

Thank you for your efforts to advocate on behalf of TRIO programs and the participants we serve. As you formulate your advocacy approach, please keep in mind the following:

1. Advocacy is about relationships. Connecting with people is what we do in TRIO. You build relationships all the time with perspective participants, community members, education professionals: use these same skills to build relationships with elected officials and their staff.
2. Advocacy is a marathon, with intermittent sprints. Proven results come when advocacy happens in small and big ways over time. Not every move in advocacy must have fanfare, at times, a simple “thank you” is exactly what is needed.
3. Personal stories are the most impactful way to advocate. Data tells us that sharing the stories of your TRIO participants has the biggest effect on elected officials.
4. Lobbying, of which advocacy can be seen as a form of, is prohibited on a federal grant. Please use your own personal time and communication outlets to advocate for TRIO.

Advocacy Tips: Build it in & make it easy!

1. Block a half hour in your calendar each month and devote it to advocacy. During that half hour, send an email, forward a student story, post a picture to your elected official’s social media and spread the word that #TRIOworks.
2. Build an advocacy action into your regular events. Have participants write a post card, take a quick video of students saying #TRIOworks and post it to social media, build in a reflection paragraph writing session with the prompt: TRIO has impacted my life by...
3. Delegate one student per event to be the photographer. Have them take photos and create a short montage to email or post to social media accounts of your congressional delegation.
4. Use the Advocacy tools found on www.coenet.org/advocacy

“Low Lift” Advocacy Ideas

- Take a group photo at your next program event, post to social media, tag your Member of Congress (MOC) & say “We appreciate our congressional funding!” #TRIOworks
- Forward a compelling student / participant essay that they wrote for a scholarship or college admissions & say “Thanks to the federal funding we get for TRIO, [student] is able to pursue their dreams.”
- Write to the District Director or District Office Staffers and invite them to attend an event with you. (Do not pay for them to attend with grant dollars.)
- Tag your MOC in your social media posts & at the end of your post say “We are thankful for our Congressional funding support.”
- Write a simple email of thanks. “We thank you for our congressional funding and appreciate the support you give to the TRIO students and programs in your district.” Send it to your Member of Congress, Educational Aid, and District Director.

“Some Effort” Advocacy Ideas

- Create a program brag sheet after you complete your APR, use your success statistics to showcase your program’s impact. Email it to your MOC and their educational aid & say

“TRIO is working in your district, here is a glimpse of the success we had last year! We are grateful for the federal funding we receive.”

- Make a montage of your program pictures, set it to music, overlay your program information, or #TRIOworks and create a 90 second video to put on social media, or email to your MOC. (This is a great student project!)
- Pull the statistics you used in the need section of your narrative and use your participant achievement data from your APR to create a comparison chart that demonstrates how impactful your program is. Email it to the education aid and MOC & say “Thank you for the opportunity to make such a profound difference in the lives of the low-income, first-gen individuals in our congressional district.”
- Invite your MOC to speak at your annual banquet, or on FGCC or TRIO Day.
- Build in time during a student program to have them email their member of congress and educational aid, telling them why they appreciate being in a TRIO program.
- Advertise an already scheduled “Virtual Town Hall” of your MOC with your participants / families. Encourage them to attend and help them create thoughtful questions / comments that relay your gratitude for TRIO funding and that #TRIOWorks.

“Decent Effort” Advocacy Ideas (These could be great student projects!)

- Design a Voter Brag Sheet for your program. Count the number of participants who have participated in the program. Identify the average salary of a college graduate in your state. Calculate the amount of taxes a worker with that average salary makes. Multiply and brag! “Our TRIO Program has produced 1,500 college graduates who, on average, contribute \$3,450 annually in taxes. That’s over \$5 million in tax revenue being contributed by our TRIO college graduates every year! The return on investment is high with TRIO Programs!”
 - This could also be done on a district level and/or state level to further demonstrate how #TRIOworks in your elected official’s voter pool.
- Produce an Alumni Achievement document annually that highlights the careers and contributions your program’s alumni are making. Send it to your elected official and their educational aid on a bi-annual or annual basis.
- Host a “Careers in Public Service” or “Civic Engagement 101” event for your participants. Invite your member of congress (also invite the District Director and/or Educational Aid). Create a pannel with curated questions from the student audience, have them speak at a meal, or at minimum, have them make a video to play for students in attendance. To round out the day, have other public service professionals join a pannel, or talk about their educational journey to get where they are. Other workshop sessions could include “The Importance of Democracy”, “Explore Public Service Careers”, “Leadership Development” & more.
- Bring your participants to an already scheduled in person Town Hall meeting with your MOC. Bring your TRIO program sign and at the end, ask the MOC to take a photo with you and your students. Bonus tip: print and frame the photo and give it to the District Director, or COE to hand deliver to the MOC’s office on Capitol Hill.

Inviting Your Member of Congress to Visit

1. If you're hosting an event, inviting your member of congress to an event, to visit your program, or to a conference is a great move. While the Member is always the first choice, often, due to a myriad of reasons, they might not be able to attend. Inviting the Educational or Legislative Aid, or the District Director is always a great second move. Being able to pivot is Key! Often times, relationships with staffers will be just as powerful as relationships with the elected officials themselves.
2. Be flexible. You may have an idea of when you want them to speak or what you want them to attend, but if they are able to attend, they may not have that exact timeframe available, or may not be able to show up at the time they committed to. When engaging a member of congress in an invitation to participate in something, have a few different options of how they can engage and be ready to change plans accordingly.
3. It is all about the students! If you are being visited by a MOC or Staffer, be sure to get your students in the spotlight early and often. Have a few students meet them at their vehicle and escort them to your event. Place them at a table with students who can engage in meaningful conversations. After the event, have your students write a thank you letter from their perspective. Lifting the student voices and stories is essential in good advocacy.
4. Inform your insitutional / agency Government Relations Team of your plans.