL THE ENERGY, MEET NEW FRIENDS, AND LIGHT UP THE DANCE FLOOR AT COE'S SALSA NIGHT!

Whether you're brand new or a seasoned salsero, this upbeat evening starts with a fun, beginner-friendly lesson led by a professional instructor—no partner required—followed by a social dance with a live DJ spinning salsa, bachata, and merengue. Come as you are and dress to move. We'll cover the basics, add simple turns, and give you the confidence to keep dancing all night. It's the perfect mid-conference reset: vibrant music, joyful community, and a chance to celebrate the spirit of TRIO together. Comfortable shoes recommended; smiles guaranteed.

MONDAY - 8:00-10:00 PM | KARAOKE SPONSORED BY GENIUS POTENTIAL | Regency C (Ballroom Level West Tower)

STEP UP TO THE MIC AND BRING THE HOUSE DOWN AT COE KARAOKE NIGHT!



From powerhouse ballads to throwback anthems, this is your moment to shine, laugh, and celebrate community. No vocal experience required—just enthusiasm. We'll provide a wide song library, seamless sign-ups, and a supportive crowd ready to cheer every chorus. Come solo or grab a duet partner, warm up those vocal cords, and let the conference stress melt away. Costumes, choreography, and backup dancers are highly encouraged. It's the most fun you'll have off the agenda—see you center stage!

TUESDAY - 6:50 AM | WELLNESS: WALK THE CHI-TOWN CIRCUIT | Meet in Lobby

MORNING ICONS WALK: MAGNIFICENT MILE EDITION

Start your day with fresh air, light movement, and skyline views—right outside the Hyatt Regency Chicago. This refreshing morning walk takes you and fellow attendees past some of the city's most iconic landmarks: the bustling Magnificent Mile, the historic Chicago Water Tower, the neo-Gothic Tribune Tower, the gleaming Wrigley Building, 360 Chicago at the John Hancock Center, and more. No pace pressure and no special gear required—just comfortable shoes and your curiosity. It's the perfect reset before a full day of sessions: energize your body, clear your mind, snap a few photos, and connect with colleagues while taking in Chicago's architectural greats. Lace up and join us!

TUESDAY - 8:00-8:45 AM | EXHIBIT HALL WALKTHROUGH | Riverside East (Exhibit Level East Tower)

EXHIBIT HALL BINGO: PLAY TO WIN!



Use the game card in your conference bag to join the fun and get your chance to win big! Collect stamps from exhibitors as you visit each booth—the more stamps you collect, the greater your chances of winning. When you've collected as many stamps as you can, drop off your completed card at the

Exhibit Information Desk (located near registration) by Tuesday, September 10, at 5 p.m. to be entered to win a prize. The winner of the Grand Prize—an iPad bundle with AirPods and an Apple Pencil, donated by MasteryPrep—plus three lucky runners-up, each receiving a gift card, will be announced via the COE Works app on Wednesday morning! Winners will also be contacted directly by email. Thank you to MasteryPrep for sponsoring the Exhibit Hall Bingo Game! Masteryprep also extends its appreciation to all exhibitors for their participation.

SPECIAL EVENTS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

TUESDAY - 11:30 AM-2:30 PM | FREE PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOTS | Riverside East (Exhibit Level East Tower)

LEAVE CHICAGO WITH A HEADSHOT THAT MATCHES YOUR LEADERSHIP

Get a polished, professional headshot while you're at COE 2025—perfect for LinkedIn, grant bios, speaker pages, and your program website. A photographer will be in the Exhibit Hall on Tuesday, September 9, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. to capture conference-ready images with professional lighting and backgrounds. To reserve your time, stop by the COE Registration Desk or the COE Booth in the Exhibit Hall; slots are limited and offered on a first-come, first-served basis, so we recommend signing up early. Bring a conference-appropriate outfit (solid colors photograph best) and any grooming touch-ups you prefer—we'll take care of the rest.

TUESDAY - ENDS AT 2:00 PM | SILENT AUCTION | Riverside East (Exhibit Level East Tower)

JOIN THE BIDDING FRENZY AT THE COE ANNUAL CONFERENCE SILENT AUCTION!

Calling all enthusiasts of unique treasures and exclusive experiences! It's time to enter a world of elegance and bidding excitement at the Silent Auction during the Annual Conference. The auction starts on Sunday, September 7, at 4:00 p.m. and closes on Tuesday, September 9, at 2:00 p.m. Please pick up your prize before 5:00 p.m. Explore a curated collection of Items and experiences in the Exhibit Hall. Uncover gems amongst exhibitors! This is your chance to secure remarkable items and experiences, all while contributing to a worthy cause. Mark your calendar, sharpen your bidding skills, and join us for an unforgettable auction event!

TUESDAY - 1:30-2:30 PM | Hot Topic Sessions

TUESDAY - 5:00 PM | Online Auction

LAST CHANCE ALERT: COE ANNUAL CONFERENCE ONLINE AUCTION ENDS SOON!

Time is ticking, and so is the countdown to the grand finale of the Annual Conference. Our Online Auction is your gateway to securing incredible items while supporting a cause close to our hearts. The online auction closes on Tuesday, September 9, at 5:00 p.m. ET. Browse and bid on exclusive Items from anywhere! Join the bidding war from your device! Don't let the opportunity slip away. Visit the online auction platform before the closing hour to place your bids and make a difference. Embrace the excitement of the final moments and emerge victorious with your coveted treasures!

**CLICK HERE
TO GO TO OUR BIDDING
PLATFORM!**

WEDNESDAY - 11:30 AM ET | 50-50 RAFFLE | Riverside East (Exhibit Level East Tower)

GET LUCKY WITH THE 50-50 RAFFLE AT THE COE ANNUAL CONFERENCE!

Feeling lucky? Participate in the thrilling 50-50 raffle and seize the chance to win big! This raffle is your golden ticket to excitement and opportunity. Slots are offered on a first-come, first served basis. Purchase your raffle ticket before 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, September 10. If you win, you get 50% of the total pot—therefore, you can win BIG! Please purchase your tickets at the Silent Auction table. Tickets are cash only! Don't miss your shot at a prize and the opportunity to support a great cause. Purchase your raffle tickets today and be part of the excitement! The drawing is on Wednesday, September 10, at the 11:30 a.m. plenary session. You must be present to win.

SESSIONS GRID

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2025



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Pre-Conference Sessions

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION
 Knock and Open the STEAM
 Door for Students

ALL
 MEET IN GRAND HALL J
 (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION
 Sweet Home Chicago:
 Designing Dynamic Student
 Experiences

ALL
 MEET IN GRAND HALL GH
 (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

STATE LEADERS CAUCUS
 (Pre-registration required)

ALL
 GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL
 EAST TOWER)

REGISTRATION & EXHIBITS

11:00 AM – 7:00 PM

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

ALL
 RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL -
 EAST TOWER)

DISCOVER CHICAGO

ALL
 RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL -
 EAST TOWER)

EXHIBITS

ALL
 RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL -
 EAST TOWER)

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

PRE-CON 1
 Unlocking AI's Potential:
 Transformative Power of AI to
 Change Lives

ALL
 GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM
 LEVEL EAST TOWER)

PRE-CON 2
 Taking the Leadership Leap:
 Using Doctoral Study to
 Advance Your Career

ALL
 GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL
 EAST TOWER)

PRE-CON 3
 Onward & Upward: Preparing
 UB/UBMS for the Future

UB/UBMS
 GRAND HALL MN (BALLROOM
 LEVEL EAST TOWER)

PRE-CON 4
 The Nuts and Bolts of the
 Financial Aid Process

ALL
 GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM
 LEVEL EAST TOWER)

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

PRE-CON 5
 New to SSS: Start Off on the
 Right Track

ALL
 GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL
 EAST TOWER)

McNair Community Briefing

MCNAIR
 GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL
 - EAST TOWER)

Moderators Orientation

INVITATION ONLY

Newcomers Reception

**SPONSORED BY STUDY
 SMART TUTORS**

INVITATION ONLY

Opening Session

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

8:15 PM – 9:00 PM

RECEPTION

8:15 PM – 9:30 PM

OPENING SESSION
 Justice in Action: A Call to
 Courage with Reverend
 William J. Barber II

ALL
 GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM
 LEVEL EAST TOWER)

BOOK SALES & SIGNING
 White Poverty: How Exposing
 Myths About Race and Class
 Can Reconstruct American
 Democracy

ALL
 GRAND BALLROOM FOYER
 (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

CHAIR'S RECEPTION
 Celebrating the 60th
 Anniversary of the Higher
 Education Act

ALL
 GRAND BALLROOM FOYER AND
 GRAND HALL ROOMS (BALLROOM
 LEVEL EAST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

			PLENARY SESSION
7:00 AM – 8:00 AM	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	9:00 AM – 10:00 AM
<p>Wellness: Rise and Shine with Sunrise Yoga</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> HONG KONG (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)</p>	<p>Registration</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>Exhibits</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>Congressional Plenary: How Washington Is Keeping the Promise of the HEA at 60</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>
10:15 AM – 11:30 AM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS			
<p>1</p> <p>Language, Identity, and Advocacy: A Cultural Exploration through Bad Bunny's Music</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>COE ED TALK Learning From our Past: Influencing the Future - A Strategic Reflection</p> <p>OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>The Impact of Student Support Services: The COE Award for Institutional Effectiveness</p> <p>LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND</p> <p> SSS-2YR</p> <p> GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Demystifying Selective College Admissions for TRIO Students</p> <p>NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STRAND</p> <p> PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH</p> <p> GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Building Strategic Partnerships: Lessons from NCCU Student Leadership Conference</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Retention Matters: Equipping TRIO Youth for High School Completion and College Entry</p> <p> PRE-COLLEGE</p> <p> GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Utilizing Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality to Enhance Students Professional Opportunities</p> <p>TECH PATHWAYS STRAND</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Innovative Practices for Educational Opportunity Centers</p> <p> EOC</p> <p> MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>
<p>9</p> <p>The Keys We Carry: Leveraging Community Cultural Wealth to Empower First-Gen Success</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Building the Case — Data-Driven Strategies to Strengthen Your TRIO Program</p> <p> PRE-COLLEGE</p> <p> NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Actionable Evaluation Strategies to Measure in McNair</p> <p>MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND</p> <p> MCNAIR</p> <p> RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Bridging Worlds After the Lahaina Wildfires</p> <p> PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH</p> <p> RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Unlocking Global Opportunities Part 1: The Nuts and Bolts of Helping Your Students Pursue Study Abroad</p> <p>CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND</p> <p> COLLEGE</p> <p> RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)</p>	<p>14</p> <p>A Beginner's Guide to Developing Crucial Skills for Supporting Mental Health</p> <p>SMART START STAND</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Transforming Learning: The Impact of Assistive Technology in Education</p> <p>TECH PATHWAYS STRAND</p> <p> ALL</p> <p> REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)</p>	<p>16</p> <p>I AM FIRST: A Student Success Online Resource Hub for First-Generation College Success</p> <p>SMART START STAND</p> <p> COLLEGE</p> <p> REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)</p>

SESSIONS GRID

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS (CONT.)

17

Preparing for Success: ED's Priorities for the 2025–2030 SSS Cycle

👤 SSS

🏠 REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

18

Empowering Parents in Supporting Pre-College Students with Internships, Jobs, and Support Networks

👤 PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

🏠 ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

19

Student-led Programming as Leadership Development

👤 PRE-COLLEGE

🏠 SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

20

Individual Academic Plans for a Successful College Future

👤 PRE-COLLEGE

🏠 SKYWAY 272 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

PLENARY SESSION

11:45 AM – 1:45 PM

2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

21

Veteran Upward Bound Programs: Navigating Year 4 with ED Guidance

👤 VUB

🏠 TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Walter O. Mason Jr. Awards Luncheon

👤 ALL

🏠 GRAND BALLROOM (THIRD LEVEL)

College Fair

SPONSORED BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

👤 ALL

🏠 RIVERSIDE EAST, EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)

2:00 PM – 3:15 PM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS

22

From Data to Meaning — Centering Student Experience to Drive Equity and Success

👤 ALL

🏠 ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

23

Opening Doors to New Possibilities: Career Development Strategies for TRIO Students

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND

👤 SSS

🏠 GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

24

Navigating Career Paths: A Guide for Higher Education Professionals

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

👤 ALL

🏠 GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

25

Graduate School Admissions: What Your Students Need to Know

NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STRAND

👤 COLLEGE

🏠 GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

26

Maximizing the Final Year: Talent Search Outcomes, Reporting, and What's Next

👤 TS

🏠 GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

27

How to Get Great Press: Here's the Scoop

👤 ALL

🏠 GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

28

Tricks, Treats and Threats of Artificial Intelligence: Strategies for Success

👤 ALL

🏠 MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

29

Standards that Strengthen: Integrating CAS into TRIO Success Strategies

👤 ALL

🏠 MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

30

Thriving Through Change: McNair Roundtable Discussion

👤 MCNAIR

🏠 MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

31

Innovative Practices in Serving Veterans

👤 VUB

🏠 NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

32

The Snowball Effect Creating the Meltdown of Higher Education

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND

👤 ALL

🏠 RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

33

Beyond Boundaries: Strengthening TRIO Through Strategic Alliances

👤 TS

🏠 RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

2:00 PM – 3:15 PM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS

34

Unlocking Global Opportunities Part 2: Securing Financial Resources for Study Abroad

CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND

COLLEGE

RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

35

From Recruitment to Retention: Building Strong TRIO Teams That Thrive

KICKSTART YOUR JOURNEY AS A TRIO DIRECTOR STRAND

ALL

REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

36

Beyond the Hashtag: Advocacy in the Digital Age

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

37

Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math/Science Programs: Navigating Year 4 with ED Guidance

UB/UBMS

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

38

The Art of Personal Storytelling for Self-Advocacy

ALL

REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

39

Yes You Can: How to Earn a Terminal Degree While Working Full-Time as a TRIO Professional

ALL

ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

40

One Platform, Many Voices: Lessons Learned from Centralizing Online Student Support at a Small Colleges

SSS

SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

41

Expanding Impact: Engaging Participants Through Large-Scale Workshops

PRE-COLLEGE

SKYWAY 272 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

42

Expanding TRIO at Two-Year Colleges: Turning Program Success into Institutional Investment

SSS-2YR

TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

3:15 PM – 4:15 PM

College Fair and Exhibit Walkthrough

ALL

RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM • HOT TOPIC SESSIONS

HT1

EmPOWERing First-Generation Students Through Summer Enrichment Building Bridges from Middle School to College

ALL

ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT2

Navigating Life's Milestones

ALL

GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT3

Building Stronger TRIO Programs Through Enhanced Advising, Recordkeeping, and Compliance

ALL

GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT4

Beyond College Bound: Empowering Families Through the Full Journey of Higher Education

ALL

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT5

Customized TRIO Professional Development to Fit Your Needs

ALL

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT6

Unlocking Potential Through Esports — How Esports Builds Belonging, Skills, and Futures

ALL

GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT7

Money Moves: Unlocking Generational Wealth with Swagger & Smarts

ALL

MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT8

Show Me The Money! Create Financial Literacy Experiences Your Students Will Never Forget

ALL

MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT9

Empowering Pathways: Meeting the Needs of TRIO Learners so They Can Reach Their Next Best Level

ALL

MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT10

From Invisible to Invincible: Transforming First-Gen Student Success by Leveling the Playing Field for All.

ALL

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT11

Unforgettable Events: Learning that Lasts

ALL

RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT12

ALL
RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT13

Compass: Online Data Management and APR Solution

ALL

RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT14

BLUMEN SOFTWARE - Find Out Why It's Miles Ahead of Other Software

ALL

REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT15

One College Nation! – An Interactive Leadership Experience Focused on Effective Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Leadership Strategies That Work!

ALL

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT16

Winning Financially: Developing a Game Plan for Success, NOT Stress!

ALL

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT17

College Access on the Chopping Block: 3 Steps to Equip Your TRIO Students to Win Scholarships Now

ALL

REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT18

Pathways to College: How Pre-College Programs Are Supporting Students & Families Anytime, Anywhere

ALL

ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT21

Mastering TRIO Data Like a Pro with StudentAccess

ALL

TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

5:15 PM – 6:15 PM

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

8:00 PM – 10:00 PM

COE Update

ALL

GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Salsa Dancing

ALL

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Karaoke

SPONSORED BY GENIUS POTENTIAL

ALL

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL - WEST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

6:45 AM – 8:00 AM

Wellness Activity: Chi-Town Circuit

ALL

MEET IN THE LOBBY (LOBBY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Registration

ALL

RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Exhibits

ALL

RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)

PLENARY SESSION

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Communities in Action: The Early Years of the Upward Bound Program

SPONSORED BY THE ASCENDIUM GROUP

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND

UB

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

10:15 AM - 11:30 AM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS

43

Expanding Access: Pell Grant Reinstatement and TRIO's Role in Supporting Incarcerated Students

ADULTS

ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

44

Empowering TRIO Students for the 21st Century Workforce: A Research-Based Enhanced Collaborative Student Empowerment Career Services Model

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND

ALL

GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

45

COE ED Talk: 60 Years of Shaping Higher Education - Celebrating Progress, Confronting Challenges

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

ALL

GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

46

ALL

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

47

Empowering TRIO Personnel to Stay the Course

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

ALL

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

48

The Best Kept Secret: Selective College Affordability for Pell-Eligible and Lower Income Students

NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STRAND

PRE-COLLEGE

GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

49

COE ED Talk: Won't You Be My Neighbor: Building Bridges and Sharing Strategies Between TRIO CBOs and Institutions

PRE-COLLEGE

MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

50

Empowering TRIO Students with AI: Practical Strategies for Success

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL

MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

51

The Latest Outlook for Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

M McNAIR

MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

52

Pathways to Career Readiness: Increasing Students' Career-Aligned Social Capital

SSS

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

53

Degree Bound: Evidence-Based Strategies to Help TRIO Students Cross the Finish Line

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND

COLLEGE

RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

54

Breaking the Workshop: Reimagining How We Connect with Students

SSS

RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

10:15 AM - 11:30 AM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS

55

Celebrating 25 Years of the
COE Keith Sherin Global
Leaders Program

CREATING GLOBAL
CITIZENS STRAND

COLLEGE

RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)

56

All Eyes on Me: TRIO Branding
101

KICKSTART YOUR JOURNEY AS
A TRIO DIRECTOR STRAND

ALL

REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL
WEST TOWER)

57

You Down with GPT?... Yeah,
You Know Me!

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL
WEST TOWER)

58

Innovative Strategies for
Securing External Funding to
Support TRIO Programs

ALL

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL
WEST TOWER)

59

Strengthening Civic
Engagement Among Students

COLLEGE

REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL
WEST TOWER)

60

Navigating Our Moral
Compass: Ethical Standards
in Hyper-Partisan Times

ALL

ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE
LEVEL EAST TOWER)

61

Strengthening Community
Partnerships to Enhance
Veteran Support Services

VETERANS

SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL
EAST TOWER)

62

NTAA Engagement
Ambassador Cohort:
Elevating Alumni Leadership
& Strengthening TRIO Alumni
Networks

ALL

SKYWAY 272 (SKYWAY LEVEL
EAST TOWER)

63

Linking Up for Lasting
Impact: How TRIO Programs
are Strengthening Campus
Collaborations

SSS-2YR

TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL
WEST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

11:30 AM – 2:30 PM

Free Professional Headshots
 ALL
 RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)

11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Lunch on Your Own

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM • HOT TOPICS

HT22
 Strategic Learning Assessment (SLA) and the Self-Determination Student Scale (SDSS): Helping Students Become More Strategic, Self-Regulated, Lifelong Learners
 ALL
 ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT23
 How COE's Tool, empower 2.0 Is Ushering in a New Digital Era for TRIO
 ALL
 GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM • HOT TOPICS

HT24
 Global Pathways to Leadership: Puerto Rico Experiences that Transform
 ALL
 GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT25
 Genius Engagement: The Silent Crisis Killing TRIO Outcomes (and How Beats, AI, & Algo'Rhythms Can Save Them)
 ALL
 GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT26
 Opening Doors, Changing Lives: Expanding Access and Impact Through Advanced Placement
 ALL
 GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT27
 Building Smart Financial Habits for Success
 ALL
 GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT28
 Elevate Your Program's Impact: Maximize Student Engagement, Achieve Proven Results!
 ALL
 MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT29
 Show Me The Money! Create Financial Literacy Experiences Your Students Will Never Forget
 ALL
 MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT30
 What If Your Curriculum Could Do More? Discover DreamCatcher Curriculum!
 ALL
 MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT31
 ALL
 NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL - WEST TOWER)

HT32
 Workforce Ready: Measure & Increase TRIO Students' Career Readiness Skills & Employability
 ALL
 RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT33
 ALL
 SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT34
 Connect. Teach. Entertain. Grow: Helping Your Students Unlock Their Potential
 ALL
 RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT35
 Level Up Your Learners: Digital College Exam Prep for TRIO Success
 PRE-COLLEGE
 REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT36
 Breaking Barriers in STEM: Hands-On, Low-Cost Activities for Every Classroom
 ALL
 REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT37
 Simplifying the Path to College with Common App
 ALL
 REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT38
 Unlocking Academic Success with Tutor.com: Empowering TRIO Students Anytime, Anywhere!
 ALL
 REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

HT39
 Fueling Persistence from Day One: Scalable Online Tools for College Programs
 COLLEGE
 ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

HT42
 Mastering TRIO Data Like a PRO with StudentAccess
 ALL
 TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL - WEST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

2:45 PM – 4:00 PM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS

64 Creating Dynamic Cultural and Academic Experiences SSS ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)	66 Delegate Like a Pro: Passing the Baton Without Dropping It LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND ALL GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)	68 How to Garner Your Institution's Support ALL GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)	70 From Applicant to Reviewer: Demystifying the Grant Review Process ALL MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)
71 Beyond Access: Technology, Policy, and Innovation in Expanding Economic Mobility for TRIO Students TECH PATHWAYS STRAND ALL MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)	72 Navigating Hidden Expectations in Graduate School MCNAIR MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)	73 Connecting the Dots of Workforce Skills and Engineering: An Introduction to Sea Perch and Solar Energy PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)	74 Be Your Own Evaluator: A How-To Session on Conducting Your Own TRIO Mini-Study MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND ALL RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)
75 Building Partnerships for College Completion and Career Success: Lessons Learned from All-In Milwaukee COLLEGE RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)	76 Creating Global Citizens: Expanding Horizons through TRIO and Opportunity Programs CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)	77 Lessons from Early Organizing: Reflections by COE's Founding President OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND ALL REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)	78 Unlocking Insights: How AI Transforms TRIO Data into Actionable Strategies TECH PATHWAYS STRAND ALL REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)
79 NTAA Engagement Ambassador Cohort: Elevating Alumni Leadership & Strengthening TRIO Alumni Networks ALL REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)	80 Maximizing the Final Year: EOC Outcomes, Reporting, and What's Next EOC REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)		

PLENARY SESSION

4:15 PM – 5:15 PM

The Role of the States in Higher Education
ALL
GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

DINNER

7:30 PM – 9:15 PM

Educational Opportunity Dinner (Ticketed Event – Included in COE Registration)
ALL
GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL - EAST TOWER)

9:30 PM – 12:00 AM

Dance
ALL
GRAND HALL (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Cash Bar
ALL
GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL - EAST TOWER)

SESSIONS GRID

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM	PLENARY SESSION 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	PLENARY SESSION 10:15 AM – 11:15 AM	PLENARY SESSION 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Information Booth ALL GRAND BALLROOM FOYER (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)	Is Economic Mobility Possible without a College Degree in the Current Workforce? ALL GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)	Update from the U.S. Department of Education ALL GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)	Conference Awards, Remarks from the 2025 - 2026 Board Chair, and Installation of Officers ALL GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)
12:30 PM			
Conference Concludes			

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 7, 2025

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

ALL DAY PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Pre-registration is required.

Knock and Open the STEAM Door for Students

ALL
MEET IN GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join us for an exciting day that dives into the transformative power of STEAM education! Through various hands-on activities across the vibrant city of Chicago, we'll explore how interactive STEAM experiences can unlock new opportunities for educators and students. Participants will engage in innovative, collaborative activities to spark curiosity, boost critical thinking, and fuel creativity. This pre-conference will equip educators with practical tools and strategies to create immersive learning experiences that embrace inquiry-based approaches, promote problem-solving, and ignite a passion for exploration. By harnessing the power of project-based learning, we aim to break down barriers, encourage diverse participation, and empower learners from all backgrounds to imagine a future where STEAM is at the heart of their journey. Get ready to be inspired!

FACILITATORS

Maggie Cinto

Director, PEOPLE Program
 University of Wisconsin,
 Milwaukee
 Milwaukee, WI

Leo Conway

Director, Upward Bound
 Pennsylvania State University
 University Park, PA

Sweet Home Chicago:

Designing Dynamic Student Travel Experiences

ALL
MEET IN GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Pre-registration is required.

Explore the Windy City on a guided tour led by experienced TRIO professionals and industry experts, and discover how to craft engaging and unforgettable student experiences. This interactive pre-conference workshop, Sweet Home Chicago, immerses participants in the city's vibrant culture and history while equipping them with practical tools to design dynamic student tours. Throughout the workshop, you will learn how to plan purposefully by identifying clear goals and selecting tour elements that truly engage students. You'll explore storytelling techniques to build captivating narratives, while also gaining strategies to manage the logistics of transportation, accommodations, budgets, and schedules with ease. Equally important, the workshop emphasizes safety and inclusion, offering approaches to ensure accessibility and create welcoming, student-centered experiences. Whether your destination is Chicago or another city, you'll leave prepared to design transformative journeys that spark curiosity, foster personal growth, and align with your program's educational goals.

FACILITATORS

Scott Clark

Independent Consultant
 Johnson City, TN

Chris George

Director, TRIO Programs
 Southcentral Kentucky
 Community & Technical College

Bowling Green, KY

Circe Thompson

Lead Tour Consultant
 GL Tours
 Fontana, WI

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION

Pre-registration is required.

2025 TRIO State Leader Caucus

ALL
GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

COE invites all current board members of state and chapter associations to a half-day session dedicated to strengthening collective efforts at the state level. The program offers opportunities to build connections, exchange strategies, and reaffirm the critical role TRIO programs play in local communities. Participants will engage in collaborative discussions on organizing, engagement, and innovation, as well as explore effective approaches to student leadership, government involvement, and partnership with corporations and funders. The session is designed to inspire renewed commitment and leadership, equipping participants to carry forward the work of TRIO with greater momentum and vision.

FEATURED GUEST SPEAKER

Senator Dora E. Drake

Minority Caucus Vice-Chair,
 Wisconsin State Legislature
 Madison, WI

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Pre-registration is required.

Unlocking AI's Potential: Transformative Power of AI to Change Lives

ALL
GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping both professional workflows and student learning. It's a skill everyone should master, but how do you "upskill" with AI? This pre-conference will explore both the professional and student applications of AI in a two-fold approach. This session will focus on using AI to enhance office functionality and provide tools to improve efficiency. It will also explore AI's role in supporting students, offering tools, strategies, and campus policies to ensure academic integrity. Participants will leave with knowledge of how to leverage AI effectively for their programs and how to ensure students use AI responsibly and effectively.

PRESENTERS

Sundiata Jangha

Director, Pipeline Programs
 University of Maryland,
 Baltimore County
 Baltimore, MD

Leticia Trevino

Manager, Growth Coaching
 Guild Education
 Denver, CO

Taking the Leadership Leap: Using Doctoral Study to Advance Your Career

ALL
GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

In the evolving landscape of higher education, a doctoral degree can be a powerful catalyst for career advancement and transformative leadership. This interactive pre-conference

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

session provides the tools, insights, and strategies to confidently navigate the journey to earning your doctorate. Together, we'll explore the pivotal decisions, from choosing the right program to determining the ideal timing for your goals. Using practical tools and a decision-making framework, you'll actively research programs that align with your aspirations, collaborate with peers, and map out a personalized action plan. Whether you're just starting to consider advanced studies or actively planning your next steps, this session will leave you inspired and equipped to pursue your academic and professional goals. Don't miss this opportunity to take your career to the next level!

PRESENTERS

Darica Simon Baptiste

Director, TRIO Programs
 Baton Rouge Community College
 Baton Rouge, LA

Raymond Cabrera

Director, Upward Bound
 University of South Florida
 Tampa, FL

Onward & Upward: Preparing Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math- Science for the Future

UB/UBMS

GRAND HALL MN (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

In these dynamic times, Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science practitioners need to reflect on what elements of their programs are thriving and what need to be to meet the needs of the students and communities we serve. In this session, participants will examine their current programmatic strengths, share best practices, and work alongside seasoned professionals to create actionable pathways to prepare their UB/UBMS program for future demands.

FACILITATORS

Jennifer Sims

Director, Upward Bound
 University of Nevada, Reno
 Reno, NV

Noah Walls

Program Coordinator, Upward Bound
 University of Nevada, Reno
 Reno, NV

Jen Zarco

Assistant Director, Upward Bound
 University of Nevada, Reno
 Reno, NV

The Nuts and Bolts of the Financial Aid Process

ALL

GRANT HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

The role of financial aid in promoting social mobility for low-income, first-generation students cannot be overstated. Research from the Pell Institute shows that students who receive financial aid are 20% more likely to persist beyond their first year. At the same time, findings from the Education Policy Institute reveal that college attendance rates increase by 4% for every \$1,000 increase in aid. These outcomes underscore the importance of understanding the financial aid process, essential for practitioners seeking to support their students on the path to degree completion. This session will introduce participants to the fundamentals of the system of financial assistance, equipping TRIO professionals with the knowledge to navigate its complexities and recognize key intervention points. Attendees will learn about the Federal Student Aid ID and FAFSA completion, the verification process, how to interpret and explain award letters, and the requirements of Satisfactory Academic Progress. The session will also address professional judgment, giving practitioners the tools to advocate effectively for their

students and ensure they can access the resources needed to persist and succeed.

PRESENTER

Connie Jaime-Lujan

Retired EOC Director
 Colorado State University, Fort Collins
 Fort Collins, CO

New to Student Support Services: Start on the Right Track

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Welcome to TRIO! Starting a new grant is more than just a challenge—it's the beginning of a transformative journey for you and the students you serve. Whether you are stepping into leadership for the very first time or continuing a program with renewed funding, the early days can feel daunting. But you are not alone. This session is your launchpad. We'll break down the essentials—key regulations, the language of TRIO, and the foundational practices that guide our work—while also equipping you with strategies to build a strong team, recruit students with intention, and deliver services that change lives. You'll leave with not only the tools to succeed, but also the inspiration to lead boldly and create a program that makes a lasting impact.

PRESENTERS

Rafael Orozco

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program and Student Support Services
 University of Colorado, Denver
 Denver, CO

Amy Verlanic

Former Student Support Services – STEM Director
 President, ALV Consulting
 Butte, MT

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

OPENING PLENARY SESSION

Justice in Action: A Call to Courage with Reverend William J. Barber II

ALL

(BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Lauded as one of the foremost civil rights activists of the 21st century, Reverend William J. Barber II has spent most of his life fighting for equal rights for people of all backgrounds – regardless of race, class, or creed. From his early days as a student organizer to his work leading the NAACP North Carolina State Chapter to his founding of the Repairers of the Breach and the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, he has fought for policies that promote economic, political, environmental, and social justice for all. During this stirring keynote address, Reverend Barber will challenge the college access and success community to persevere in the face of daunting obstacles of the present day.

PRESENTER

Reverend William J. Barber II

President and Senior Lecturer, Repairers of the Breach
 Co-Chair, Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

Professor and Founding Director, Center for Public Theology and Public Policy, Yale Divinity School
 Goldsboro, NC

8:15 PM – 9:00 PM

Book Signing

ALL

(BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Immediately following the keynote, join Reverend William J. Barber II for a signing of his book *White Poverty*. Pick up a signed copy of the powerful collection of sermons and

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

speeches that sparked the Moral Mondays movement and helped build a new “big tent” civil-rights movement—uniting people across race, class, party, and identity to demand justice. Don’t miss this chance to meet the author and take home an inspiring roadmap for civic courage and collective action.

8:15 PM – 9:30 PM

RECEPTION

Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Higher Education Act

ALL
GRAND BALLROOM FOYER/HALL/ETC (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join COE Board Chair Mara Luna for an evening reception welcoming all conference participants. This is a relaxed opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, meet new allies, and celebrate TRIO’s work and the 60th anniversary of the Higher Education Act. Enjoy light hors d’oeuvres, beverages, and plenty of conversation and networking as we gather to recharge, reflect, and strengthen the community that opens doors and changes lives.

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

7:00 AM – 8:00 AM

WELLNESS

Rise and Shine with Sunrise Yoga

ALL
HONG KONG (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Ease into the week with a rejuvenating sunrise yoga experience that welcomes you into the day with clarity, balance, and renewed energy. As the first light of morning stretches across the sky, join us for a guided flow designed to awaken your body and calm your mind, setting the stage for a productive and inspiring day ahead. This session blends gentle movements with mindful breathing, helping you release tension, find focus, and reconnect with your inner rhythm. Whether you are brand new to yoga or have years of practice, you’ll be guided through poses that are accessible, restorative, and energizing. The goal isn’t perfection—it’s presence

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

PLENARY SESSION

How Washington Is Keeping the Promise of the Higher Education Act at 60

ALL
GRAND BALLROOM FOYER/HALL/ETC (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

As the Higher Education Act marks its 60th anniversary, COE convenes a conversation with Members of Congress who shape the policies that determine whether first-generation, low-income students can not only enter college, but graduate. This high-stakes plenary will dig into the future of higher

education and TRIO’s role in student success. Lawmakers will reflect on six decades of progress since 1965 and outline where bipartisan cooperation is possible—and where the fault lines lie.

PRESENTERS

Congressman Danny Davis (D-IL-07)
 U.S. Representative for Illinois’s 7th Congressional District
 Washington, DC

Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-WI-04)
 U.S. Representative for Wisconsin’s 4th Congressional District
 Washington, DC

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

1.

Language, Identity, and Advocacy: A Cultural Exploration through Bad Bunny’s Music

ALL
ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Use Bad Bunny’s *Debí Tirar Más Fotos* as a classroom lab for cultural literacy and civic voice. This session uses the album’s rich blend of Puerto Rican musical traditions and frank social commentary on identity, gentrification, and politics as a powerful entry point for classroom and campus conversations. Participants will get concrete strategies for analyzing lyrics and music as primary texts, designing culturally responsive lessons that center students’ lived experiences, and turning artistic expression into civic engagement projects that amplify marginalized voices.

You’ll leave with ready-to-use activities—from guided lyric dissections and place-based history modules to community-based art projects and advocacy toolkits—that help students reclaim cultural heritage, practice critical media literacy, and craft public-facing campaigns rooted in their communities. Whether you teach high school, run a pre-college program, or advise college students, this session shows how local artists can catalyze identity formation, collective storytelling, and meaningful social change.

PRESENTERS

Mayrel Artilles
 Education Department Director & Academic Advisor
 Antillean Adventist University
 Mayaguez, PR

Mara Luna
 Program Director, Upward Bound
 University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras
 San Juan, PR

MODERATOR

Fabiola Falto Castro
 Director, Student Support Services ESL
 Antillean Adventist University
 Mayaguez, PR

2.

COE ED Talk: Learning From Our Past, Influencing the Future - A Strategic Reflection

SPONSORED BY ASCENDIUM EDUCATION GROUP

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND

ALL
GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

History is our playbook. Join an interactive session with seasoned TRIO leaders who lived—and won—past battles to defend funding, protect programs, and preserve our students’ futures. Through firsthand stories, strategic



case studies, and facilitated small-group exercises, you'll learn the tactics that turned crisis into comeback: rapid-response advocacy, coalition-building, persuasive narratives, and campus-based mobilization. Walk away with concrete templates, message briefs, and an action plan you can use immediately to anticipate threats, organize your community, and protect TRIO today and tomorrow. This is not a lecture—it's a strategy lab to sharpen your defenses and multiply our collective power.

FACILITATORS

Maureen Hoyler

Senior Advisor to the President
 Council for Opportunity in Education
 Washington, DC

Monte Perez

Interim President
 East Los Angeles College
 Los Angeles, CA

3.

The Impact of Student Support Services: The COE Award for Institutional Effectiveness

SPONSORED BY GMA CONSTRUCTION

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

2-YR COLLEGES

GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) delivers proven gains in persistence and completion for participating students—now imagine that impact scaled across an entire campus. This session is your roadmap for doing just that and for competing for the COE Award for Institutional Effectiveness (three \$10,000 awards). Join COE leaders and Advisory Committee members to learn how community colleges are translating SSS practices—intrusive advising, cohort models, data-driven evaluation, and holistic supports—into institution-wide strategies that

boost retention and graduation. You'll walk away with clear, practical tools: a step-by-step guide to the application, insider scoring tips, examples of scalable SSS practices, and a checklist of evidence and metrics reviewers want to see. Designed for community college presidents, provosts, SSS directors, and student-success teams, this session includes a live Q&A so you can assess your readiness, sharpen your submission, and position your campus to win national recognition and unrestricted funding to deepen student impact. Apply by October 15 — start here.

PRESENTERS

Alfred Herrera

Retired Assistant Dean for Academic Partnerships and Director, Center for Community College Partnerships
 University of California, Los Angeles
 Los Angeles, CA

Nicole Norfles

Director of Program, Practice and Innovation
 Council for Opportunity in Education
 Washington, DC

James Whitney

Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
 Mercer County Community College
 West Windsor, NJ

MODERATOR

Starr Hayes

Director, Student Support Services
 Technical College of the Lowcountry
 Beaufort, SC

4.

Demystifying Selective College Admissions for TRIO Students

SPONSORED BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STRAND

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Too many talented TRIO students self-eliminate from top-tier colleges before they even apply—assuming they won't be admitted or couldn't afford the price tag. This practical, panel-driven session flips that script. Admissions officers from a range of selective institutions will reveal the real criteria that matter, demystify essays and recommendation strategies, and show how TRIO supports can position students to compete successfully. You'll leave with concrete, replicable tactics for advising students: how to build a competitive application timeline, which experiences truly move the admissions needle, and how to craft compelling narratives that reflect resilience and potential. The conversation will also unpack financial aid realities—what merit and need-based packages typically cover, how to navigate net-price calculators, and negotiation strategies that often make elite colleges affordable for low-income, first-generation learners. Bring your questions and real student scenarios for a Q&A that turns theory into immediate action.

PRESENTERS

Kevin Hudson

Associate Director, Institutional Diversity and College Opportunity
 Princeton University
 Princeton, NJ

Calvin Wise

Deputy Dean, Admissions, Undergraduate Admissions
 Johns Hopkins University
 Baltimore, MD

MODERATOR

Jaila Morant

Program Advisor/Coordinator, Upward Bound
 Horry-Georgetown Technical College
 Conway, SC

5.

Building Strategic Partnerships: Lessons from NCCU Student Leadership Conference

ALL

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Great programs don't happen alone—North Carolina Central University's Student Leadership Conference shows what's possible when institutions build strategic, mission-driven partnerships. In this session, you'll get a behind-the-scenes look at how NCCU aligned campus units, community organizations, alumni networks, and funders to grow the conference's reach, deepen student leadership development, and secure sustainable resources. Through concrete examples and honest lessons learned, attendees will discover how to identify the right partners, craft win-win agreements, negotiate in-kind and financial support, and design shared metrics that keep collaborations accountable and impactful. Leave with a practical partnership playbook—including conversation starters, outreach templates, and a checklist for maintaining momentum—so you can expand opportunities, amplify student voice, and create transformative experiences on your own campus.

PRESENTER

Dekendrick Murray

Executive Director for Student Access and Success
 North Carolina Central University
 Durham, NC

MODERATOR


Cindy Wells

Director, Talent Search
 North Central Missouri College
 Trenton, MO

6.

Retention Matters: Equipping TRIO Youth for High School Completion and College Entry

 **PRE-COLLEGE**

 **GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

Keeping students connected from high school to college requires more than good intentions—it demands evidence-based timing, targeted interventions, and community-centered supports. This session digs into the latest research and frontline practices that measurably improve retention in TRIO pre-college programs, with a sharp focus on ensuring high school students remain engaged and graduate college-ready. You'll examine concrete strategies for building early college awareness, sequencing academic supports so they arrive when students need them most, and deploying proactive interventions—everything from strategic check-ins and summer bridge models to family engagement that strengthens college-going cultures at home. We'll also address effective re-engagement approaches for students who have left school, offering tools to welcome them back and place them on a clear pathway to credentials. Expect practical frameworks, real program case studies, and ready-to-use tools you can implement the week after you return to campus: an intervention timeline, a parent-engagement roadmap, retention metrics that matter, and templates for re-entry programs that work. Leave empowered to reduce attrition, boost on-time graduation, and sustain student momentum all the way to postsecondary success.

PRESENTERS

Sebastian Myrick

Executive Director, TRIO
Programs

South Seattle Community
College
Seattle, WA

Jennifer Sims

Director, Upward Bound
University of Nevada, Reno
Reno, NV

MODERATOR

Alexis Royal

Associate Director, Upward
Bound

Abilene Christian University
Abilene, TX

7.

Utilizing Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality to Enhance Students' Professional Opportunities

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

 **ALL**

 **MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

Technology is no longer an optional add-on—artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are reshaping how students learn, practice job skills, and access career pathways. This fast-paced, practice-focused session shows how TRIO programs can responsibly democratize these tools so first-generation and low-income students gain the same competitive advantages as their peers. Panelists from TRIO programs and industry partners will demonstrate real-world applications—AI tutors that personalize study plans, VR simulations that let students rehearse workplace scenarios, and AR tools that translate classroom learning into hands-on career tasks—then walk through the partnerships, budgets, and training models that made them scalable and sustainable. You'll hear success stories, lessons learned, and practical implementation strategies for building equitable tech pathways—from sourcing low-cost platforms and training staff to designing accessible experiences and measuring career outcomes. Bring your questions and leave with a clear roadmap to pilot AI/VR/AR initiatives that boost

engagement, accelerate career readiness, and expand social and economic mobility for the students you serve.

PRESENTERS

Danielle Daniels

Assistant Director of Diversity in
STEM, David T. Kearns Center
for Leadership and Diversity
University of Rochester
Rochester, NY

Bruce Dunams

Founder and CEO
The Inventory Factory
York, PA

Bianca Jackson

Founder
BrickRose Exchange
Baltimore, MD

MODERATOR

Chelsey Toms

Academic Advisor, Upward
Bound
Davis and Elkins College
Elkins, WV

8.

Innovative Practices for Educational Opportunity Centers

 **EOC**

 **MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

Adult learners face unique hurdles—work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and credit loss—that demand fresh, community-rooted solutions. This interactive session spotlights how Educational Opportunity Centers are rewriting the playbook with bold programming, strategic partnerships, and smart use of technology to meet adults where they are. Hear concrete case studies of wraparound supports, stackable credentials, accelerated re-entry pathways, and employer-aligned training that have increased enrollment, persistence, and job placement. Engage directly with EOC leaders in problem-solving labs, walk away with ready-to-use tools (partnership

templates, outreach scripts, and tech-integration checklists), and leave inspired with practical strategies to expand access, reduce barriers, and transform outcomes for today's adult learners.

PRESENTERS

Teriki Barnes

Director, EOC and Upward
Bound Math-Science
Southeastern Oklahoma State
University
Durant, OK

Karen Keim

Director, EOC and Talent
Search
University of Maine
Orono, ME

MODERATOR

Andrea Cummings

Program Director, EOC
Florida State College
Jacksonville, FL

9.

The Keys We Carry: Leveraging Community Cultural Wealth to Empower First-Gen Success

 **ALL**

 **MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

First-generation and low-income students arrive with powerful, often overlooked strengths—aspirations, bilingualism, family networks, community knowledge, resilient navigation skills, and resistance wisdom. Grounded in Dr. Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth framework, this interactive session reframes those strengths as the foundation for transformative TRIO practice. We'll unpack each form of cultural capital and surface concrete ways to design programming—advising scripts, mentorship structures, curriculum tweaks, and family-engagement practices—that honor students' lived experience while dismantling deficit-based assumptions. Through short case studies and hands-on planning

activities, you'll practice turning asset-based language into measurable program changes (recruitment messaging, student onboarding, retention checkpoints, and assessment metrics). Participants will leave with a practical toolkit: ready-to-use prompts for asset-based advising, classroom and outreach templates that center cultural wealth, and an action plan to shift institutional narratives. Join us to celebrate the strengths your students bring, amplify their voices, and build more equitable pathways to college completion.

PRESENTERS

Alfonso Amanecer

Assistant Dean of Richmond College

University of Richmond
 Richmond, VA

Martha Villegas Miranda

Director, Talent Search
 Broward College
 Fort Lauderdale, FL

MODERATOR

Petra Lopez-Vasquera

Program Director, Upward Bound

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
 Edinburg, TX

10.

Building the Case — Data-Driven Strategies to Strengthen Your TRIO Program

PRE-COLLEGE

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Too often, our reports reduce students to a handful of metrics that miss the skills and resilience driving long-term success. This session shows you how to combine traditional measures—enrollment, persistence, grades—with nontraditional indicators like socio-emotional competencies, engagement patterns, and behavioral trends to build a fuller, equity-centered picture of impact. Anchored by a

real-world case study and rigorous data, we'll identify where institutional goals and student realities diverge and demonstrate practical fixes that strengthen program practice and advocacy. You'll explore concrete strategies for collecting valid nontraditional data, modeling longitudinal outcomes, and translating mixed-data insights into compelling narratives for campus leaders and funders. Expect hands-on examples of dashboards, sample indicators, reporting templates, and message frames that spotlight student growth rather than deficit. Leave with a ready-to-use toolkit to improve your reporting, defend program value, and make a persuasive case for investments that advance both opportunity and measurable student success.

PRESENTERS

Kenneth Carroll

Director, Academy of Construction and Design
 DC Students Construction Trades Foundation
 Washington, DC

De Angelo Rorie

Director, Office for TRIO and College Preparatory Programs
 University of the District of Columbia
 Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Xong Lor

Director, Talent Search
 University of Arkansas
 Fayetteville, AR

11.

Actionable Evaluation Strategies to Measure What Matters the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Programs

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND

M McNAIR

RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Strong data practice is more

than compliance—it's your most powerful tool to sharpen programming, advocate for resources, and guide scholars to doctoral success. This hands-on session shows Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program directors and staff how to use both formative and summative data to align activities with outcomes, catch problems early, and tell a persuasive, equity-centered story about your program's impact. We'll move from strategy to practice: learn how to define meaningful, program-specific metrics tied to PhD enrollment and persistence, design quick-cycle formative checks that inform advising and research preparation, and build summative measures that demonstrate long-term return on investment. Through collaborative exercises and real-world examples, you'll develop prototype indicators, review sample dashboards and reporting language, and explore tools that make ongoing evaluation sustainable—without overburdening staff or students. Leave with a concrete roadmap: sample instruments, dashboard templates, data-collection timing, and messaging you can use with campus leaders and funders to elevate McNair's outcomes and secure the support your scholars need. Bring a challenge or a data question—we'll help you make it measurable.

PRESENTERS

Christabelle Dragoo

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program
 University of Oregon
 Eugene, OR

Alice Ho

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program
 University of California, Los Angeles
 Los Angeles, CA

MODERATOR

Esther Suswam

Associate Professor and Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

Miles College
 Birmingham, AL

12.

Bridging Worlds After the Lahaina Wildfires

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

When the August 8, 2023, wildfires devastated Lahaina, Hawaii, Upward Bound students at Lahainaluna High School confronted enormous loss and disruption. This moving qualitative case study—grounded in Bridging Multiple Worlds Theory—centers student voices to reveal what helped them stay in school, what obstacles blocked their progress, and which supports mattered most in the months afterward. Join researchers and program leaders as they translate rich, trauma-informed findings into practical strategies you can use immediately: scalable re-engagement protocols, family- and community-centered supports, campus-based mental-health partnerships, documentation and enrollment fixes, and policy levers that protect students in crisis. You'll leave with concrete tools, communication templates, and program designs to strengthen resilience, re-enroll displaced learners, and sustain post-crisis pathways to college for the students you serve.

PRESENTER

Jana Wilkinson

Director, Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science
 University of Hawaii, Maui College
 Kahului, HI

MODERATOR

David Smith

Executive Director, TRIO Programs
 Tusculum University
 Greeneville, TN



13.

Unlocking Global Opportunities Part I: The Nuts and Bolts of Helping Your Students Pursue Study Abroad

CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND

COLLEGE
RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Study abroad can be life-changing—but only when students have the proper roadmap. This fast-paced, practice-focused session walks you step-by-step through sending TRIO students abroad: choosing inclusive programs, navigating applications and visas, securing passports, accessing funding and scholarships, handling credit transfer, and building trauma-informed pre-departure orientations. You'll leave with ready-to-use checklists, sample outreach language for first-generation learners, risk-management and accessibility strategies, and a toolkit for removing common barriers—from financial constraints to family concerns—so students are prepared, safe, and supported at every step. Join advisors, program directors, and study-abroad officers to learn how to design equitable international experiences that expand horizons, build confidence, and propel students toward long-term academic and career success.

PRESENTERS

Angelica Benitez

Director, Student Support Services and Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

Rider University
 Lawrenceville, NJ

Amber Mercier

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
 IES Study Abroad
 Chicago, IL

MODERATOR

Sara Ritter

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program
 Boise State University
 Boise, ID

14.

A Beginner's Guide to Developing Crucial Skills for Supporting Mental Health

ALL
REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

College life can strain even the most resilient students—especially first-generation and low-income learners juggling academics, work, and family responsibilities. This hands-on session equips TRIO and student-success professionals with practical, evidence-informed skills to recognize distress, respond confidently, and connect students to care promptly. You'll practice clear, compassionate communication techniques for crisis and non-crisis situations, learn brief interventions that stabilize students in the moment, and master referral protocols that make warm handoffs to counseling and community resources seamless. Facilitators will model difficult conversations, share screening tools and safety planning templates, and provide scripts and checklists you can use immediately. Leave prepared to strengthen students' resilience, reduce stigma, and create a culture of care on your campus—so every student has the support they need to thrive.

PRESENTERS

David Rivera

Associate Professor
 CUNY Queens College
 Queens, NY

Victoria Smith

Grants Program Coordinator, International Arctic Research Center
 University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Fairbanks, AK

MODERATOR

Dolores Gomez

Director, Student Support Services-Teacher's Prep
 Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
 Corpus Christi, TX

15.

Transforming Learning: The Impact of Assistive Technology in Education

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL
REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Technology can open doors—or widen disparities—depending on how it's used. This practical, student-centered session shows how assistive technology transforms classrooms and student services so learners with diverse needs can fully participate, progress, and succeed. We'll demystify high- and low-tech options—from screen readers and speech-to-text to adaptive note-taking apps and simple browser extensions—then show how to evaluate needs, choose cost-effective solutions, and embed supports using Universal Design for Learning. Through hands-on demos, real campus case studies, and procurement and training tips, you'll learn how to create inclusive implementation plans, secure funding, and train staff and student leaders to scale supports sustainably. Leave with an action toolkit: an accessibility checklist, sample accommodation workflows, demo accounts to try back home, and communication templates to build campus buy-in—so assistive tech becomes an accelerator for success, not a barrier.

PRESENTERS

Mary Kate Junk

Math Specialist, Student Support Services
 Marquette University
 Milwaukee, WI

Emily Raclaw

Director, On Your Marq
 Marquette University
 Milwaukee, WI

MODERATOR

Valton Stinton

Director, Student Support Services
 Del Mar College
 Corpus Christi, TX

16.

Innovative Strategies for Securing External Funding to Support TRIO Programs

ALL
REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Private foundations can be game-changers for TRIO programs—unlocking resources for innovation, staffing, evaluation, and sustainability beyond federal grants. This practical session demystifies the foundation landscape and gives TRIO professionals the strategies they need to secure external support that complements and amplifies program impact. Join grant officers and successful TRIO grantees as they walk through how to identify mission-aligned funders, craft persuasive third-party proposals, and build relationships that move beyond one-off gifts to multi-year partnerships. You'll learn how to present program outcomes in funder-ready language, negotiate indirect-cost support, and use foundations to pilot ideas that position your program for larger investments. Expect concrete tools—sample pitch language, prospect-research templates, budgeting exemplars, and a follow-up plan you can use to move funders from interest to commitment. Leave ready to diversify your funding mix, strengthen institutional partnerships, and accelerate student-centered innovations.

PRESENTERS

Joan Becker

Retired Vice-Provost for



Academic Support, University of Massachusetts, Boston
 Consultant, Council for Opportunity in Education
 Boston, MA

Michelle Danvers Foust

Director, TRIO Pre-College Programs
 CUNY Bronx Community College
 Brooklyn, NY

MODERATOR

Alison Mall

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program
 University of Alaska, Anchorage
 Anchorage, AK

17.

Preparing for Success: ED's Priorities for the 2025–2030 SSS Cycle

SSS
REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Student Support Services senior staff from the Student Support Division at ED will outline expectations for the 2025–2029 SSS grant cycle. This session will include a brief recap of the recent competition, along with a discussion of performance expectations for the upcoming year, particularly related to outcomes and reporting requirements. Participants will be able to engage directly with Department staff to clarify any questions.

PRESENTER

James Davis

Director, Undergraduate Programs
 Student Service, Office of Postsecondary Education U.S. Department of Education
 Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Ronnie Gross

Executive Director, TRIO Programs
 East Tennessee State University
 Johnson City, TN

18.

Empowering Parents in Supporting Pre-College Students with Internships, Jobs, and Support Networks

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH
ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Parents are powerful allies in students' college and career journeys—but many lack the information and confidence to guide exploration beyond familiar options. This practical session shows TRIO professionals how to turn parents into informed partners who champion internships, mentorships, and non-traditional career pathways. You'll learn research-backed outreach strategies and conversation frameworks for addressing common parental concerns—safety, affordability, career stability, and fit—while reframing work-based learning as a route to long-term success. Through sample family-friendly tools, communication templates, and role-play scenarios, participants will practice facilitating productive parent–student dialogues, connecting families to concrete internship and workforce programs, and removing access barriers. Leave with a ready-to-implement plan to build stronger parent engagement that boosts student confidence, expands career options, and increases tangible opportunities for upward mobility.

PRESENTERS

A. Roxanne Gregg

Executive Director, TRIO Programs
 University of Notre Dame
 Notre Dame, IN

Angie Aguilar

Director, Upward Bound
 Harvey Mudd College
 Claremont, CA

MODERATOR

Michael Isaac

Director, Upward Bound
 Arkansas Baptist College

Maumelle, AR

19.

Student-led Programming as Leadership Development

PRE-COLLEGE
SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

What happens when students move from participants to designers? In this hands-on workshop, you'll explore how a bold shift to student-led, autonomy-supportive programming can supercharge leadership development, ownership, and long-term engagement. We'll begin by unpacking a real-world redesign: why the change was made, how the model was implemented, and what surprises emerged—both the wins and the pitfalls. Through guided reflection and small-group design labs, you'll assess how this approach could translate to your campus, identify common barriers (from staffing norms to risk management), and surface practical solutions. Then, with facilitators and peers, you'll sketch an initial program concept tailored to your context—complete with participant roles, decision-making structures, assessment metrics, and a simple pilot timeline. Leave the session with ready-to-use templates, facilitation prompts, and an action roadmap to launch a participant-led, autonomy-supportive initiative that builds student agency, strengthens leadership pipelines, and deepens campus investment in sustained student success.

PRESENTERS

Ellie Brittain

Outreach Counselor, Talent Search
 Western Carolina University
 Cullowhee, NC

JennieV Sorrells

Director, Project Discovery
 Western Carolina University
 Cullowhee, NC

MODERATOR

Paul Barnes

Director, Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science
 University of Montevallo
 Montevallo, AL

20.

Individual Academic Plans for a Successful College Future

PRE-COLLEGE
(SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Every student's path to college looks different—this session shows you how to build a living, student-centered Academic Career Preparation Plan that guides each learner from the classroom to their first postsecondary milestone. Join program directors, coordinators, students, and parents for a practical walkthrough of a year-long planning meeting that happens during both the academic year and summer bridge. You'll see how to use GPA, course sequencing, dual-enrollment/AP progress, college-entrance testing, career interest inventories, community service, and financial-literacy needs to create a customized plan that aligns services, timelines, and measurable goals. Through a live demonstration and small-group clinic, you'll learn strategies for conducting productive family-staff conferences, translating assessment data into precise supports, and keeping plans actionable across semesters. Walk away with ready-to-use templates, conversation scripts for student and parent meetings, tracking rubrics, and a step-by-step checklist to implement a sustainable planning process that increases persistence, strengthens college readiness, and makes each student's next step clear.

PRESENTERS

Juana Llanas

Academic Advisor, Upward Bound
 University of Texas Rio Grande

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Valley
 Brownsville, TX

Norma Miranda

Director, Special Programs
 University of Texas Rio Grande
 Valley
 Brownsville, TX

MODERATOR

Lavern Maison

Project Director, Talent Search
 and Upward Bound
 CUNY Brooklyn College
 Brooklyn, NY

21.

Veterans Upward Bound Programs: Navigating Year 4 with ED Guidance

VUB

**📍 TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST
 TOWER)**

Senior staff from the Student
 Support Division at the U.S.
 Department of Education
 will outline expectations for
 Veterans Upward Bound
 programs as they enter their
 fourth year. The session will
 highlight key federal priorities
 in program performance,
 student outcomes, and
 reporting requirements. This
 is a valuable opportunity to
 receive direct guidance and
 get your questions answered
 by Department staff.

PRESENTER

Sharon Easterling

Director of EOC, Upward
 Bound, Upward Bound Math-
 Science, Veterans Upward
 Bound

Student Service, Office
 of Postsecondary U.S.
 Department of Education
 Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Chevonne Neal

Director, Veterans Upward
 Bound
 Southeastern Louisiana
 University
 Hammond, LA

11:45 AM – 1:45 PM

Walter O. Mason Jr. Awards Luncheon

ALL

📍 (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

As the highest honor awarded
 by COE, the Walter O. Mason
 Jr. Award recognizes individuals
 who have made outstanding
 contributions to college
 opportunity programs and
 have significantly advanced
 educational opportunities for
 low-income, first-generation
 students. We are also excited
 to announce the winners of
 the 2025 First-Generation
 College Celebration Day
 grant competition. Don't
 miss this inspiring event
 that highlights the power of
 education to change lives!

2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

College Fair for TRIO Professionals

**SPONSORED BY
 PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**

ALL

**📍 RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL -
 EAST TOWER)**

Meet with undergraduate
 admissions officers of selective
 institutions interested in
 attracting low-income, first-
 generation college students.
 Learn what colleges are
 doing to attract and retain
 first-generation, low-income
 students to campus. Cultivate
 relationships with college
 admissions officers to learn
 how to increase the number
 of successful applications
 submitted by TRIO students
 to these institutions.

2:00 PM – 3:15 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

22.

From Data to Meaning — Centering Student Experience to Drive Equity and Success

ALL

**📍 ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL
 WEST TOWER)**

Numbers alone don't move
 leaders—stories grounded
 in rich evidence do. This
 session shows how to combine
 traditional metrics (retention,
 credit accumulation, graduation
 rates) with nontraditional
 sources—student contact
 notes, socio-emotional
 indicators, engagement
 patterns, and longitudinal
 outcomes—to create a fuller,
 more persuasive portrait of
 program impact. Through
 real examples and step-
 by-step tactics, you'll learn
 how to design dashboards
 that demonstrate the signals
 campus leaders care about,
 build short-case narratives for
 funders and legislators, and
 translate mixed-data insights
 into compelling advocacy
 and resource requests.
 Expect practical tools (report
 templates, visualization tips,
 and message frames) and
 immediately usable workflows
 to elevate your reporting, inform
 program improvement, and
 make the case for sustained
 investment in TRIO students.

PRESENTER

Laura Gittings-Carlson

Executive Director, TRIO
 Programs
 Montana State University,
 Billings
 Billings, MT

MODERATOR

Karen Smolarek

Director, Student Support
 Services
 University of Wisconsin-River
 Falls
 River Falls, WI

23.

Opening Doors to New Possibilities: Career Development Strategies for TRIO Students

**SPONSORED BY ASCENDIUM
 EDUCATION GROUP**

**OPENING DOORS, CHANGING
 LIVES STRAND**

SSS

**📍 GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL
 EAST TOWER)**

College completion is vital
 — but true student success
 means thriving after graduation.
 This hands-on session gives
 TRIO professionals the
 playbook to move students
 from academic achievement to
 career readiness by designing
 employer-aligned pathways
 that actually land jobs. Learn
 how to build and sustain
 employer partnerships, activate
 TRIO alumni as mentors and
 talent pipelines, and embed
 workforce-aligned skill-building
 into your programming—
 from micro-credentials and
 internships to mock interviews
 and project-based experiences.
 You'll leave with concrete tools
 and templates: partnership
 outreach language, an alumni-
 mentoring model, sample
 competency maps tied to
 local labor market needs, and
 a short-term implementation
 plan you can pilot this
 semester. Walk away ready to
 expand students' networks,
 accelerate real-world skill
 acquisition, and ensure that
 the diploma your students earn
 opens doors to meaningful,
 sustainable careers.

PRESENTERS

Benny Berger

Academic Success Advisor,
 Student Support Services
 University of Massachusetts-
 Boston
 Boston, MA

Lorena Fuentes

Interim Vice Provost, Pre-
 Collegiate and Educational
 Success Programs
 University of Massachusetts-
 Boston

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Boston, MA

MODERATOR

Rose Calzontzi

Director, Student Support Services

Sonoma State University
 Rohnert Park, CA

24.

Navigating Career Paths: A Guide for Higher Education Professionals

SPONSORED BY GMA CONSTRUCTION

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

ALL

GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Just as students must thoughtfully plan their journey to college, higher education professionals need to be strategic in developing their own career paths. Moving from program staff to institutional leadership often requires more than just academic credentials and good fortune. If you're aspiring to advance into higher education administration but are uncertain how to navigate that path, this session is for you. Join this dynamic and interactive panel to gain valuable insights from experienced professionals on how to successfully chart your course in academia.

PRESENTERS

Ngondi Kamatuka

Director, Center for Educational Opportunity Programs
 University of Kansas
 Lawrence, KS

Lucila Loera

Executive Director, Office for Access & Opportunity
 Washington State University
 Pullman, WA

MODERATOR

Kimberly Williams

Executive Director, TRIO and Educational Opportunity Programs
 Nevada State University

Henderson, NV

25.

Graduate School Admissions: What Your Students Need to Know

SPONSORED BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STRAND

COLLEGE

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Many talented TRIO scholars hesitate to apply to selective graduate programs because they underestimate their fit or worry about cost—this session tackles both head-on. Admissions officers and graduate program administrators will unpack what evaluators really look for, how to craft competitive applications, and which experiences (research, internships, faculty mentorship) move the needle. Panelists will also demystify financing graduate study—breaking down assistantships, fellowships, tuition remission, and creative funding strategies that make high-quality programs affordable. You'll hear examples of programs that combine strong training with excellent ROI and learn how to map students to "best-fit" options across disciplines. Bring student scenarios to the Q&A and leave with concrete next steps, timelines, and resources to help your scholars apply boldly, choose wisely, and secure funding to pursue advanced degrees.

PRESENTERS

Tikia K. Hamilton

Assistant Professor of History
 Loyola University Chicago
 Chicago, IL

Kevin Hudson

Associate Director, Institutional Diversity and College Opportunity
 Princeton University
 Princeton, NJ

Joseph Lewis

Associate Dean for Access, Diversity, & Inclusion

Princeton University
 Princeton, NJ

MODERATOR

Andrea Holgado

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

St. Edward's University
 Austin, TX

26.

Maximizing the Final Year: Talent Search Outcomes, Reporting, and What's Next

TALENT SEARCH

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

As Talent Search programs prepare to enter the final year of their grant cycle, senior staff from the U.S. Department of Education's Student Support Division will outline key expectations and preview the upcoming competition. The session will focus on performance benchmarks, outcome tracking, and reporting requirements, offering participants the opportunity to ask questions and receive direct guidance from Department staff.

PRESENTER

Gaby Watts

Director, Student Service
 Office of Postsecondary Education U.S. Department of Education
 Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Jami Bayles

Director, Talent Search
 Utah State University Blanding Campus
 Blanding, UT

27.

How to Get Great Press: Here's the Scoop

ALL

GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Your students' successes are newsworthy—if you know how to tell them. This hands-on session teaches TRIO professionals how to attract local reporters and secure meaningful coverage that elevates your program, bolsters community support, and fuels advocacy. Learn what makes a pitch irresistible to editors, how to craft tight story angles and subject lines, and which assets (photos, student soundbites, data points, and human-interest hooks) reporters need to say "yes." Through real-world examples and quick practice exercises, you'll build a ready-to-send media kit, practice a 30-second pitch, and get templates for press releases, op-eds, and social-media teasers. You'll also learn practical timing strategies, how to cultivate relationships with education reporters, and simple steps for preparing students to speak on camera. Walk away with concrete materials and a short outreach plan so your program's impact stops being an inside story and becomes a community-wide conversation. Bring a story idea and leave with the tools to get it covered.

PRESENTERS

Josh Gagnon

Director, Upward Bound
 University of New Hampshire
 Durham, NH

Brandii Peterson

Executive Director, TRIO Programs
 Lyon College
 Batesville, AR

MODERATOR

Tyra Esparza

Director, Talent Search
 University of Arkansas
 Springdale, AR

29.

Standards that Strengthen: Integrating CAS into TRIO Success Strategies

ALL

MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL)

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

EAST TOWER)

Want a proven framework to strengthen program quality, assessment, and student outcomes? This interactive session introduces the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) and shows how TRIO programs can use CAS standards as a practical toolkit for continuous improvement, accountability, and professional practice. We'll focus on the TRIO-specific standards and walk through concrete ways to align programming, assessment, staffing, and learning outcomes with nationally recognized benchmarks. Participants will review sample standards, engage in small-group problem-solving to map CAS to their own program goals, and hear real-world examples of how standards drive stronger reporting, clearer learning objectives, and more persuasive funding and accreditation narratives. You'll leave with an implementation checklist, sample rubrics and alignment templates, and peer-tested strategies to integrate CAS standards into daily practice—so your TRIO program can demonstrate quality, equity, and measurable impact.

PRESENTERS

Andrea Reeve

Retired TRIO Director and Adjunct Faculty, Student Affairs in Higher Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO

Robin Williams

Director, TRIO Development and Support
Oregon TRIO Association
Astoria, OR

MODERATOR

Danny Giles

Associate Director, Student Support Services
Virginia State University
Petersburg, VA

30.

Thriving Through Change: Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program Roundtable Discussion

MCNAIR

MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join a hands-on, peer-led roundtable designed for Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement professionals who need practical, sustainable solutions to preserve and grow program impact in uncertain times. Through structured table clinics, small-group problem solving, and rapid-share sessions, experienced McNair directors will guide you as you tackle real challenges—budget shocks, compliance shifts, recruitment barriers, mentoring at scale, and legal/policy threats—to produce concrete next steps you can implement when you return to campus. This session is highly interactive: bring a current challenge or case study, and you'll get direct feedback from peers, sample tools and templates, and prioritized action items. Facilitators will synthesize each table's work into a short "resilience playbook" that captures tested strategies, community resources, and contact matches for follow-up collaboration. Leave with ready-to-use tactics, a network of colleagues committed to mutual support, and a clear short-term plan to strengthen your McNair program's sustainability and scholar outcomes.

PRESENTER

Kim Rosfeld

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program and President, MAP
Southern Nazarene University
Bethany, OK

MODERATOR

C. Chiara Wang

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement

Program

Northern State University
Aberdeen, SD

31.

Innovative Practices in Serving Veterans

VETERANS

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Join a fast-moving, practice-focused session that spotlights bold, student-centered approaches for supporting military-connected learners. Hear practitioners who have redesigned outreach, credit-for-service pathways, flexible scheduling, benefits navigation, and trauma-informed wraparound care to meet veterans where they are—balancing work, family, and service-related needs. Through vivid case studies you'll see how partnerships with VA offices, employers, mental-health providers, and veteran-led student organizations turn obstacles into opportunity and accelerate veteran persistence and career readiness. This session emphasizes tangible solutions—from tech-enabled onboarding and competency-based credit to peer-mentoring cohorts and targeted employer pipelines—that make campuses more navigable and welcoming for veterans. Expect concrete examples, honest lessons learned, and strategies that respect military culture while building inclusive campus communities. You'll leave energized with ready-to-use tools: outreach templates, a benefits-navigation checklist, models for veteran-friendly course scheduling, and partnership strategies to scale wraparound supports—so your campus can better serve those who served.

PRESENTERS

Ben Blake

Program Coordinator, Veterans Upward Bound
Boise State University
Boise, ID

Beatrice Turpin-Peek

Director, Veterans Upward Bound
Prince George's Community College
Upper Marlboro, MD

MODERATOR

Robbie Gregg

Project Director, Veterans Upward Bound
Pensacola State College
Pensacola, FL

32.

The Snowball Effect Creating the Meltdown of Higher Education

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND

ALL

RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

From the Industrial Revolution to the information age, the job market has steadily raised the bar for postsecondary credentials—and today, more students than ever need college to compete. At the same time, the cost of earning a degree has climbed while the public and private resources that make that education affordable have eroded, placing disproportionate strain on low-income learners and the institutions that serve them. This session untangles the forces behind that crisis—rising tuition and student debt, state disinvestment, changing enrollment patterns, shifting labor-market demands, and policy choices that have widened opportunity gaps—and shows how those pressures combine to threaten access, completion, and institutional sustainability. Join policy analysts, campus leaders, and TRIO practitioners for a clear-eyed examination of how we got here and, more importantly, what can be done next. Through case studies and practical analysis, we will explore evidence-based remedies—from funding and financial-aid innovations to programmatic strategies

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

(wraparound supports, transfer pathways, and workforce partnerships) and advocacy tactics that shift the political will toward reinvestment. You'll leave equipped to explain the problem with clarity, marshal data to make the case for resources, and deploy actionable interventions that protect students and stabilize your institution. Walk away with a concise advocacy frame, campus-ready messaging to influence institutional leaders, and a short menu of implementable strategies to expand affordability, retention, and long-term student success.

PRESENTER

Thomas Mortenson

Senior Scholar

Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education
Lehigh Acres, FL

MODERATOR

Deonte Williams

Program Coordinator, Upward Bound

College Bound Institute
Atlanta, GA

33.

Beyond Boundaries: Strengthening Talent Search Through Strategic Alliances

TALENT SEARCH

RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Strategic partnerships can be the game-changer that elevates Talent Search programs from effective to extraordinary. This session will showcase how collaborating with colleges, community organizations, businesses, and government agencies can expand resources, enrich student services, and open doors for first-generation and low-income students. Through innovative partnership models, proven engagement strategies, and inspiring real-world examples, you'll discover how to build alliances that create transformative opportunities. Leave equipped with practical

tools to cultivate and sustain collaborations that amplify your program's reach and impact.

PRESENTERS

Gabrielle Dillon

Director, TRIO Talent Search Programs

The Family Centered Educational Agency
South Holland, IL

Jamal Hawkins

Executive Director, TRIO Programs

The Family Centered Educational Agency
South Holland, IL

MODERATOR

Tamala Moore

Director, Talent Search

Sinclair College
Dayton, OH

34.

Unlocking Global Opportunities Part II: Securing Financial Resources for Study Abroad

CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND

COLLEGE

RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Cost should never be a barrier to global opportunity. This session equips TRIO professionals with the strategies and resources needed to help students finance their study abroad dreams. Learn how to identify scholarships, tap into institutional and external funding sources, and build strong financial plans that make international education attainable. Presenters will share tips on budgeting, application timelines, and demystifying program costs—ensuring your students are both informed and empowered. Leave with a toolkit of actionable insights to help your students turn aspiration into adventure.

PRESENTERS

Deloris Davis-Grant

Former Teacher and Travel Expert

Providence, RI

Kyle Ethelbah

Director, College Programs for the Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

MODERATOR

Heather Hagenbuch

Director, Student Support Services

SUNY University at Buffalo
Buffalo, NY

36.

Beyond the Hashtag: Advocacy in the Digital Age

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

PRE-COLLEGE

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Petitions and policy briefs matter—but in today's media landscape, the right digital campaign can amplify your message overnight. This hands-on workshop turns TRIO professionals into smart digital advocates: you'll learn the storytelling techniques, platform strategies, and creative formats that actually move audiences and influence decision-makers. Using real-world case studies, quick ideation sprints, and live feedback, participants will build and pitch short, ready-to-launch campaigns that spotlight student success, mobilize constituents, and support local or national advocacy goals. You'll get practical guidance on crafting scroll-stopping reels, leveraging trending audio and formats without sacrificing dignity or context, building sharable narratives that center students, and measuring impact so your next ask is impossible to ignore. Bring a program win or advocacy idea and leave with a compact campaign plan, sample scripts and captions, and the confidence to make your students' stories go farther—ethically, creatively, and strategically.

PRESENTER

Juawn Jackson

Director, EOC

Mercer University
Macon, GA

MODERATOR

Christopher Cooper, Sr.

Program Director

Southern Illinois University,
Edwardsville
Shiloh, IL

37.

Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science Programs: Navigating Year 4 with ED Guidance

UB/UBMS

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Senior staff from the Student Support Division at the U.S. Department of Education will outline expectations for Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math-Science programs as they enter their fourth year. The session will highlight key federal priorities in program performance, student outcomes, and reporting requirements. This is a valuable opportunity to receive direct guidance and get your questions answered by Department staff.

PRESENTER

Sharon Easterling

Director of EOC, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Veterans Upward Bound

Student Service, Office of Postsecondary Education U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Sundiata Jangha

Director, Pipeline Programs
University of Maryland,
Baltimore County
Baltimore, MD

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

38.

The Art of Personal Storytelling for Self-Advocacy

ALL
 REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Great opportunities begin with a great story. This interactive session teaches practical storytelling methods you can use to guide students in crafting personal statements and presentations that win scholarships, internships, study-abroad placements, and jobs. Using proven frameworks (think STAR/HERO-style structures), real student examples, and quick writing exercises, you'll learn how to help students surface meaningful experiences, shape those moments into compelling narratives, and tailor messages for different audiences—from selection committees to campus leaders and employers. You'll practice coaching techniques that move beyond editing—helping students discover authentic voice, highlight growth and resilience, and translate lived experience into evidence of potential. The session includes live workshoping so participants can draft, revise, and pitch short personal statements, elevator scripts, and presentation outlines in real time. Walk away with ready-to-use templates, feedback rubrics, and a step-by-step mentorship playbook to support students through every stage of storytelling—from brainstorming to final polish—so their stories do what they should: open doors.

PRESENTER

Shelly Siegel

Retired TRIO Director
 North Brooklyn Park, MN

MODERATOR

Caitlin Siefkes

Director, Upward Bound
 Dakota County Technical College
 Rosemount, MN

39.

Yes, You Can: How to Earn a Terminal Degree While Working Full-Time as a TRIO Professional

ALL
 ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Hear from TRIO professionals who turned rigorous graduate study into sharper programming and stronger outcomes. This interactive panel spotlights practitioners who earned terminal degrees and used their research to redesign advising, assessment, and student supports—bringing theory into practice in ways that directly benefit TRIO students. Panelists will candidly share how they secured funding (fellowships, assistantships, external grants), balanced work and study, and translated scholarship into program improvements. Bring your questions for a live Q&A and leave with practical strategies: funding pathways to pursue advanced degrees, tips for sustaining program operations while you study, research-to-practice frameworks you can replicate on campus, and mentoring models to support staff and student researchers. Whether you're considering graduate school or aiming to leverage research to strengthen services, this session provides the roadmap and resources to advance your academic and programmatic impact.

PRESENTERS

Evora Baker

Director, TRIO Programs
 Shepherd University
 Shepherdstown, WV

Michele Lagnese

Director, Student Support Services
 University of Pittsburgh
 Pittsburgh, PA

MODERATOR

Whitney Sren

Co-Founder/Co-Owner
 DreamCatcher Curriculum

Fayetteville, AR

40.

One Platform, Many Voices: Lessons Learned from Centralizing Online Student Support at a Small College

SSS
 SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

See how a small college multiplied impact by bringing TRIO onboarding, tutoring, and career readiness into one centralized online hub. Paul Quinn College's cross-departmental initiative reduced staff duplication, saved time, and guaranteed that every student—whether on campus or remote—receives consistent, coordinated support that drives retention and completion. In this session you'll get a behind-the-scenes look at the platform's design, partnership model, and rollout strategy, including real metrics on time saved and student engagement. Learn practical steps for building your own integrated hub: workflow templates, staffing models, low-cost technology choices, accessibility and privacy considerations, and strategies to center student voice in design. Leave with a replicable implementation checklist and concrete examples so you can streamline services, strengthen handoffs, and ensure every student has a clear path to success.

PRESENTER

Kelli Emerson

Director, Student Support Services
 Paul Quinn College
 Dallas, TX

MODERATOR

Heidi Neely

Director, Student Support Services
 Gaston College
 Dallas, NC

41.

Expanding Impact: Engaging Participants Through Large-Scale Workshops

PRE-COLLEGE
 SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER

Running a big workshop shouldn't mean losing connection or impact. This hands-on session reveals how to design and deliver large-scale events that keep broad audiences engaged, build community partnerships, and drive measurable outcomes for student access and success. Presenters will unpack practical frameworks for structuring content, pacing interactive activities, and managing breakout cohorts so every participant—whether 20 or 2,000—walks away with new skills and clear next steps. You'll learn evidence-based techniques for recruitment and registration, inclusive facilitation methods, tech tools that amplify interaction (polling, live chat, and moderated Q&A), and methods for meaningful follow-up that convert attendees into action-takers. Case studies will show how community partnerships and campus units can expand capacity while sharing ownership and resources. Leave with ready-to-use agendas, engagement templates, evaluation rubrics, and a replicable playbook for scaling workshops that increase student access, persistence, and success.

PRESENTERS

Ashley Childs

Coordinator, EOC
 Texarkana College
 Texarkana, TX

Tenequa Martin

Director, EOC
 Texarkana College
 Texarkana, TX

MODERATOR

Tiffany Terry

Assistant Director, Upward Bound
 Rochester Institute of

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Technology
Rochester, NY

42.

Expanding TRIO at Two-Year Colleges: Turning Program Success into Institutional Investment

ALL SSS-2YR
↑ TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Your program's outcomes are the evidence—now turn that proof into lasting institutional commitment. This session brings together two community-college TRIO teams that successfully translated strong program results into expanded services, new staff lines, and sustained institutional funding. Through candid case studies and tactical how-tos, you'll learn how to build a persuasive expansion case, marshal the right data, and mobilize campus decision-makers. Attendees will walk away with concrete tools and strategies: a roadmap for briefing presidents and deans, templates for data visualizations that demonstrate unmet need, approaches for managing non-grant funds with fiscal integrity, tactics to influence scholarship allocations, and messaging that ties every request back to the proven TRIO model. If you're ready to scale impact, this session gives you the playbook to move from successful program to institutional priority.

PRESENTERS

Joseph Aguirre
Director, College Success Programs
Sheridan College
Sheridan, WY

Joshua Becker
Director, Student Support Services
Northeast Community College
Norfolk, NE

MODERATOR

Michelle Benoit
Director, Student Support Services
Southwestern Oregon

Community College
Coos Bay, OR

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Snack Break: College Fair and Exhibit Hall Walkthrough

ALL
↑ RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL - EAST TOWER)

The College Fair awaits your presence – where dreams are nurtured, futures are transformed, and change is ignited. Be part of a movement that's defining the future of education – one student at a time!

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

HOT TOPICS

HT1.

EmPOWERing First-Generation Students Through Summer Enrichment: Building Bridges from Middle School to College

ALL
↑ ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

For first-generation-to-college students, the journey from middle and high school to higher education can feel like uncharted territory. Summer programs offer a unique opportunity to provide the skills, mentorship, and confidence these students need to envision and achieve their college goals.

In this engaging workshop, TRIO professionals will explore how summer enrichment experiences can be intentionally designed to spark motivation, develop leadership, and build college readiness in first-generation students. Using real examples from Upward Bound, Talent Search, and other TRIO initiatives, participants will gain practical strategies for creating programs that address

both academic preparation and personal growth—while fostering a sense of belonging in future college environments.

PRESENTER

Jonathan Medina
“America's #1 Youth Motivator”
Top School Speakers
Edinburg, TX

HT2.

Navigating Life's Milestones

ALL
↑ GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Life is full of milestones—some joyful, like marriage or welcoming a child, and others deeply challenging, like the loss of a loved one. Preparation turns those moments from overwhelming to manageable. In this session, Joah Yeoman, Financial Consultant at TIAA, will translate complex choices into a clear, practical plan you can use right away. You'll see how to build a flexible financial foundation before big moments arrive, respond to the unexpected without derailing your budget, and keep long-term goals—retirement, education, and beyond—on track through every transition. Come ready to leave with strategies, confidence, and the peace of mind to navigate the milestones that matter most.

PRESENTER

Joah Yeoman
Financial Consultant
TIAA
Frisco, TX

HT3.

Building Stronger TRIO Programs Through Enhanced Advising, Recordkeeping, and Compliance

ALL
↑ GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

This session is designed for TRIO program advisors, counselors, and leadership staff to explore essential

strategies for building fidelity in program operations. Led by Study Smart Tutors, participants will engage in discussions on the importance of consistent advising practices, robust recordkeeping, and comprehensive compliance measures. By examining best practices and innovative methodologies, attendees will learn how to create a cohesive and accountable support system that aligns with program objectives. This interactive workshop aims to highlight the available tools and insights we use to enhance program effectiveness and ensure program integrity and greater student success.

PRESENTERS

Heath Alexander
Senior Director, Grants and Evaluation
Study Smart Tutors
Silver Spring, MD

Casey Weld
Director of Partnership Development
Study Smart Tutors
Washington, DC

HT4.

Beyond College Bound: Empowering Families Through the Full Journey of Higher Education

ALL
↑ GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

From the first campus search to graduation day, this session helps you walk students and families through every step of the higher education journey. We'll demystify how to choose the right school and program, navigate applications with confidence, build a smart plan to pay for college, and strengthen financial literacy that lasts well beyond freshman year. You'll learn how to plug into campus networks, identify the resources that make a difference, and anticipate what's next as new features and tools come online. Most

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

importantly, we surface the questions you may not even know to ask—and deliver clear, actionable answers—so every decision feels informed, intentional, and achievable.

PRESENTERS

Gene Lucero

President and CEO
 My College Basics
 Pueblo, CO

John Wooten

Chief Sales Officer
 My College Basics
 Pueblo, CO

HT5.

Customized TRIO Professional Development to Fit Your Needs

ALL

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Discover the wealth of TRIO expertise waiting to empower your institution or agency and explore how to collaborate with COE to craft personalized professional development solutions aligned with your unique needs, aspirations, and objectives. This session will delve into COE's comprehensive range of technical assistance offerings, including personalized coaching for program directors, simulated site visits, program evaluations, and in-depth training on pertinent legislation and regulations governing TRIO programs. Moreover, participants will actively participate in crafting a customizable action plan tailored specifically for their institution or agency, ensuring tangible takeaways and actionable insights.

PRESENTERS

Woodrow Lewis Jr.

Director, College Initiatives
 Council for Opportunity in Education
 Washington, DC

Jen Rudolph

Associate Vice President, Pre-College and State Initiatives

Council for Opportunity in Education
 Washington, DC

HT6.

Unlocking Potential Through Esports — How Esports Builds Belonging, Skills, and Futures

ALL

GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join us for an exciting and informative seminar that unveils the future of education, performance, and wellness through competitive gaming. This session introduces the Esports Performance Academy (EPA)—a groundbreaking initiative that merges the dynamic world of esports with evidence-based strategies for student success. Discover the mission, vision, and innovative framework behind EPA, designed to teach students through structured, intentional engagement with esports. Learn about the Academy's robust offerings, including coaching, wellness programs, cognitive and physical training, academic mentorship, and career exploration. Explore how EPA's programming supports college and career readiness, improves student performance, and promotes mental and physical health. You'll see how esports serves as a powerful platform for developing leadership, communication, critical thinking, and resilience. This seminar will demonstrate how esports is far more than gameplay—it's a catalyst for growth, self-discipline, and opportunity. Through the Esports Performance Academy, students gain access to a structured pathway that fosters academic achievement, career readiness, and personal wellness. Discover how this innovative program is shaping the next generation of leaders.

PRESENTER

Andrew Cooley

CEO
 Esports Performance Academy

Dallas, TX

H7.

Money Moves: Unlocking Generational Wealth with Swagger & Smarts

ALL

MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Money doesn't buy happiness, but it's a good down payment. Engage 100% of your students by diving into financial literacy in a unique way. Financial freedom means breaking from detrimental money patterns, and it requires knowledge about money viewed through the lens of success, confidence, and flair. This high-energy session will break down budgeting, saving, investing, and debt management into bite-sized, easy-to-grasp concepts, sprinkled with real-world examples and a dash of humor that supports everyone throughout their journey. Whether you're a rookie or a money wizard, you'll walk away with actionable strategies and practical tips that will have you hyped to help your students take control of their financial destiny!

PRESENTERS

Jim Giovannini

Owner/Author
 Academic Tutoring & Test Prep
 Park Ridge, IL

Yuval Trachtenberg

Vice President of School Partnerships
 Academic Tutoring & Test Prep
 Park Ridge, IL

HT8.

Show Me the Money! Create Financial Literacy Experiences Your Students Will Never Forget

ALL

MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

The first 50 attendees will receive a VISA gift card! Show up early because spots fill

up FAST! Learn the secret strategies to hosting impactful financial literacy workshops for students. With experience from 100+ TRIO programs, Simple Money Academy offers expertise to help you transform your view on financial literacy and empower your students for success! Come ready to have a FUN time!

PRESENTER

MJ Pittman

CEO
 Simple Money Academy
 McKinney, TX

HT9.

Empowering Pathways: Meeting the Needs of TRIO Learners so They Can Reach Their Next Best Level

ALL

MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Fostering agency in both students and instructors is essential to unlocking lasting college and career success for TRIO learners. This interactive session explores evidence-based strategies that empower educators to design learner-centered environments, motivate students to take ownership of their learning, and adapt instruction to meet distinct needs so every student reaches their next best level. Through a mix of short presentations, practical handouts, and lively group work, participants will craft an actionable student-and-teacher agency plan tailored to their campus context—complete with scaffolded curricular moves, professional-development ideas, and approaches to embed agency into institutional culture. You'll leave energized with concrete techniques to boost engagement and retention, a replicable framework for fostering instructional innovation, and materials you can use immediately to strengthen college- and career-ready outcomes for the students you serve.



PRESENTER

David Waldherr

Founder, Cambridge Educational Services
 Des Plaines, IL

HT10.

From Invisible to Invincible: Transforming First-Gen Student Success by Leveling the Playing Field for All

ALL

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL
 WEST TOWER)

Many First-generation college students navigate higher education without a roadmap, often struggling in silence with the “null curriculum” – all the unspoken rules and knowledge gaps that can hinder academic success.

Join Lisa Andion and Marc Santos as they share their personal journeys and show how Grammarly for Education becomes the unbiased sidekick first-gen students never realized they needed. Think of it as an academic wingman that never judges, never sleeps, and never makes you feel small for asking “basic” questions.

Founded by individuals who understood the challenge of mastering English as a second language, Grammarly was built with students at its core. This AI-powered tool doesn’t care about your family’s educational background or language skills – it’s the patient tutor that transforms “I can’t write” into “watch me soar,” and offers 24/7 support to ensure brilliant ideas aren’t lost in translation.

Explore real stories of transformation and practical strategies for empowering first-gen and multilingual students with a new academic superpower. This isn’t just about improving writing – it’s about building confidence and providing unwavering support to students who need it most.

PRESENTERS

Lisa Andion

Head of Solution Engineering

Grammarly
 San Francisco, CA

Marc Santos

Education Account Executive
 Grammarly
 San Francisco, CA

HT11.

Unforgettable Events: Learning that Lasts

ALL

RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL
 EAST TOWER)

This interactive session is all about leading outstanding student workshops, camps, and conferences. Discover new activities and explore resources that will take your in-person events to the next level. Participants will learn how to engage students with fun, student-centered activities; share and hear best practices from fellow student access professionals; and practice strategies for designing attention-grabbing, high-impact events.

PRESENTERS

Robyn Boone

Senior Curriculum Business Development Partner
 Paradigm Shift
 Broken Arrow, OK

Kyle Price

Director of Content
 Paradigm Shift
 Muskogee, OK

HT13.

Compass: Online Data Management and APR Solution

ALL

RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
 EAST TOWER)

Experience a comprehensive system that simplifies data entry and management. Compass offers swift data entry, seamless handling of groups, and effortless data transition across school years. Enjoy user-friendly reporting and dashboards, effortlessly generate TRIO APR

reports, and explore additional features like applications, QR codes, surveys, and data exports. With inclusive data management, user training, and technical support, all within competitive pricing, Compass delivers unparalleled value. Trust in CoBro Consulting’s 20 years of experience serving over 100 education programs nationwide for reliable data management and program evaluation services!

PRESENTER

Urban Pelicon

CIO
 CoBro Consulting
 San Diego, CA

HT14.

BLUMEN SOFTWARE - Find Out Why It’s Miles Ahead of Other Software

ALL

REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL
 WEST TOWER)

If your program doesn’t yet have BOT, this session is your chance to see—side by side—how a purpose-built TRIO platform can outpace a generic database. We’ll demo real workflows that save staff hours, reduce errors, and deepen student engagement: multilingual, fillable online forms that accept uploads and digital signatures; a mobile app and “wallet” that let staff and students update records and go paperless from any device; and two-way texting so you can reach students where they are and capture replies automatically. You’ll also see time-savers like batch data processing, a powerful global filter screen to locate any cohort in seconds, and a custom import utility that pulls records from Banner, PeopleSoft, Datatel, and more. For program integrity and accountability, we’ll show BOT’s APR toolkit that simulates the Department of Education’s error checks, plus an NSC interface for accurate alumni tracking, and enterprise-grade protections including two-factor authentication and SOC-2–level data security. We’ll

demo student-facing features too—self check-in via ID scan, real-time Prior Experience point tracking, and event logs that turn activity into evidence of impact. Come with your current pain points; leave with practical comparisons, pricing questions answered, and a clear sense of whether BOT will streamline your operations, strengthen compliance, and expand service access for the students you serve. A live Q&A will follow the demo so you can see how BOT fits your program’s workflow.

PRESENTER

Gunjan Seth

Vice President
 BLUMEN-COMPANSOL
 Houston, TX

HT15.

One College Nation! – An Interactive Leadership Experience Focused on Effective Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Resilience, and Leadership Strategies That Work!

ALL

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL
 WEST TOWER)

Come ready to lead. This high-energy, interactive session teams Joshua Fredenburg and Tish Norman to deliver a pragmatic leadership toolkit for emerging and seasoned TRIO professionals. Grounded in real-world practice—not theory—you’ll learn concrete techniques for powerful communication, emotional intelligence, and resilience that translate directly into stronger student outcomes and healthier teams. Through short demonstrations, paired practice, and guided reflection, you’ll build skills to coach students toward agency, run more effective meetings, de-escalate conflict, and design leadership experiences that cultivate persistence and purpose.

PRESENTER

Joshua Fredenburg

National Speaker & Leadership

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Consultant
 Long Beach, CA

HT16.

Winning Financially: Developing a Game Plan for Success, NOT Stress!

ALL
REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Having a financial game plan is key in uncertain times. Eric Smith, known for high-energy and engaging financial literacy fun, will share simple steps to creating a winning strategy for not only surviving difficult times but actually winning financially. Just like all of Eric's workshops, this session is guaranteed to be full of high energy and lots of gems that you can use to start winning today.

PRESENTER

Eric Smith

Owner

The Financial Literacy Coach
 Newnan, GA

HT17.

College Access on the Chopping Block: 3 Steps to Equip Your TRIO Students to Win Scholarships Now

ALL
REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

TRIO is under attack! With the Department of Education facing major cuts, your students can't afford for you to stick to business as usual. That's where you come in. If you're ready to be your students' secret weapon in the fight for funding, this session is for you. Join Attorney and Serial Scholarship Winner India Prather as she shares real-world strategies to help your students win scholarships—even full rides—in a time when every dollar counts. You'll learn how to introduce scholarships early, guide students in writing competitive essays, and shift their mindset from hoping for aid to hustling for it. You're already helping

students get to and through college. Now it's time to help them do it debt-free, no matter what happens in Washington.

PRESENTER

India Prather

CEO

The Art of Scholarships
 Charlotte, NC

HT18.

Pathways to College: How Pre-College Programs Are Supporting Students & Families Anytime, Anywhere

PRE-COLLEGE
ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

TRIO programs are built on relationships, trust, and meaningful support for students and families navigating the path to college. But with limited staff time, growing caseloads, and increasing demands for flexible services, how can programs maintain high-touch impact while expanding their reach? In this session, we'll explore how Talent Search, Upward Bound, Gear Up and EOC programs are enhancing their support strategies by integrating online tools that meet students and families where they are—at home, on the go, or after hours. Learn how Go2Orientation, StudentLingo, TutorLingo, OnlineLingo, and ParentLingo can help you: extend your services without stretching your team; offer skill-building workshops and college prep 24/7; provide family-friendly, multilingual content; track engagement, and meet grant requirements. You'll see examples of how pre-college TRIO teams are combining in-person connection with accessible, flexible online resources to increase confidence, readiness, and persistence—without losing the personal touch.

PRESENTER

Alex Pecoraro

Director of Partnerships
 Innovative Educators, Inc.

Boulder, CO

HT21.

Mastering TRIO Data Like a Pro with StudentAccess

ALL
TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Looking for a better way to manage participant data? StudentAccess is designed specifically for TRIO programs, offering features like the Multiple Student Tool, Online Applications, Dynamic Report Generator, and seamless communication tools. This session will demonstrate how StudentAccess simplifies data tracking and ensures compliance with the Department of Education's reporting requirements. Discover how to streamline workflows and enhance program efficiency with this powerful software.

PRESENTERS

Alex Grote

Vice President

Heiberg Consulting, Inc.
 Fort Collins, CO

Claysa Diamond

Marketing & Communications
 Manager

Heiberg Consulting, Inc.
 Fort Collins, CO

5:15 PM – 6:15 PM

PLENARY SESSION

Update from the Council for Opportunity in Education

ALL
GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

With the future of the Federal TRIO programs hanging in the balance, this plenary session is a must-attend. Join COE President Kimberly Jones as she delivers the latest updates and crucial insights from Washington, DC, on developments that could shape the future of TRIO. Don't miss this opportunity to

stay informed and prepared for the changes ahead!

PRESENTER

Kimberly Jones

President

Council for Opportunity in
 Education
 Washington, DC

6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Salsa Dancing

ALL
REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Feel the energy, meet new friends, and light up the dance floor at COE's Salsa Night! Whether you're brand new or a seasoned salsero, this upbeat evening starts with a fun, beginner-friendly lesson led by a professional instructor—no partner required—followed by a social dance with a live DJ spinning salsa, bachata, and merengue. Come as you are and dress to move. We'll cover the basics, add simple turns, and give you the confidence to keep dancing all night. It's the perfect mid-conference reset: vibrant music, joyful community, and a chance to celebrate the spirit of TRIO together. Comfortable shoes recommended; smiles guaranteed.

8:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Karaoke

SPONSORED BY GENIUS POTENTIAL

ALL
REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Step up to the mic and bring the house down at COE Karaoke Night! From powerhouse ballads to throwback anthems, this is your moment to shine, laugh, and celebrate community. No vocal experience required—just enthusiasm. We'll provide a wide song library, seamless sign-ups, and a supportive crowd ready to cheer every chorus. Come

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
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solo or grab a duet partner, warm up those vocal cords, and let the conference stress melt away. Costumes, choreography, and backup dancers are highly encouraged. It's the most fun you'll have off the agenda—see you center stage!

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

6:45 AM – 8:00 AM

WELLNESS

Walk the Chi-Town Circuit

ALL

MEET IN THE LOBBY (LOBBY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Explore some of Chicago's most iconic sights with fellow attendees on a refreshing morning walk. Just steps from the Hyatt Regency Chicago, you'll discover The Magnificent Mile, the historic Chicago Water Tower, the neo-Gothic Tribune Tower, the Wrigley Building, 360 Chicago at the John Hancock Center, and more.

8:00 AM – 8:45 AM

Exhibit Hall Walkthrough

ALL

RIVERSIDE EAST (EXHIBIT LEVEL EAST TOWER)

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

PLENARY SESSION

Promises Kept, Promises to Keep: Reflections on the Higher Education Act of 1965

SPONSORED BY ASCENDIUM
EDUCATION GROUP

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING
LIVES STRAND

ALL

GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

When enacted in 1965, the landmark Higher Education Act (HEA) established the federal role in providing postsecondary opportunity. The law authorized need-based grants, work-study opportunities, and loans to students willing to

invest in themselves. It also created outreach programs to help the most economically disadvantaged students prepare for and succeed in higher education, including the TRIO programs. In the decades since, the percentage of U.S. adults who have earned bachelor's degrees has increased by 301% (from 9% in 1965 to 38% in 2022). Despite these advances, access and completion remain a barrier for far too many students, particularly those from low-income, first-generation backgrounds. On the occasion of the HEA's 60th anniversary, it is important to understand why the federal commitment to postsecondary opportunity mattered in 1965 and why it matters even more now. Panelists will discuss key elements of the Act, the political and social dynamics that led to their inclusion, and the ways the HEA has transformed the higher education landscape. Panelists will also discuss the current outlook for postsecondary opportunity and what policy changes are necessary to ensure greater success for future students.

PRESENTERS

Jhenai Chandler

Vice President for Research and Policy

NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

Washington, DC

Eric Kelderman

Senior Writer

The Chronicle of Higher Education

Washington, DC

Paul Reville

Francis Keppel Professor of Practice of Educational Policy and Administration

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Cambridge, MA

MODERATOR

Aaron Brown

Executive Vice President

Council for Opportunity in Education

Washington, DC

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

43.

Expanding Access: Pell Grant Reinstatement and TRIO's Role in Supporting Incarcerated Students

ADULTS

ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

The restoration of Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated learners marks a historic shift in U.S. higher education policy—from the 1994 Crime Bill's removal of access to the Second Chance Pell experiment in 2015, and full reinstatement under the FAFSA Simplification Act effective July 1, 2023. This session translates that policy progress into practice. TRIO panelists with frontline experience in correctional settings will share compelling success stories, the practical realities of delivering advising and financial-aid counseling inside facilities, and strategies for designing wraparound supports that survive institutional constraints. Attendees will learn how to navigate administrative roadblocks, build campus-corrections partnerships, structure compliant aid packaging, and deliver student supports that improve enrollment, persistence, and reentry outcomes. Expect concrete models for program delivery, templates for intake and advising, evidence-based practices for academic and psychosocial support, and policy-savvy approaches to measure impact—so your program can turn restored



eligibility into real opportunity for justice-impacted students.

PRESENTERS

Stephanie Cruz

Director of Access
Community College of Rhode Island
Warwick, RI

Brenda Dann Messier

Consultant
Council for Opportunity in Education
Greenwich, RI

Hannah Davis Sutton

Director, EOC
Opportunity Resource Services
Cleburne, TX

MODERATOR

Esosa Ruffin

Coordinator
Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education
Washington, DC

44.

Empowering TRIO Students for the 21st Century Workforce: A Research-Based Enhanced Collaborative Student Empowerment Career Services Model

SPONSORED BY ASCENDIUM EDUCATION GROUP

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND

COLLEGE

📍 GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Higher education and the workforce are changing fast—so must our career supports. Drawing on systems thinking, institutional-effectiveness research, high-impact practices, and findings from the Pell Institute's multi-method Ascendium career services study, this session introduces the Pell Institute Toolkit for Enhanced Collaboration & Student-Empowerment Career Services Models—a practical, evidence-based roadmap to scale career supports that prepare TRIO students to

learn, lead, and earn across a lifetime. Participants will get a clear tour of the toolkit's core components—collaborative staffing models, HIP-aligned career experiences, data and evaluation protocols, and student empowerment strategies—and see real examples of how these elements strengthen advising, internships, employer partnerships, and transfer-to-career pathways. We'll translate institutional research into actionable steps: how to map systems, align offices, embed career learning in program design, and track outcomes that matter to campus leaders and funders. The session also explains a proposed pilot study to field-test the model and invites attendees to weigh in on design, feasibility, and site participation. Come prepared to assess fit for your campus, learn tools you can implement immediately, and learn how to position your program at the forefront of TRIO career innovation. Leave with a practical implementation checklist, evaluation templates, and a network of colleagues ready to collaborate on building career pathways that work for first-generation and low-income students.

PRESENTERS

Marilee Brescaini Ludvik

Co-PI, Director of Academic Effectiveness and Professor of Practice, Leadership Studies
University of San Diego
San Diego, CA

Margaret Cahalan

Senior Scholar
Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education
Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Rafael Orozco

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program and Student Support Services
University of Colorado, Denver
Denver, CO

45.

COE ED Talk: 60 Years of Shaping Higher Education - Celebrating Progress, Confronting Challenges

SPONSORED BY GMA CONSTRUCTION

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

ALL

📍 GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

As the Higher Education Act approaches its 60th anniversary, we'll take a clear-eyed look at the landmark law that transformed access to college—and yet still falls short of full equity. This timely discussion traces the HEA's history, assesses its impact on first-generation and low-income students, and explores the current structural gaps. Expect a frank conversation about funding trends, accountability, and the political forces that shape opportunity, followed by practical policy and campus strategies you can use to defend and strengthen programs that work. Leave with a sharper historical frame, evidence-based advocacy messages, and a set of concrete steps to help ensure the next chapter of the HEA advances true educational opportunity for all.

FACILITATORS

Aaron Brown

Executive Vice President
Council for Opportunity in Education
Washington, DC

Jonathan McKenzie

Chief Executive Officer
The Family Centered Educational Agency
South Holland, IL

46.

Communities in Action: The Early Years of the Upward Bound Program

SPONSORED BY ASCENDIUM EDUCATION GROUP

OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES STRAND

UB

📍 GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Drawing on 21 oral-history interviews with students and staff who lived the MIT/Wellesley Upward Bound experience, this presentation revisits the program's original anti-poverty, community-action roots and the radical promise it made to young people shut out of higher education. Through first-person stories and archival insight, you'll hear how intensive summer institutes, mentorship, and campus immersion helped students imagine college as possible—and in many cases, changed entire families and neighborhoods. We'll surface the strategies that worked then—community partnership, culturally responsive support, and collective advocacy—translate those lessons to today's context and consider how Upward Bound's founding ethos can guide contemporary program design and policy. Expect moving testimony, concrete historical examples, and a discussion of what modern TRIO practitioners can reclaim from this early era to deepen access, strengthen community ties, and sustain long-term impact.

PRESENTERS

Evette Layne

Director, Educational Opportunity Programs
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, MA

Gail Stubbs

Assistant Vice Provost for Student Equity, Access, and Success
University of Massachusetts Boston
Boston, MA

MODERATOR

Melinda Miller

Executive Director, EOC, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math-Science
The Family Centered

Educational Agency
 South Holland, IL

47.

Empowering TRIO Personnel to Stay the Course

SPONSORED BY GMA CONSTRUCTION

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

ALL

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

The day-to-day work of TRIO is rewarding—and relentless. This hands-on session gives staff leaders and frontline practitioners a pragmatic toolkit to sustain their commitment, manage heavy workloads, and thrive amid shifting campus cultures and student needs. Through short case studies, guided reflection, and strategy labs, you'll learn time-tested approaches for prioritizing high-impact work, preventing burnout, improving team systems, and deepening student engagement without sacrificing staff well-being. Expect concrete resources you can use the week after the conference: protocols for workload triage, brief rituals to restore team morale, communication templates for aligning campus partners, and professional-development pathways that reinforce mission and build career momentum. Walk away recharged, equipped with an action plan to protect your passion for the work, strengthen your program's human infrastructure, and ensure you and your team can keep opening doors for students—sustainably.

PRESENTERS

Daniel Lee

Academic Coordinator
 Indian River State College
 Fort Pierce, FL

Janieta Washington

Program Director, Upward Bound Math-Science
 Indian River State College
 Fort Pierce, FL

MODERATOR

Kyle Ethelbah

Director, College Programs for the Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach
 University of Nevada, Las Vegas
 Las Vegas, NV

48.

The Best Kept Secret: Selective College Affordability for Pell-Eligible and Lower-Income Students

SPONSORED BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

NAVIGATING THE SELECTIVE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE STRAND

PRE-COLLEGE

GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Many low-income students assume selective colleges are out of reach—but generous institutional aid often makes elite options cheaper than community or state schools. This interactive session will demystify award letters and net-price realities so you can confidently advise students about their best, most affordable fits. Participants will work through real financial aid packages, learn step-by-step how to use net-price calculators and compare total cost of attendance, and practice strategies for clarifying aid offers, appealing awards, and identifying scholarships and work-study opportunities that close remaining gaps. You'll leave with practical tools—a checklist for reading award letters, a side-by-side comparison template, sample parent-friendly talking points, and scripting for financial-aid conversations—so your students can make fully informed choices that maximize both quality and affordability. Bring a sample award letter if you can; be prepared to turn confusion into clarity and open doors that students didn't know were possible.

PRESENTERS

G. Dino Koff

Assistant Vice President and Executive Director of Financial Aid

Dartmouth College
 Hanover, NH

Annie Shea

Director of Regional Engagement and Associate Director of Undergraduate Admission

Vanderbilt University
 Nashville, TN

MODERATOR

Stephen Rebello

Senior Director, Student Support Services
 SUNY—Binghamton
 Binghamton, NY

49.

COE ED Talk: Won't You Be My Neighbor: Building Bridges and Sharing Strategies Between TRIO CBOs and Institutions

PRE-COLLEGE

MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Community-based organizations run TRIO with creativity, grit, and a nimbleness that institutions can learn from—and this session brings those lessons to the forefront. Hear how CBOs overcome funding constraints, build mission-driven partnerships, and design student-centered services that meet learners where they are. Through concrete examples, you'll learn practical approaches to creative budgeting, resource-sharing, stakeholder engagement, and measuring impact in ways that win support and sustain programs. This session is for CBO leaders and institutional partners alike: come to collect replicable tools for forging cross-sector alliances, leveraging community assets, and turning limited resources into high-impact programming. Expect honest lessons on risk, accountability, and advocacy, plus ready-to-use strategies you can adapt immediately to strengthen recruitment, boost retention,

and expand opportunity for the students you serve.

FACILITATORS

Al Bacon

Director, Education and Outreach Services
 Parris Foundation
 Houston, TX

Bernard Clay

Executive Director
 Introspect Youth Services, Inc.
 Chicago, IL

50.

Empowering TRIO Students with AI: Practical Strategies for Success

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL

MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Artificial intelligence (AI) isn't the future—it's already reshaping how students learn, job-seek, and overcome barriers. This action-oriented session shows how TRIO professionals can adopt AI tools that amplify advising, personalize academic support, and accelerate career readiness without sacrificing student-centered values. Through concrete demos and real-world examples, you'll see how AI can automate routine tasks, surface at-risk signals earlier, tailor study plans, and match students to internships and funding opportunities. We'll address ethical and equity considerations—bias checks, privacy safeguards, and accessibility—so you can deploy AI responsibly. Leave with an implementation checklist, vendor-vetting questions, sample prompts and use-cases you can pilot immediately, and strategies for training staff and students to use AI as a tool for empowerment rather than a replacement for human care. Practical, cautious, and student-first, this session equips you to bring AI into your work in ways that measurably improve outcomes.

PRESENTERS

Vicki Ampiaw

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



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Director, TRIO Pre-College Programs
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH

Mitchell Colver

Associate Provost for Engagement and Retention
American Public University System
Charles Town, WV

MODERATOR

Nickole Falto Castro

Director, Student Support Services
Antillean Adventist University
Mayaguez, PR

51.

The Latest Outlook for Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Programs

MCNAIR

MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

In the early days of the new administration, the White House issued several Executive Orders aimed at eliminating “dangerous, demeaning, and immoral race- and sex-based preferences under the guise of ‘diversity, equity, and inclusion.’” As the only Federal TRIO Program allowing for the inclusion of students “underrepresented in graduate education,” the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement program is particularly vulnerable in this environment. Come to this session to learn about potential threats to the McNair program. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with legal experts and learn from colleagues as we navigate the present uncertainty.

PRESENTERS

Michael Pillera

Director, Educational Opportunities Project
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Washington, DC

Scott Goldschmidt

Partner

Thompson Coburn LLP
Washington, DC

Brandt Hill

Partner

Thompson Coburn LLP
Birmingham, AL

MODERATOR

Michael Hunt

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Baltimore, MD

52.

Pathways to Career Readiness: Increasing Students’ Career-Aligned Social Capital

SSS

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Saint Peter’s University’s TRIO Student Support Services EDGE course is a 16-week, evidence-based pathway that fast-tracks sophomores from classroom confidence to career-ready professionals. This session unveils the curriculum’s sequence—Explore, Discover, Gain Experience, Excel—and shows how a deliberate focus on building industry relationships, mentorship, and applied professional skills closes equity gaps and expands mobility for first-generation and low-income students. Presenters will share outcomes data, sample lesson plans, and best practices for recruiting employer partners, structuring meaningful networking experiences, and coaching students to confidently present themselves. Attendees will walk away with replicable tools—a syllabus roadmap, mentoring and employer-engagement templates, assessment measures for social-capital growth, and tips for scaling the model on campus. If you want a practical, high-impact strategy to turn classroom learning into paid

internships, stronger resumes, and lasting professional networks, this session delivers the how-to and the proof.

PRESENTERS

Katelyn Joyce

Assistant Director, TRIO Student Support Services
Saint Peter’s University
Jersey City, NJ

Marieli Rubio

Partner and Director of Impact Career Launch
San Francisco, CA

MODERATOR

Shaun Jacobs-Patterson

Executive Director, CASE
Saint Peter’s University
Jersey City, NJ

53.

Degree Bound: Evidence-Based Strategies to Help TRIO Students Cross the Finish Line

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND

COLLEGE

RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

What actually helps TRIO students persist, transfer, and graduate? This session digs into the latest research and real-world program evidence to surface the practices that produce measurable gains in retention, persistence, and completion. Through concise summaries of high-impact strategies—cohort models, intrusive advising, early momentum course sequencing, proactive case management, and employer-connected pathways—you’ll learn why these approaches work, how they interact, and what implementation pitfalls to avoid. Participants will examine practical examples and data from TRIO settings, translate research into action with immediate-to-deploy tools, and leave with a clear implementation checklist for strengthening handoffs, boosting engagement, reducing

attrition, and supporting successful transfers from two-year to four-year institutions. This session is designed to turn evidence into practice so your program can improve outcomes this semester and for years to come.

PRESENTER

Sari Byerly

Assistant Vice President for Student Pathways
Weber State University
Ogden, UT

MODERATOR

Michael Henry

Director, Student Support Services
Southwest Virginia Community College
Cedar Bluff, VA

54.

Breaking the Workshop: Reimagining How We Connect with Students

SSS

RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

When traditional workshops failed to draw students, one Student Support Services program tried a different rhythm—short, high-energy experiences delivered where students already are. The result: Career & Coffee conversations, Financial Literacy Lunch-and-Learns, and bite-sized virtual micro-workshops that meet students’ schedules, spark curiosity, and build mentorship and confidence. This session pulls back the curtain on that turnaround, sharing design principles, sample formats, and facilitation tips that make micro-programming stick. Join small-group discussions to adapt these ideas to your campus, brainstorm low-cost community partnerships, and leave ready to pilot quick-touch interventions that boost attendance, deepen engagement, and create authentic pathways to student success.

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



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 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

PRESENTER

Tocarra Williams

Director, TRIO Programs
 North Central Missouri College
 Trenton, MO

MODERATOR

Kristin Millard

Executive Director, Academic
 Support Centers and Programs
 Weber State University
 Ogden, UT

55.

Celebrating 25 Years of the COE Keith Sherin Global Leaders Program

CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND

COLLEGE

RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Mark the 25th anniversary of the Keith Sherin Global Leaders program with a reflective, forward-looking session that explores how one bold investment in international learning transforms lives. Hear donors and partners describe the vision and conditions that sustain this work and learn from a TRIO program director about the practical challenges and breakthroughs of running a two-part model—study abroad and a Washington, D.C. semester. Together we'll showcase impact data, powerful alumni stories, and lessons learned about access, mentorship, and cross-cultural leadership. Leave inspired by the program's legacy and equipped with ideas to replicate, scale, or support similar global opportunities for the students you serve.

PRESENTERS

Travis Anane

Student
 Rutgers, The State University of
 New Jersey - Newark
 New Brunswick, NJ

Rosa Maria Acevedo

Assistant Professor of Higher
 Education
 Department of Education
 Foundations, Organizations,

and Policy
 University of Pittsburgh
 Pittsburgh, PA

Lindsay Calvert

Director, IIE Network and Center
 for International Opportunities
 Institute of International
 Education (IIE)
 Houston, TX

Kim Gorman

Director, Student Support
 Services
 University of Connecticut
 Storrs, CT

Mary Tupan Wenno

Executive Director
 ECHO
 Utrecht, Netherlands

MODERATOR

Donta Mills

Assistant Director, Upward
 Bound
 Baton Rouge Community
 College
 Baton Rouge, LA

56.

All Eyes on Me: TRIO Branding 101

SPONSORED BY COLLEGE BOARD

START SMART STRAND

ALL

REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Your program's brand is more than a logo—it's the story you tell, the emotions you evoke, and the impact you inspire. TRIO Branding 101 will guide you step-by-step in creating a modern, cohesive visual identity that reflects your mission and resonates with students, partners, and your community. Learn how to choose colors, fonts, and imagery that capture your program's spirit while mastering messaging and marketing strategies that clearly communicate its purpose, benefits, and outcomes. Plus, jumpstart your design process with exclusive access to 20+ ready-to-use Canva templates created specifically for TRIO

programs by branding expert Maria David. Leave ready to make your program look—and feel—as powerful as the work you do every day.

PRESENTER

Maria David

Associate Director
 Morehead State University
 Morehead, KY

MODERATOR

Nayely Martinez De Lima

Senior Manager, Student
 Support Services
 Dallas College
 Dallas, TX

57.

You Down with GPT?... Yeah, You Know Me!

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

What do TRIO professionals and 90s rap legends have in common? More than you think. This electrifying workshop blends nostalgic energy with next-gen innovation, showing how AI and GPTs can unlock doors and transform the way we deliver student services. Rooted in the theme "Opening Doors, Changing Lives: The Transformative Power of Education," we'll explore real tools that do the heavy lifting — from answering FAQs to personalizing guidance. With live demos, collaborative prompt remixes, and a few lyrical nods to Treach and the crew, you'll leave energized and equipped to reimagine the future of TRIO — one prompt at a time.

PRESENTER

Antonio Robinson

Director, TRIO Programs
 Trident Technical College
 Charleston, SC

MODERATOR

Sebastian Myrick

Executive Director, TRIO
 Programs
 South Seattle Community

College
 Seattle, WA

58.

I AM FIRST: A Student Success Online Resource Hub for First-Generation College Success

COLLEGE

REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Supporting first-generation students across online, hybrid, and campus environments requires intentional design and seamless connection—this session shows you how. Discover a proven virtual hub model that centralizes onboarding, academic supports, financial literacy programming, and career readiness into a single, student-friendly experience that increases retention and engagement. Through a mix of demonstration, discussion, and real-world examples, you'll learn how to design accessible online orientations, craft short workshop series that translate to measurable outcomes, and use digital tools to strengthen advising handoffs and peer networks. Leave with practical templates, engagement scripts, and an implementation checklist you can adapt immediately to create an integrated virtual pathway that empowers first-gen students to persist, progress, and thrive.

PRESENTER

Lee Williams

Executive Director, Student
 Success, Retention, TRIO-EOC
 Texarkana College
 Texarkana, TX

MODERATOR

Michele Feiner

Director, Student Support
 Services
 Vermont State University,
 Johnson
 Johnson, VT



59.

Strengthening Civic Engagement Among Students

COLLEGE

REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

With only about two in five voters aged 18–29 casting ballots in 2024, many young people remain disconnected, disinterested, and economically strained—conditions that weaken both civic life and long-term opportunity. This session explores why youth civic participation matters for students' agency, career readiness, and community health, and shows how TRIO professionals, advisers, and faculty can move the needle. Campus and community leaders will share evidence-backed strategies—from low-barrier voter registration and voter-education drives to curriculum-linked civic projects, community partnerships, and paid civic internships—that make participation meaningful, relevant, and safe for students facing economic stress. Expect practical takeaways you can implement immediately: outreach scripts, classroom prompts, coalition-building tactics, and evaluation tools to measure student engagement. Leave ready to turn civic education into action and help your students build the habits of democratic participation and leadership.

PRESENTERS

Cathy Cohen

Professor, Political Science
 University of Chicago
 Chicago, IL

Iona Calhoun-Battiste

Senior Director, Collective Power
 The Chicago Community Trust
 Chicago, IL

Noah Walls

Program Coordinator, Upward Bound
 University of Nevada, Reno
 Reno, NV

MODERATOR

Sherontae Maxwell

Assistant Director of Access
 University of Georgia
 Athens, GA

60.

Navigating Our Moral Compass: Ethical Standards in Hyper-Partisan Times

ALL

ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

In an era of heightened polarization, ethical clarity is essential to preserve the trust between institutions and the communities they serve. This interactive session invites practitioners to move beyond abstract principles and build a practical ethics toolkit for real-world dilemmas—from curricular controversies and free-speech tensions to equity-driven interventions and partner relationships. Through facilitated case studies, role-play scenarios, and small-group problem solving, participants will test decision-making frameworks, practice stakeholder mapping, and learn a step-by-step protocol for transparent, values-aligned choices that withstand public scrutiny. Leave with concrete tools—a decision tree, communication templates, and escalation guidelines—you can use immediately to make principled, accountable decisions that protect institutional integrity and advance student-centered work.

PRESENTER

Alison Mall

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program
 University of Alaska Anchorage
 Anchorage, AK

MODERATOR

Christine Quemuel

Assistant Vice Provost for Student Success
 University of Hawaii at Manoa
 Honolulu, HI

61.

Strengthening Community Partnerships to Enhance Veteran Support Services

VETERANS

SKYWAY 260 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Veterans navigating the jump from military service to civilian life need more than classroom instruction—they need coordinated, community-wide support. This session showcases how Veteran Upward Bound programs can amplify outcomes by forging strategic partnerships with employers, veteran service organizations, VA offices, mental-health providers, community colleges, and workforce agencies. Hear real-world models for creating seamless referral systems, credit-for-service pathways, benefits navigation clinics, and employer pipelines that lead to credentialed careers. You'll leave with practical strategies and partnership templates to map local assets, engage stakeholders, and design integrated supports that improve enrollment, retention, and long-term employment for the veterans you serve. Join us to learn how collaboration turns single-point services into a network that sustains veterans' educational and career success.

PRESENTER

Halle Timpson

Principal Investigator and Project Director, Veterans Upward Bound

The University of Tennessee – Knoxville
 Knoxville, TN

MODERATOR

Will Smith

Director, EOC
 The Higher Education Consortium of St. Louis
 St. Louis, MO

62.

NTAA Engagement Ambassador Cohort: Elevating Alumni Leadership & Strengthening TRIO Alumni Networks

ALL

SKYWAY 272 (SKYWAY LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Alumni are more than success stories—they're mentors, advocates, funders, and living proof of TRIO's impact. This session spotlights thriving TRIO alumni chapters and the NTAA Engagement Ambassador Cohort, a six-month professional-development pipeline that trains alumni leaders to grow sustainable networks that fuel mentorship, career pipelines, and public advocacy. Hear from alumni who turned engagement strategies into measurable gains—expanded mentoring programs, employer partnerships, fundraising wins, and powerful advocacy campaigns—and learn the step-by-step practices the cohort uses to recruit, train, and mobilize alumni. Participants will come away with a practical playbook: outreach scripts and recruitment tactics, a calendar for year-round engagement activities, mentorship and career-connection models, and simple metrics to demonstrate alumni program value. Whether you're just starting an alumni group or ready to scale a national chapter, this session offers proven tools and inspiration to transform former students into lifelong partners in student success.

PRESENTERS

Justin Thomas

Assistant Director, Talent Search
 Murray State University
 Murray, KY

Tommy Walls

Director, Alumni Relations and Career Opportunities
 Council for Opportunity in Education

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

Washington, DC

MODERATOR

LaTonya Nixon

Vice President, Student Services

Beaufort County Community College

Washington, NC

63.

Linking Up for Lasting Impact: How TRIO Programs are Strengthening Campus Collaborations

SSS-2YR

TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Too often students fall through the cracks when campus units operate in isolation—TRIO programs know better. This interactive session reveals a practical, replicable model for deep collaboration between TRIO and core campus partners—Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Housing, Disability Services, Career Services, tutoring centers, and academic departments—to design coordinated responses that solve complex student problems. You'll see how shared protocols, simple data handoffs, and agreed-upon escalation paths turn fragmented services into a single, student-centered support system that improves retention and accelerates progress to degree completion. After a brief framing of the collaboration model, participants will work in facilitated groups to diagnose a real student scenario and build a cross-functional action plan, plotting roles, timing, communication scripts, and metrics for success. Expect concrete takeaways—sample memoranda of understanding, referral language, a quick intake template, and an implementation checklist—so you can return to campus with a ready-to-use roadmap to break down silos, strengthen partnerships, and deliver seamless support to the students who need it most.

PRESENTER

Jeanne Lynn Wiatr

Retention Specialist, Student Support Services

University of Memphis

Memphis, TN

MODERATOR

Shareka Brown

Director, Student Support Services

Davidson-Davie Community College

Lexington, NC

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM

Lunch on Your Own

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

HT22.

Strategic Learning Assessment (SLA) and the Self-Determination Student Scale (SDSS): Helping Students Become More Strategic, Self-Regulated, Lifelong Learners

ALL

ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

This presentation introduces assessment instruments and how they can be used to help students become more effective learners. The Strategic Learning Assessment (SLA) is a 20-minute online assessment that identifies a student's awareness and skills in 11 key learning areas essential for academic success, including Communication, Critical Thinking, Effective Learning Strategies, Focus and Concentration, Growth Mindset, Persistence, Seeking Help, Sense of Belonging, Stress Management, Test Preparation, and Time Management. The Self-Determination Student Scale (SDSS) measures five competencies related to increased self-determination: Know yourself and your context, Value Yourself, Plan,

Act and Experience Outcomes and Learn. Both the SLA and the SDSS provide tailored recommendations and strategies for each assessed learning area. Participants will learn how the SLA and SDSS provide personalized feedback and data-driven insights to benefit both students and educators. A live demonstration will showcase student and administrator experiences, including the Administrative Dashboard's features.

PRESENTERS

Mike Ealy

President and Author

Longsdale Publishing

Trinity, FL

Sharon Field

Founder, 2BSD: Resources for Self-Determination and Professor Emeritus, College of Education

Wayne State University

Birmingham, MI

HT23.

How COE's Tool, empower 2.0, Is Ushering in a New Digital Era for TRIO

ALL

GRAND HALL GH (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Did you know that COE offers data-tracking software to complete your APRs? Learn about empower 2.0—a next-generation platform designed to streamline operations and reduce the workload for TRIO directors and staff. Built with direct input from program leaders, it automates reporting, simplifies data tracking, and enhances program visibility. empower 2.0 helps you spend less time on paperwork and more time making an impact.

PRESENTER

Helmut Neher

Chief Technology Officer

Bright Learning Lab

Austin, TX

HT24.

Global Pathways to Leadership: Puerto Rico Experiences that Transform

ALL

GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join Zion Leadership Group (ZLG) for a high-energy, interactive session that showcases the immersive and allowable educational experiences available to our students in Puerto Rico.

Discover two transformative experiences: the Global Leadership Symposium, a week-long leadership and cultural immersion, and the Global STEM Academy, where students earn an underwater robotics certification while exploring Puerto Rico's vibrant marine ecosystems.

Since 2017, ZLG has hosted over 150 TRIO & GEAR UP groups on powerful journeys that elevate academic confidence, cultural awareness, and career readiness. Don't miss this opportunity to equip your students with the tools to become bold, globally-minded leaders!

PRESENTERS

Adrian Rosado

President and Author

Zion Leadership Group
 San Juan, PR

LaCretia Wooten

Director

University of Kansas
 Kansas City, KS

HT25.

Genius Engagement: The Silent Crisis Killing TRIO Outcomes (and How Beats, AI, & Algo'Rhythms Can Save Them)

ALL

GRAND HALL J (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

We all know the truth: low attendance, poor retention, and grant outcome struggles

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

all stem from LACK OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT! With 7000+ testimonials across 200 schools, Genius Potential understands the proven plug-and-play strategies fusing hip hop, humor, and real-life relatability that have gotten students from city to rural environments showing up and taking action on TRIO outcomes. In our interactive session, you'll learn how to curate the perfect workshop that transforms low-interest topics like FAFSA, STEM, and career readiness into fun, culturally relevant experiences that boost attendance, engagement, and action for even the most disengaged and hard-to-reach students. We'll also explore easy-to-use AI tools that cut your planning time in half, spark attendance & engagement, and help you do more with less!

PRESENTERS

Bert Gervais

Student Engagement Expert
Genius Potential
Brooklyn, NY

David Horne

Student Engagement Expert
Genius Potential
Brooklyn, NY

HT26.

Opening Doors, Changing Lives: Expanding Access and Impact Through Advanced Placement

ALL

📍 GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Education has the power to transform lives, especially for first-generation and low-income students who are paving their path to college and career success. This session will explore how the Advanced Placement (AP) Program serves as a powerful lever of opportunity, offering students meaningful and relevant coursework that strengthens their preparation and confidence for higher education.

We will highlight the impact of AP courses, including AP Career Kickstart and the groundbreaking AP African American Studies course, which together broaden access and representation for students worldwide. Participants will learn how these innovative AP opportunities empower students to pursue rigorous coursework, develop critical skills, and connect their learning to future goals.

Designed for TRIO professionals, this session will share strategies and resources for supporting students on their journey to and through college—helping open doors to opportunity and changing lives through the transformative power of education.

PRESENTER

Sharee Onyezia

Senior Director, AP Program Access
College Board
Chicago, IL

HT27.

Building Smart Financial Habits for Success

ALL

📍 GRAND HALL L (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Want to take control of your financial future—and help your students do the same? In this session, we will reveal five simple but powerful money habits that can transform how you manage your finances for life. You'll learn how to track your cash flow, stick to a spending plan that expands your options, make your money work harder, manage debt wisely, and stay focused on long-term goals.

PRESENTER

Joah Yeoman

Financial Consultant
TIAA
Frisco, TX

HT28.

Elevate Your Program's Impact: Maximize Student Engagement, Achieve Proven Results!

ALL

📍 MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join us for an incredible, interactive session designed to maximize student engagement, help students attain academic success, and support students through their life-journey. Learn innovative approaches to test preparation, personal enrichment, and tutoring that empower students to conquer standardized exams, foster academic growth and critical thinking, and ignite motivation.

Discover proven techniques that build resiliency and that equip your students for long-term achievement. This session blends practical tools, evidence-based strategies, and fresh perspectives to transform your program's outcomes.

Leave equipped to inspire and support your students like never before.

PRESENTERS

Jim Giovannini

Owner/Author
Academic Tutoring & Test Prep
Park Ridge, IL

Yuval Trachtenberg

Vice President of School Partnerships
Academic Tutoring & Test Prep
Park Ridge, IL

HT29.

Show Me The Money! Create Financial Literacy Experiences Your Students Will Never Forget

ALL

📍 MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

The first 50 attendees will receive a VISA gift card! Show up early because spots fill up FAST! Learn the secret strategies to hosting impactful financial

literacy workshops for students. With experience from 100+ TRIO programs, Simple Money Academy offers expertise to help you transform your view on financial literacy and empower your students for success! Come ready to have a FUN time!

PRESENTER

MJ Pittman

CEO
Simple Money Academy
McKinney, TX

HT30.

What If Your Curriculum Could Do More? Discover DreamCatcher Curriculum!

ALL

📍 MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

DreamCatcher Curriculum is specifically designed to support first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students in building self-awareness, resilience, and confidence in pursuing postsecondary education. Our topics align with TRIO's mission by promoting college readiness and college success through culturally relevant, student-centered content. DreamCatcher Curriculum equips TRIO participants with the mindset and skills they need to succeed in high school, college, and beyond. Participate in some sample student activities, get a chance to review our topics, and discover what sets us apart!

PRESENTER

Whitney Srsen

Co-Founder
DreamCatcher Curriculum
Fayetteville, AK

HT32.

Workforce Ready: Measure & Increase TriO Students' Career Readiness Skills & Employability

ALL

📍 RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Join this session to learn



how Career Launch, a social enterprise born within higher education, helps TRiO partners drive post-education employability through career readiness skills and career-aligned social capital.

Career Launch, an official partner of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), developed the NACE Career Readiness Inventory—a 10-minute, frictionless experience that is based on NACE's 10+ years of research on the skills most valued by employers (i.e., the NACE 8 Competencies). Partners gain full access to aggregate and segmented student data that will help inform programming and curricular objectives to ensure students are ready for their careers.

Career Launch also provides staff/faculty professional development and has the #1 curriculum on how to increase students' career-aligned social capital and career readiness skills.

PRESENTERS

Destiny O'Rourke

Director of Partnerships, Engagement and Communication
 San Ramon, CA

Marieli Rubio

Partner & Vice President of Impact
 Career Launch
 San Francisco, CA

HT34.

Connect. Teach. Entertain. Grow: Helping Your Students Unlock Their Potential

ALL
RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Step into an electrifying session with The Unlock Project, where inspiration meets action! You'll get a sneak peek of powerful keynotes, dive into transformative courses, and participate in a Q&A session that will leave you energized and ready to unlock new

possibilities for your students. Come discover what The Unlock Project is all about!

PRESENTER

Cole Blalock

Founder

The Unlock Project
 Orem, UT

HT35.

Level Up Your Learners: Digital College Exam Prep for TRIO Success

PRE-COLLEGE
REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

In this session, we'll explore how TRIO programs can harness digital tools to better prepare students for key college entrance and placement exams like the PSAT, SAT, ACT, and ACCUPLACER. You'll learn actionable strategies for building learner confidence, increasing engagement, and improving outcomes through adaptive study plans, interactive content, and data-informed instruction. We'll also look at case examples of how online prep resources—such as full-length practice tests, video tutorials, and flashcards—can support a variety of learning styles and help students take ownership of their exam journey. Whether your program is just getting started or refining its approach, you'll walk away with practical ideas you can implement immediately to support TRIO student success. This session will also share how Peterson's Test Prep supports these strategies through its digital platform.

PRESENTERS

Brian Coyne

CEO

Peterson's Test Prep
 Denver, CO

Tara Paul

Education Account Manager
 Peterson's Test Prep
 Denver, CO

HT36.

Breaking Barriers in STEM: Hands-On, Low- Cost Activities for Every Classroom

PRE-COLLEGE
REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Join in this fun hands-on workshop that will help you to lower barriers in STEM education by providing practical, low-cost activities designed to engage underserved students. Participants will try out the Marshmallow Challenge, an engaging engineering activity that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork using simple, budget-friendly materials.

PRESENTER

Chris Scott

Executive Director
 Woven Learning and Technology
 Tustin, CA

HT37.

Simplifying the Path to College with Common App

ALL
REGENCY C (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

The process of applying to college can be overwhelming, no matter where a student is on their college journey. Common App, a non-profit membership organization, simplifies this process by connecting students to over 1,000 colleges and universities, along with scholarship opportunities, through a single platform. We've set a bold moonshot goal: to close the gap for low- and middle-income students applying to postsecondary opportunities. Join us to learn how our platform, resources, and access-driven initiatives help first-year, transfer, and military-connected students and their supporters navigate the admissions process with confidence.

PRESENTERS

Batanya Gipson

Director, Community College and Transfer Student Engagement
 Common App
 Arlington, VA

Meredith Lombardi

Director, Education and Training
 Common App
 Arlington, VA

HT38.

Unlocking Academic Success with Tutor.com: Empowering TRIO Students Anytime, Anywhere!

ALL
REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

What do TRIO students need to improve grades, boost test scores, and accelerate toward graduation? Personalized academic support. Walk away from this session with actionable insights into how Tutor.com's 24/7 online tutoring (including bilingual Spanish support), writing review, and test prep help improve student outcomes.

PRESENTERS

Dorsey Baldwin

Customer Success Manager, Library & TRIO Programs
 Tutor.com
 New York, NY

Dave Wills

Senior Director, Library & TRIO Programs
 Tutor.com
 New York, NY

HT39.

Fueling Persistence from Day One: Scalable Online Tools for College Programs

COLLEGE
ROOSEVELT 3AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

How can TRIO college programs deliver individualized support to more students without overextending staff?

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
 SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

With increasing caseloads, varying student needs, and limited time, finding scalable strategies that still center student success and impact is more important than ever.

In this session, discover how TRIO teams are combining human connection with flexible, online resources to help students succeed academically, persist through challenges, and feel supported from their first day through graduation. You'll explore how tools like Go2Orientation, StudentLingo, TutorLingo, and OnlineLingo can reinforce academic skills and motivation outside of appointments; provide 24/7 access to workshops that meet grant objectives; streamline onboarding with trackable, accessible orientation experiences; and strengthen tutor training without requiring live sessions.

Whether you serve online learners, first-gen students, or those balancing school and work, you'll walk away with practical examples of how TRIO college programs are scaling support without sacrificing the personal touch that defines their mission.

PRESENTER

Alex Pecoraro

Director of Partnerships
 Innovative Educators, Inc.
 Boulder, CO

HT42.

Mastering TRIO Data Like a Pro with StudentAccess

ALL

TORONTO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Looking for a better way to manage participant data? StudentAccess is designed specifically for TRIO programs, offering features like the Multiple Student Tool, Online Applications, Dynamic Report Generator, and seamless communication tools. This session will demonstrate how StudentAccess simplifies data tracking and ensures

compliance with the Department of Education's reporting requirements. Discover how to streamline workflows and enhance program efficiency with this powerful software.

PRESENTERS

Claysa Diamond

Marketing & Communications Manager

Heiberg Consulting, Inc.
 Fort Collins, CO

Alex Grote

Vice President
 Heiberg Consulting, Inc.
 Fort Collins, CO

2:45 PM – 4:00 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

64.

Creating Dynamic Cultural and Academic Experiences

SSS

ACAPULCO (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Take your students out of the lecture hall and into the world where learning, culture, and career collide. This hands-on session walks you through the full design process for immersive experiences—visits to historical sites, instructional live performances, industry site visits, and curated academic encounters—that deepen engagement, build professional networks, and connect coursework to real-world opportunity. You'll explore how to translate bold ideas into student-centered itineraries that prioritize accessibility, learning outcomes, and safety; how to align experiences with TRIO objectives and assessment plans; and how to negotiate cost-sharing, logistics, and partnership roles with campus and community partners. Through concrete examples, sample itineraries, outreach language for partners, and practical budget and risk-management tips, you'll leave ready to

plan scalable, sustainable programs that inspire students, expand horizons, and create memorable pathways to academic and career success.

PRESENTERS

Bre Buckner

Assistant Director, Student Support Services
 Kent State University
 Kent, OH

Adam Cinderich

Director, Student Support Services
 Kent State University
 Kent, OH

MODERATOR

Bernadine Booky

Director, Student Support Services
 New Mexico State University
 Las Cruces, NM

66.

Delegate Like a Pro: Passing the Baton Without Dropping It

SPONSORED BY GMA CONSTRUCTION

LEADERSHIP IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE STRAND

ALL

GRAND HALL I (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

If delegation feels like handing off chores instead of building capacity, this workshop is for you. Come to this practical, interactive session that teases apart simple task assignment from true delegation and shows how the latter grows trust, strengthens teams, and improves outcomes. You'll learn clear strategies for matching work to strengths, setting expectations without micromanaging, coaching for accountability, and creating feedback loops that protect quality while developing autonomy. Designed for TRIO directors, managers, and team leads, this session blends short demonstrations with real-world practice so you leave ready to distribute responsibility in ways that free your time, invest

in staff growth, and make your program more resilient.

PRESENTERS

Rodney E. Adams

Associate Vice President, Student Services
 Technical College of the Lowcountry
 Beaufort, SC

E. Jim Oree

Director, Student Support Services
 Midlands Technical College
 Columbia, SC

MODERATOR

Lynette D. Bates

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, Upward Bound, and Upward Bound Math-Science
 The University of New Orleans
 New Orleans, LA

68.

How to Garner Your Institution's Support

ALL

GRAND HALL K (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

TRIO programs thrive when institutional leaders move from passive awareness to active partnership. This session shows you how to win visible, sustained support from presidents, provosts, deans, and trustees so your program becomes an institutional priority—not just a line item. Hear from seasoned practitioners who have successfully elevated TRIO on their campuses, learn persuasive evidence-and-story-based strategies to demonstrate your program's impact, and practice advocacy approaches that translate outcomes into administrative action. Through an interactive workshop you'll map key stakeholders, craft concise leadership briefings, and leave with a ready-to-use plan to deepen executive buy-in, protect resources, and expand opportunities for your students by embedding TRIO into the institution's mission

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

and strategic direction.

PRESENTER

Stephen Rebello

Director, Student Support Services

SUNY Binghamton
Binghamton, NY

MODERATOR

Melvin Simoyi

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

Heritage University
Zillah, WA

70.

From Applicant to Reviewer: Demystifying the Grant Review Process

ALL

MICHIGAN 1 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Ever wondered what happens to your proposal after you hit “submit”? This session pulls back the curtain on the U.S. Department of Education’s peer-review system—who reviewers are, what they look for, and how their recommendations shape which projects get funded. Designed with TRIO and GEAR UP professionals in mind, the discussion explains why your frontline expertise is invaluable to the review panel, how serving as a reviewer can sharpen your own grant-writing, and how to register and prepare to participate. You’ll get practical guidance on reading review criteria, avoiding common proposal pitfalls, and using reviewer insights to strengthen future applications. Leave with a clear roadmap to become a reviewer and concrete tactics to design proposals that survive—and thrive—under federal scrutiny.

PRESENTER

Kari Azevedo

Director and Principal Investigator, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

University of Central Missouri
Warrensburg, MO

MODERATOR

Kimberly Alexander-Brown

Executive Director, Office of Minority Student Affairs and Director, TRIO Programs

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Champaign, IL

71.

Beyond Access: Technology, Policy, and Innovation in Expanding Economic Mobility for TRIO Students

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

ALL

MICHIGAN 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

TRIO has always been about creating ladders to opportunity—now those ladders must reach a rapidly changing labor market and a digitally driven learning landscape. This session showcases the most promising innovations that keep first-generation and low-income students competitive: from equitable broadband and device strategies to AI-driven tutoring, VR/AR virtual reality and augmented reality simulations for career prep, and employer-aligned micro-credential pathways. You’ll hear real examples of programs that expanded access through technology, learned how to build partnerships that translate training into jobs, and discover policy levers that protect digital equity and scale what works. Designed for practitioners and advocates, the session blends concrete tools with strategic advocacy: practical steps to assess and close digital gaps, models for embedding new tech into student services without creating barriers, and persuasive message frames to win institutional and legislative support. Leave with ready-to-use implementation ideas, partnership strategies, and an advocacy checklist to ensure your students don’t just enter college—they thrive, compete, and build long-term economic mobility.

PRESENTER

Kiesha King

Head, U.S. Education Strategy

T-Mobile

Porter, TX

MODERATOR

Cheri Westmoreland

Executive Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH

72.

Navigating Hidden Expectations in Graduate School

MCNAIR

MICHIGAN 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Great mentorship can change the trajectory of a student’s academic and professional life—but those relationships don’t happen by accident. This practical, interactive session gives administrators and program staff the language, tools, and strategies to help students and faculty build clear, productive, and sustainable mentor-mentee partnerships from undergraduate through graduate study. You’ll learn how to set mutual expectations, structure purposeful meetings, navigate common power dynamics, and coach students to take agency in shaping their mentoring relationships—turning episodic advising into lasting professional sponsorship. Through real scenarios, sample mentoring agreements, and communication scripts you can use the moment you return to campus, the session focuses on concrete outcomes: clearer role definitions, routine check-ins that advance research and career goals, conflict-resolution techniques that preserve relationships, and strategies to broaden students’ networks beyond a single mentor. Leave prepared to elevate mentoring from good intention to measurable impact so your students gain the guidance, opportunities, and professional

capital they need to move confidently toward graduate study and career success.

PRESENTER

Shari Cunningham

Program Assistant, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

Rutgers University
Piscataway, NJ

MODERATOR

Christabelle Dragoo

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

University of Oregon
Eugene, OR

73.

Connecting the Dots of Workforce Skills and Engineering: An Introduction to SeaPerch and Solar Energy

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

NEW ORLEANS (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

High school students crave inventive, career-relevant STEM experiences that connect classroom theory to real-world problem solving—this session gives Upward Bound Math-Science professionals a ready-made playbook to deliver exactly that. Learn how to design two energizing summer modules—a SeaPerch underwater-robotics track and a mini solar-energy research camp—that spark curiosity, teach engineering practices, and build portable skills like teamwork, prototyping, and data literacy. Presenters will demonstrate sample lesson sequences, low-cost materials strategies, assessment touchpoints, and scaffolds to make these modules accessible to diverse learners, including students with limited prior STEM exposure. You’ll see classroom-to-competition pathways in action and get clear next steps to register teams for TRIO or regional SeaPerch contests, plus tips for recruiting industry partners, securing

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



OPENING DOORS, CHANGING LIVES
THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION
SEPTEMBER 7-10 | CHICAGO, IL

modest funding, and aligning activities to college- and career-readiness goals. Leave equipped with downloadable lesson-plan modules, step-by-step implementation guidance, and practical outreach language so you can launch a memorable summer STEM program that expands students' horizons, strengthens their résumés, and opens pathways into engineering and energy careers.

PRESENTER

Julie Yavarian

Assistant Director, Upward Bound Math-Science

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

Lafayette, LA

MODERATOR

Stephanie Campbell

Director, Upward Bound

Polk State College

Winter Haven, FL

74.

Be Your Own Evaluator: A How-To Session on Conducting Your Own TRIO Mini-Study

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS STRAND

ALL

**RANDOLPH 1AB (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

You don't need a full-time evaluator to prove your program's impact—just the right approach and tools. This hands-on session arms TRIO practitioners with step-by-step methods to design a focused, defensible mini-study anchored in your program objectives and federal reporting needs. We'll translate everyday program activities into measurable questions, build simple logic models, choose feasible indicators, and outline low-burden data-collection routines that staff can sustain. Through practical examples and short work time, participants will draft an evaluation plan, see sample instruments and analysis templates, and learn how to turn findings into compelling

narratives for campus leaders, funders, and legislators. Leave with ready-to-use templates, basic guidance on quantitative and qualitative analysis, and reporting language demonstrating effectiveness while strengthening your program's case for resources and support.

PRESENTERS

Lauren Coleman-Tempel

Director, TRIO Training

University of Kansas

Lawrence, KS

Meghan Ecker-Lyster

Director, Research, Evaluation, and Dissemination

University of Kansas

Lawrence, KS

MODERATOR

Brandy Joe Mitchum

Director, Upward Bound

Williamsburg Technical College

Kingstree, SC

75.

Building Partnerships for College Completion and Career Success: Lessons from All-In Milwaukee

COLLEGE

**RANDOLPH 2 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

See how a bold, partnership-driven model moves students from first-generation promise to real economic opportunity. This session showcases findings from the inaugural cohorts of All-In Milwaukee—an integrated college-completion initiative that supports low-income and first-generation students from high school through college and into careers—and translates outcomes into playbooks you can use. Presenters will share hard results on degree completion and career placement, demonstrate how coordinated high-school, university, and employer partnerships produce measurable gains, and surface the operational lessons needed to sustain holistic supports at scale. Through concrete case

examples you'll learn how to design shared-goal frameworks, align data systems across partners, structure employer engagement that leads to paid internships and job placement, and build wraparound services that prevent attrition. Expect practical takeaways: partnership agreements, sample metrics dashboards, communication templates for stakeholder alignment, and a step-by-step roadmap to replicate the All-In approach in your region. Leave ready to create integrated pathways that strengthen opportunity, expand talent pipelines, and deliver long-term benefits for students and communities.

PRESENTERS

Irving Ibarra

Director, Strategic Partnerships

All-In Milwaukee

Milwaukee, WI

Allison Wagner

Founding Executive Director

All-In Milwaukee

Milwaukee, WI

MODERATOR

Maureen Hoyler

Senior Advisor to the President

Council for Opportunity in Education

Washington, DC

76.

Creating Global Citizens: Expanding Horizons through TRIO and Opportunity Programs

CREATING GLOBAL CITIZENS STRAND

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

**RANDOLPH 3 (CONCOURSE LEVEL
EAST TOWER)**

Preparing students for a connected world means more than travel—it means building intercultural competence, academic confidence, and global agency. This session spotlights Northeastern Illinois University's Upward Bound program, which blends virtual collaborations and in-person exchanges with partners in Latin

America to deepen students' cross-cultural awareness and academic skills. You'll hear how the program scaffolds language and research projects, structures meaningful partnerships, and supports students before, during, and after international engagement so learning translates into long-term growth. Presenters will share concrete program designs, implementation tips, assessment approaches, and outcome data that demonstrate increased cultural fluency, academic motivation, and college readiness. Leave with a replicable roadmap—partnership templates, curriculum modules, risk-management checklists, and strategies for equitable access—so your program can launch sustainable global experiences that expand horizons, strengthen resumes, and cultivate tomorrow's global citizens.

PRESENTER

Aaron Cortes

Director, STEAM Pathways

Northeastern Illinois University
- Center for College Access and Success

Chicago, IL

MODERATOR

Llindy Gonzalez

Director, Upward Bound

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

77.

Lessons from Early Organizing: Reflections by COE's Founding President

ALL

**REGENCY A (BALLROOM LEVEL
WEST TOWER)**

After years of organizing locally at the state and regional levels, a courageous group of TRIO educators from around the nation made the decision to establish a national movement in the late 1970s. Building on the lessons learned during these early days, these leaders forged a path that would embed

SESSIONS DESCRIPTIONS



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TRIO into our nation's higher education infrastructure and ultimately grow its capacity to more than \$1 billion to serve nearly a million students annually. During this session, the architect of this national movement – COE President Emeritus Arnold Mitchem – will offer his reflections on the early days of the national movement and how they inform what the TRIO community can and must do to preserve opportunity for the students of tomorrow.

PRESENTER

Arnold Mitchem

President Emeritus

Council for Opportunity in Education

Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Deborah Northcross

Consultant

Council for Opportunity in Education

Washington, DC

78.

Unlocking Insights: How AI Transforms TRIO Data into Actionable Strategies

TECH PATHWAYS STRAND

COLLEGE

REGENCY B (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

Your student contact notes are more than records—they're a hidden gold mine of signals about needs, barriers, and opportunity. This practice-focused session uses a Colorado State University case study to show how TRIO Student Support Services and Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program directors harnessed Natural Language Processing (NLP) to surface patterns, predict risk, and redesign outreach in ways that measurably improved student engagement. You'll see how automated text analysis can transform free-text notes into actionable themes—revealing common stressors, referral needs, and

momentum moments—so staff can prioritize the right students at the right time. Presenters will walk through implementation lessons: data-prep basics, privacy and FERPA guardrails, choosing vendor vs. in-house approaches, and how to translate NLP outputs into real workflows (targeted advising, curriculum tweaks, and program-level changes). Expect concrete examples, before-and-after impact stories, and a practical roadmap you can adapt: sample queries, dashboard views, and a starter toolkit to pilot NLP on your own contact-note data. Leave empowered to stop drowning in notes and start using them to drive smarter, equity-centered student support.

PRESENTERS

April Cano-Garcia

Director, Student Support Services

Colorado State University
 Fort Collins, CO

Grace Ivins

Director, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program

Colorado State University
 Fort Collins, CO

MODERATOR

Shaun Patterson

Executive Director, TRIO Programs

Saint Peter's University
 Jersey City, NJ

80.

Maximizing the Final Year: EOC Outcomes, Reporting, and What's Next

EOC

REGENCY D (BALLROOM LEVEL WEST TOWER)

As EOC programs prepare to enter the final year of their grant cycle, senior staff from the U.S. Department of Education's Student Support Division will outline key expectations and preview the upcoming competition. The session will focus on performance

benchmarks, outcome tracking, and reporting requirements, offering participants the opportunity to ask questions and receive direct guidance from Department staff.

PRESENTER

Rachael Wiley

Division Lead, EOC and Veterans Upward Bound

Student Services Division

U.S. Department of Education
 Washington, DC

MODERATOR

Stephanie Langley

Director, EOC

University of Tennessee,
 Knoxville
 Knoxville, TN

4:15 PM – 5:15 PM

PLENARY SESSION

The Role of the States in Higher Education

ALL

GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Although the federal government has played a crucial role in ensuring access to higher education, state entities play an immense and often overlooked part in supporting student opportunities. Indeed, as the federal investment in higher education has been stagnant and the purchasing power of the Pell Grant has been eroded, states have become even more important players in the college access and affordability arena for students and their families. During this plenary session, experts will discuss trends in state support of higher education and explore ways that college access and success professionals can leverage local relationships to help ensure their students' success.

PRESENTERS

Gabriella Gomez

Executive Vice President, Policy, Advocacy, and Communications
 Strada Education Network

Indianapolis, IN

Tom Harnisch

Vice President, Government Relations

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
 Boulder, CO

Tom Keily

Policy Director

Education Commission of the States
 Denver, CO

MODERATOR

Brenda Dann Messier

Consultant

Council for Opportunity in Education
 Greenwich, RI

7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

Educational Opportunity Dinner

ALL

GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)

Please note that your conference badge is your official meal ticket to the Educational Opportunity Dinner. Persons without an appropriate conference badge will not be permitted inside the ballroom.

11:45 AM – 12:00 AM

Dance

ALL

GRAND HALL (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)



WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 10, 2025

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

PLENARY SESSION

Is Economic Mobility Possible without a College Degree in the Current Workforce?

ALL
GRAND BALLROOM - BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER

This panel addresses the need for postsecondary credentials, including baccalaureate and advanced degrees, from a range of perspectives. One recent survey indicated that less than 44% of high school students intend to attain a bachelor's degree – nearly 12% lower than a decade earlier. At the same time, workforce needs are not being met in fields such as agriculture, manufacturing, and healthcare, many of which are low-wage jobs. This plenary session will explore how we can both meet workforce demands and the need to provide educational opportunities for low-income families to improve their economic standing.

PRESENTERS

Charlene Dukes

President Emerita
Prince George's Community College
Largo, MD

Jeff Strohl

Executive Director
Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce
Washington, DC

Allison Wagner

Founding Executive Director
All-In Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

PLENARY SESSION

Update from the U.S. Department of Education

ALL
GRAND BALLROOM - BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER

As the Higher Education Act marks 60 years, senior U.S. Department of Education officials join COE for an update on the policies and priorities shaping access and success for first-generation, low-income students. Leaders from the Office of Postsecondary Education will outline the current regulatory agenda, including evidence and performance priorities, and data and reporting modernization.. This session translates federal policy into practical next steps: what to watch in the year ahead, how to align your program with emerging guidance, and where the TRIO community's voice can shape decisions. Leave with clarity, confidence, and an action plan for the coming semester.

PRESENTER

Christopher McCaghren

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs, Office of Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

PLENARY SESSION

Awards, Installation of Officers, and Remarks from the 2025-26 COE Board Chair Jeffrey Kahlden

ALL
GRAND BALLROOM (BALLROOM LEVEL EAST TOWER)



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COE'S 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 23-26, 2026

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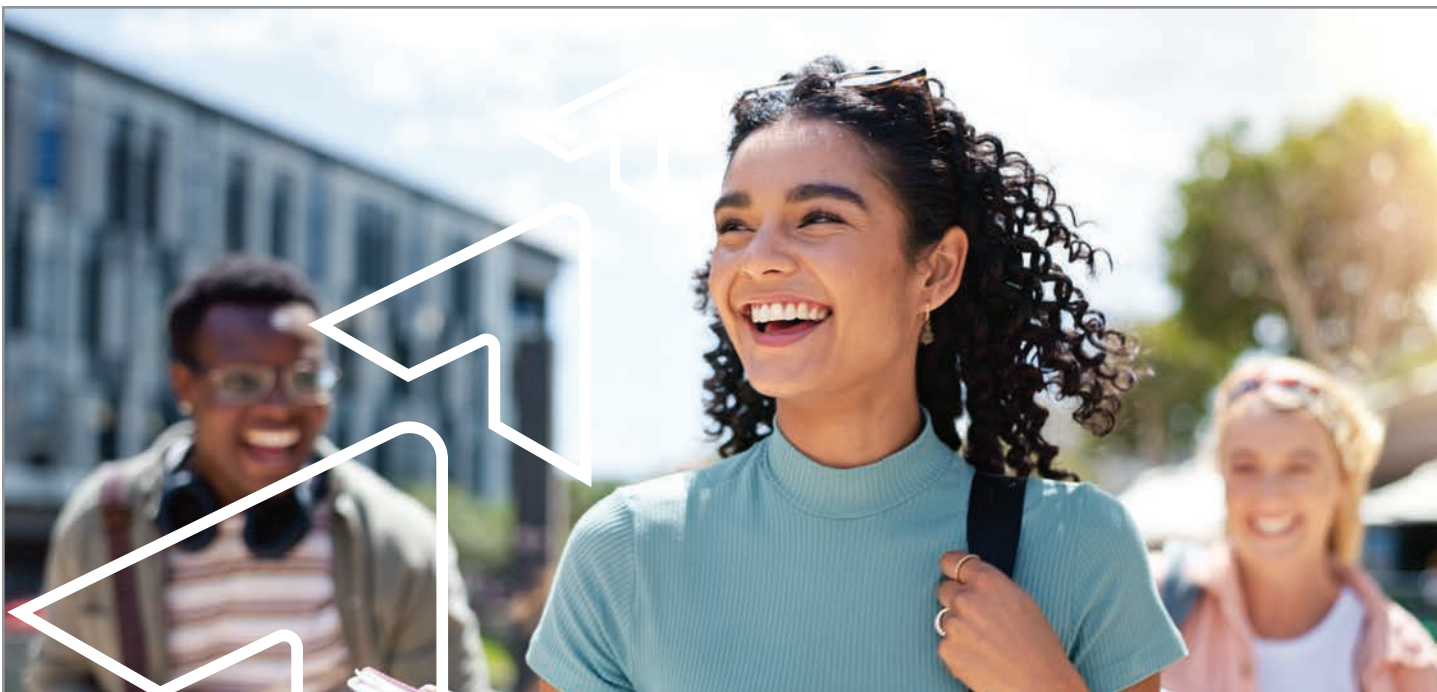


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Our North Star

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Our Approach

We invest in identifying, testing, and scaling solutions that help more learners from low-income backgrounds achieve upward mobility.

Our Focus

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- 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

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College Fair for TRIO Professionals

Meet with undergraduate admissions officers of selective institutions interested in attracting low-income, first-generation college students. Learn what colleges are doing to attract and retain first-generation, low-income students to campus. Cultivate relationships with college admissions officers to learn how to increase the number of successful applications submitted by TRIO students to these institutions.



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY

Location: Riverside East
(Exhibit Level East Tower)
Hyatt Regency Chicago

Date: Monday, September 8
Time: 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Snack Break
Time: 3:15 - 4:00 p.m.

Are you up for the challenge? Don't miss this chance to rewrite destinies, create pathways, and illuminate possibilities. The Selective College Fair awaits your presence – where dreams are nurtured, futures are transformed, and change is ignited. **Be part of a movement that's defining the future of education – one student at a time!**



Communities of Practice

BROUGHT TO YOU BY COE

COE maintains several Communities of Practice that allow college access and success practitioners to share best practices and cultivate new ideas. Membership in any of the communities is free.

- International Access
- Research, Evaluation and Data Use,
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and
- State Leadership



JOIN A COMMUNITY

A smiling young man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a maroon mesh shirt, is the central focus. Behind him, a woman with blonde hair is partially visible, smiling. A red sign with white text and graphics is also in the background. The sign features a large white outline of a person's head and shoulders, with the text "#1" above it and "WE'RE #1" below it.

NOVEMBER 8 IS FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE CELEBRATION DAY

Join the movement to honor the achievements and resilience of first-generation college students by participating in First-Generation College Celebration Day! Whether you're a student, faculty member, or supporter, you can make a difference by sharing your story and raising awareness on social media using #CelebrateFirstGen.

Visit coenet.org for event planning resources, tips on how to engage your campus or community, and more ways to celebrate the impact of first-gen students across the nation. Let's come together to inspire others and build a brighter future for all!



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



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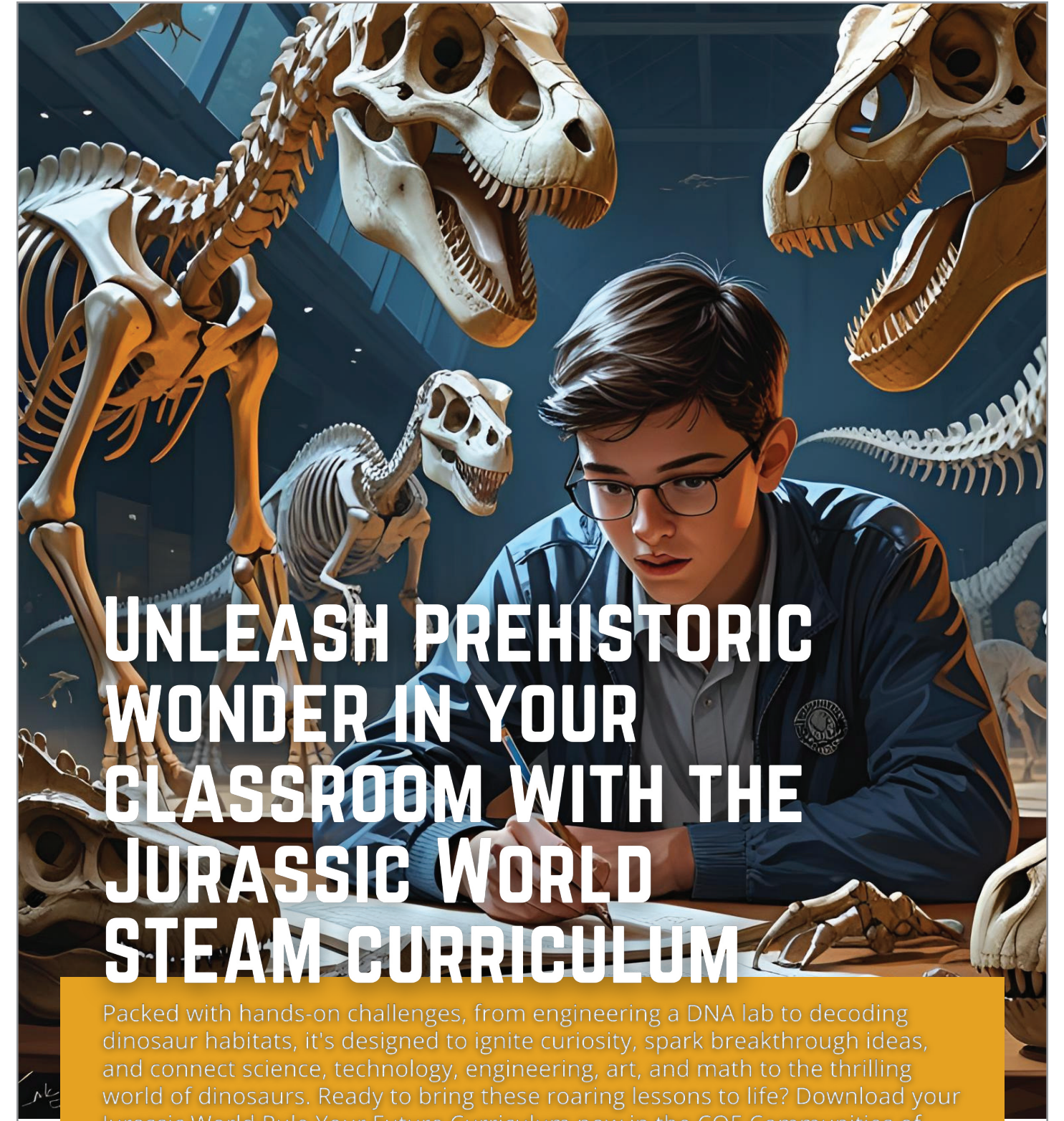
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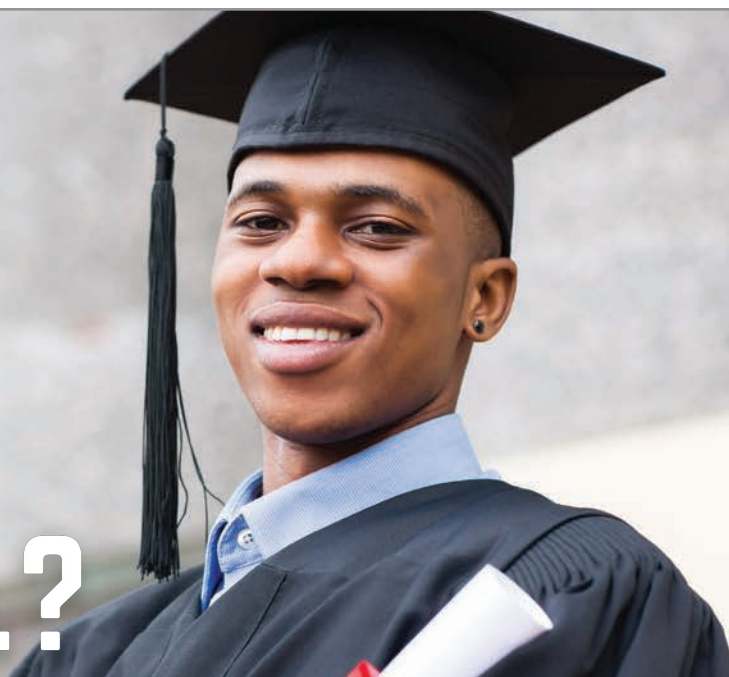
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READY TO UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL?



NATIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONGRESS



Each **June**, the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) hosts the **National Student Leadership Congress** in Washington, D.C., for first-generation high school students from TRIO programs across the United States and territories. **Talent Search**, **Upward Bound**, and **Upward Bound Math-Science** students serve as delegates in an intensive 6-day leadership experience, a mock Congress competition, an interactive learning lab, a monument tour, and a day on Capitol Hill.

KEITH SHERIN GLOBAL LEADERS



COE offers a short-term, **summer** study abroad experience for TRIO participants in **Student Support Services** and **McNair Scholars** programs. Keith Sherin Global Leaders Program destinations have included South Africa, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Spain, and the Netherlands. Students typically can apply for financial aid and receive academic credit for the experience.



Keith Sherin Global Leaders Semester-in-Washington, D.C. invites one outstanding TRIO **Student Support Services** or **McNair** participant **each semester** to enroll at Marquette University's Les Aspin Center, take classes for two days, and work in Congressional offices, federal agencies, or nonprofit organizations for the other three days each week during the 16-week semester.



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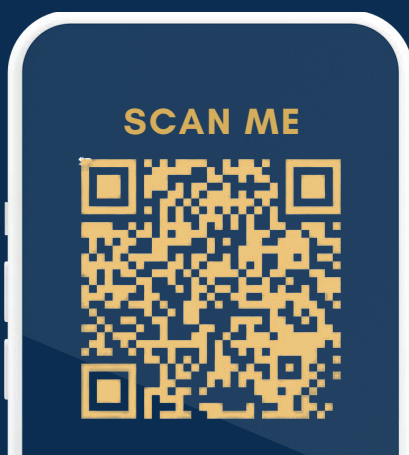
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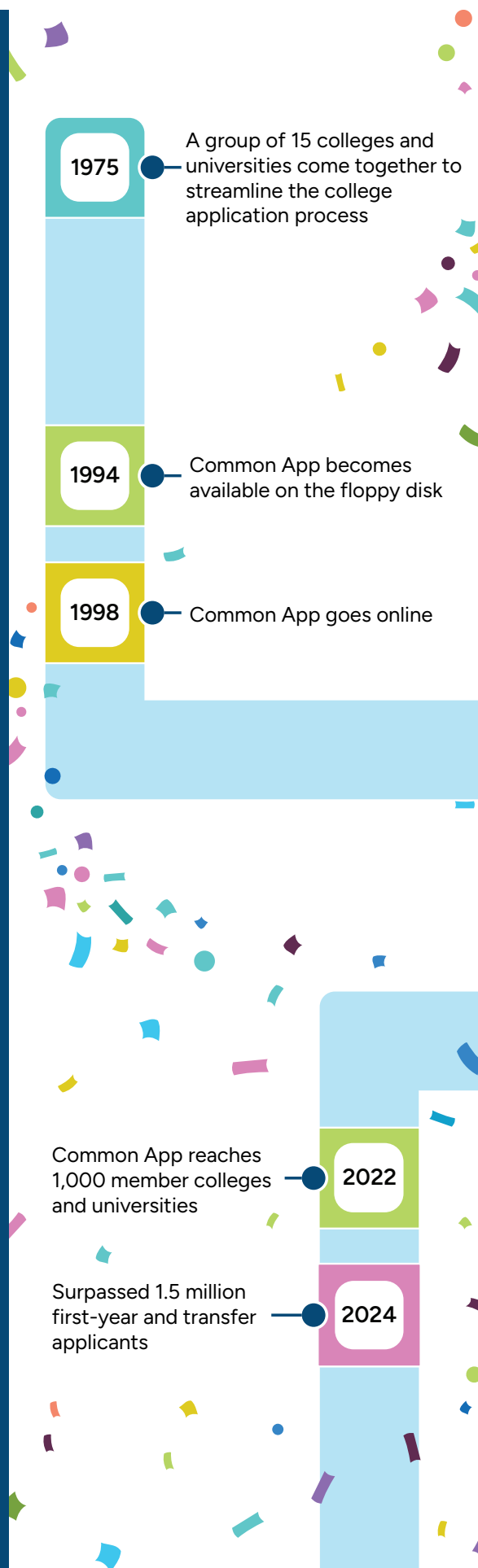


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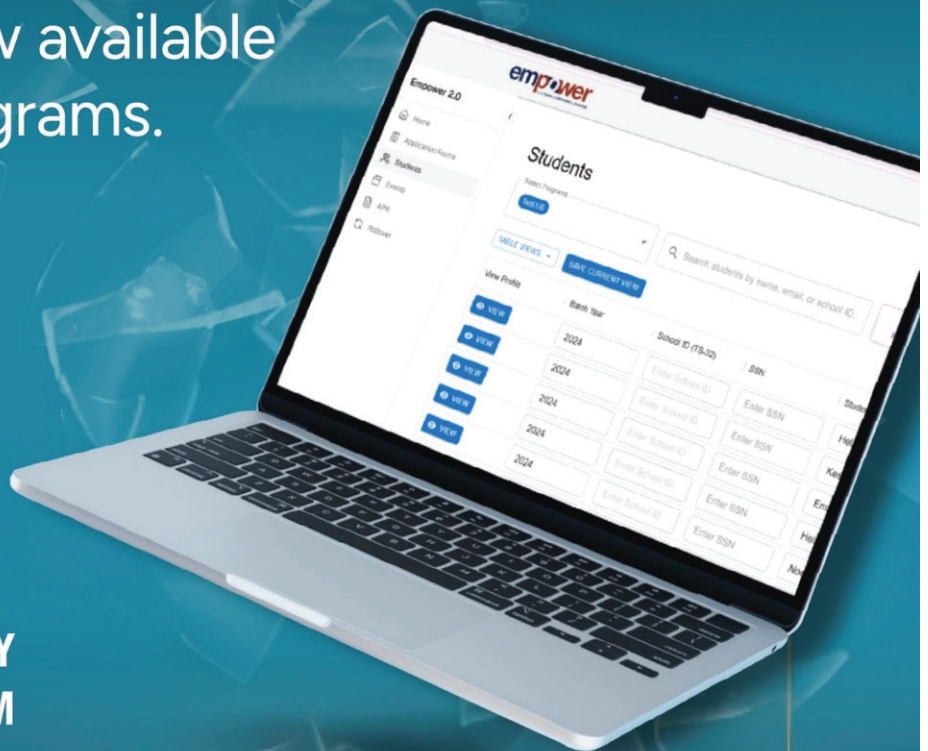
SEP 9

**TUESDAY
12:45 PM**



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*Your Technical Checkup
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PEER REVIEW



What is a Peer Review?

Think of it as a friendly audit, a comprehensive site visit conducted by trained peer monitors who understand TRIO programs inside and out. Peer Reviews offer a detailed look at your program's operations, documentation, outcomes, and regulatory compliance — without the stress of a federal review.

Why Schedule a Peer Review?

- Identify and correct compliance gaps before a USDE site visit
- Gain practical recommendations tailored to your program
- Showcase your program's strengths to stakeholders
- Prepare new staff or directors for federal expectations
- Enhance overall program quality and student outcomes

What's Included?

- Pre-visit documentation review
- On-site or virtual site visit by trained TRIO peer reviewers
- Interviews with staff, students, and institutional leadership
- A detailed final report with actionable recommendations

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Yes, this service is an allowable use of funds — ensuring your investment strengthens your program's integrity, compliance, and impact.



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Don't wait for the Department of Education to tell you what needs fixing. Get proactive. Get Peer Reviewed.

 <https://naeoptrio.org/peer-review-program/>



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A Big “Thank You” Our Three Strong Leaders!



Left to Right: Yara Zaccorato (Past-President), Arielle Derival (President), Dr. Kevin Linton (President-Elect)

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Join us for our Annual Conference
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In moments of uncertainty, strong leadership makes all the difference. We are deeply grateful to COE leadership for standing steady through difficult times and ensuring the TRIO community remained informed, connected, and cared for. Your unwavering commitment has not gone unnoticed, and it means more than words can say. **Thank you.**



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KUDOS TO OUR SSS CLIENTS!

In the 2025 Student Support Services (SSS) grant competition, NEC achieved funding for 52 of 56 proposals—a remarkable 92.8%* success rate! Additionally, over 70% of our Proposal Writing Workshop attendees submitted proposals that were successful!

ABOUT US

For more than two decades, NEC has been a valuable partner to TRIO Projects, providing extensive support services to secure and maintain funding.

NEC has secured over \$876 million in federal funding for institutions and agencies, with a success rate of 92%.

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**includes proposals on the funding band*





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ABOUT US

For over 20 years, NEC has assisted TRIO Projects with comprehensive supportive services to get funded AND remain funded.

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Join the hundreds of nationwide colleges, agencies, and TRIO Projects that have benefited from NEC's expertise!

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2025 - 2026


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Rooted in Purpose - Rising Through Resilience

A tribute to the power and perseverance of SWASAP TRIO programs



From the Gulf Coast to the desert southwest, SWASAP TRIO programs continue to lead with courage, impact, and innovation. We proudly honor our students, alumni, and professionals who remain undeterred, transforming lives in the face of adversity.

Congratulations to our newly elected board members, and thank you to every SWASAP member who stands firm in our mission. TRIO Works. In every zip code. In every challenge. In every triumph.

BIG BAD SWASAP

Since 1971, **SWASAP** has been opening doors of educational opportunity for disadvantaged low income, first generation, veteran, and differently abled students. SWASAP provides its members the guidance and support needed to foster activities necessary to ensure these students achieve their educational goals.

CONGRATULATIONS

Jeff Kahlden
25-26 COE Board Chair



TRIO HOMECOMING: TOGETHER WE RISE!

A celebration of unity, legacy, and inspiration. It's a time to connect or reconnect, uplift one another, and honor the enduring commitment to access and opportunity through SWASAP.

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Houston, Texas – Westin Galleria

Registration is open!



We'll see you in Chicago. – The SWASAP Region

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India Prather

Audience Feedback On Jun 16, 2025

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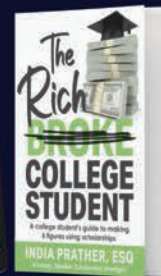
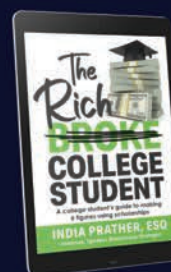


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