



**FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:**  
*Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility*

# 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

*Conference Program*



**THE PREMIER CONFERENCE**  
**for College Access & Success Professionals**

[coenet.org/annual-conference](https://coenet.org/annual-conference)



# STANDING STRONG AND PROTECTING THE PROMISE OF TRIO!



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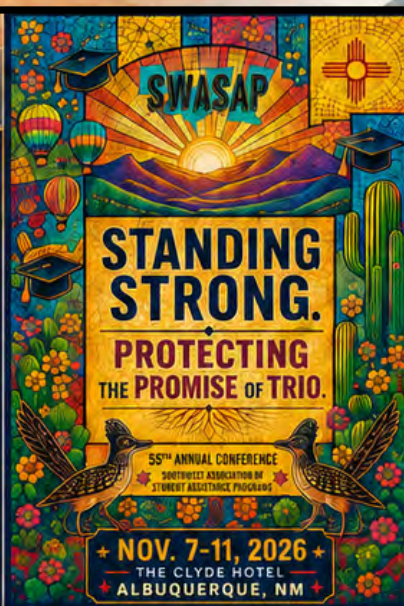
Across our region, TRIO professionals transform access into impact—empowering students, strengthening communities, and advancing pathways to educational and economic mobility.

*Together, we remain united, resilient, and unwavering in protecting the promise of TRIO.*

- ACCESS**  
Opening Doors
- ACHIEVEMENT**  
Building Futures
- IMPACT**  
Strengthening Communities
- ECONOMIC MOBILITY**  
Creating Lasting Change

## SWASAP STANDS STRONG

Since 1971, SWASAP has championed educational opportunity for first-generation students, students from limited-income backgrounds, veterans, and students with disabilities. Across Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, our members remain committed to advancing access, achievement, and lasting impact.



## JOIN US IN ALBUQUERQUE

**55TH ANNUAL SWASAP  
CONFERENCE**

**NOVEMBER 7-11, 2026**  
THE CLYDE HOTEL  
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*Standing Strong. Protecting  
the Promise of TRIO.*

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN!**



**FROM THE  
SOUTHWEST  
TO SAN DIEGO—**

## SWASAP IS STANDING STRONG AND PROTECTING THE PROMISE OF TRIO!

ADVANCING ACCESS. TRANSFORMING LIVES. DRIVING ECONOMIC MOBILITY.



**SEE YOU IN  
SAN DIEGO!**



*Dr. Raymond Cabrera*

# *Congratulations*

SAEOPP would like to congratulate our own  
Dr. Raymond Cabrera on being sworn in as

**COE Board Chair!**





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# WELCOME

September 2026

## Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of the Council for Opportunity in Education's Board of Directors, it is my privilege to welcome you to the 2026 COE Annual Conference in beautiful San Diego, California. This year, we gather under the theme "From Access to Impact: Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility." It is a theme that speaks directly to the work we do every day—and to what is at stake in this extraordinary moment for our community.

There is no denying that this has been a difficult year for TRIO. We have fought hard to protect the Federal TRIO Programs and the students, families, institutions, and communities that depend on them. We have celebrated important advocacy victories, endured the loss of staff amid uncertain times, and faced challenges that have tested us personally and professionally. And still, the fight continues.

That is why gathering together this year matters so much. From September 16–19, this conference gives us an opportunity to step away from the daily battles, come together as one TRIO community, and reconnect with the people who understand both the weight of this moment and the importance of our mission. Over these four days, I hope you will learn from one another, exchange ideas, strengthen relationships, celebrate the impact of our work, and prepare for what comes next.

But I also hope you will give yourself permission to feel. Feel the pride that comes from knowing how many lives you have changed. Feel the frustration and disappointment of the battles that did not go our way. Feel the joy of reuniting with colleagues and friends. And, when you can, allow yourself to experience everything our host city has to offer. San Diego—with its beautiful coastline, vibrant neighborhoods, exceptional food, warm sunshine, and unmistakable energy—is an ideal place to recharge and reconnect.

Most importantly, I hope you leave this conference feeling hopeful. As we gather in San Diego, let us draw strength from one another. Let us celebrate what we have accomplished, acknowledge what we have endured, and renew our commitment to the students who are counting on us to keep going. The road ahead will require all of us. But we will travel it as we always have.

I look forward to sharing this important and restorative time with you.

Warmly,

**Jeff Kahlden**

**Chair, 2025-2026 Board of Directors**  
Council for Opportunity in Education



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September 2026

## Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Welcome to San Diego and the 2026 Council for Opportunity in Education Annual Conference! As your Annual Conference and Program Co-Chairs, we are thrilled to welcome you to four days of learning, connection, wellness, and entertainment. Thank you for the expertise, passion, and commitment you bring to the college access and success profession—and for taking the time to invest in your own professional growth by joining us.

This year's theme, "From Access to Impact: Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility," invites us to consider how our work can help students turn educational opportunity into lifelong success. Our conference strands reflect that charge:

- **TRIO 101:** Build a strong foundation in TRIO while gaining practical guidance for confidently supporting students and your program.
- **Start Smart for New Directors:** Strengthen your leadership skills in strategic planning, fiscal oversight, compliance, and team management.
- **Research and Evaluation:** Discover how data, evaluation, and effective reporting can demonstrate impact, strengthen performance, and improve student outcomes.
- **Fueling the Future—Economic Impact/Career Readiness:** Explore strategies connecting college success, career readiness, workforce development, and long-term economic mobility.
- **AI and Innovative Technology:** Learn how to responsibly harness AI and emerging technologies to enhance student services, program operations, and access.

Beyond the sessions, we hope you make time to connect with colleagues, build new relationships, prioritize your well-being, enjoy San Diego, and celebrate the extraordinary community behind this work. Most importantly, we hope you return home with **new ideas, practical tools, renewed energy, and an even stronger network** to support you in the work ahead.

Thank you for being here and for everything you do for our students and our profession. We are delighted to welcome you to San Diego!

Warm regards,

### 2026 Annual Conference Co-Chairs

Stephanie Givens

Derek Sporbett

### 2026 Annual Conference Program Co-Chairs

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Beckley, WV

### D'Angelo Sands

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### Megan Simila

Idaho Business for Education  
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Technology  
Beckley, WV

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Oregon TRIO Association  
Astoria, OR

### Yara Zoccarato

Western Connecticut State University  
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Sherontae Maxwell

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Cristina Aguirre

## SEE SAN DIEGO

Chris George  
Dalia Hernandez  
Cristina Aguirre

## BANQUET/RECEPTIONS

Deborah Northcross  
Fabiola A. Falto Castro

## ON-SITE AUDIO VISUAL

Michael Maxwell



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# 2026 CONFERENCE EXHIBITORS

## AI ESSENTIALS

Booth 202

**Michael Nowak**

Lemont, IL

✉ [mnowak@essentials-ai.com](mailto:mnowak@essentials-ai.com)

🔗 [essentials-ai.com](https://essentials-ai.com)

## BANZAI

Booth 204

**Nathan Thomson**

Provo, UT

✉ [nathan@banzai.org](mailto:nathan@banzai.org)

🔗 [banzai.org](https://banzai.org)

## CAMBRIDGE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Booth 606

**David Waldherr**

Des Plaines, IL

✉ [conferences@cambridgeed.com](mailto:conferences@cambridgeed.com)

🔗 [cambridgeed.com](https://cambridgeed.com)

## CAREER LAUNCH

Booth 307

**Destiny O'Rourke**

San Ramon, CA

✉ [accounting@careerlaunch.academy](mailto:accounting@careerlaunch.academy)

🔗 [careerlaunch.academy](https://careerlaunch.academy)

## CE TOURS

Booth 506

**Shakela Ayton**

Allen, TX

✉ [shayton@cetoursgroup.com](mailto:shayton@cetoursgroup.com)

🔗 [cetoursgroup.com](https://cetoursgroup.com)

## CIRCLE OF CHANGE LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Authors Pavilion

**Joshua Fredenburg**

Long Beach, CA

✉ [circleofchangeleadconference@gmail.com](mailto:circleofchangeleadconference@gmail.com)

🔗 [drjoshuafredenburg.com](https://drjoshuafredenburg.com)

## COBRO CONSULTING

Booth 504

**Mr. Urban Pelicon**

San Diego, CA

✉ [upelicon@cobroconsulting.com](mailto:upelicon@cobroconsulting.com)

🔗 [cobroconsulting.com](https://cobroconsulting.com)

## COE & THE PELL INSTITUTE

Booth 111

**Vanessa Ramirez**

Washington, DC

✉ [membership@coenet.org](mailto:membership@coenet.org)

🔗 [coenet.org](https://coenet.org)

## COUNSELOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

New York, NY

✉ [counselorconnection@collegeboard.org](mailto:counselorconnection@collegeboard.org)

🔗 [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org)

## COLLEGE AID PRO

Booth 612

**Joe Korfmacher**

Salem, MA

✉ [josephk@collegeaidpro.com](mailto:josephk@collegeaidpro.com)

🔗 [collegeaidpro.com](https://collegeaidpro.com)

## COLLEGE CAMPUS TOURS

Booth 311

**Shaun Lain**

Atlanta, GA

✉ [shaun@CollegeCampusTours.net](mailto:shaun@CollegeCampusTours.net)

🔗 [CollegeCampusTours.net](https://CollegeCampusTours.net)

## COLLEGEWEAR, INC.

Booth 303

**Cameron Casey**

Poway, CA

✉ [cameron@collegewearinc.com](mailto:cameron@collegewearinc.com)

🔗 [collegewearinc.com](https://collegewearinc.com)

## COMPANSOL

Booths 103 & 105

**Gunjan Seth**

Houston, TX

✉ [gunjan@compansol.com](mailto:gunjan@compansol.com)

🔗 [compansol.com](https://compansol.com)

## COMPASSIONATE MATH

Booth 312

**Geillan Aly**

Glastonbury, CT

✉ [compassionatemath@gmail.com](mailto:compassionatemath@gmail.com)

🔗 [compassionatemath.com](https://compassionatemath.com)

## COZART GROUP

Booth 509

**C. Michael Cozart**

Mobile, AL

✉ [cmichael@cozartgroup.us](mailto:cmichael@cozartgroup.us)

🔗 [cozartgroup.us](https://cozartgroup.us)

## CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP (CLS) PROGRAM

Booth 213

**Nellie Manis**

✉ [nmanis@americancouncils.org](mailto:nmanis@americancouncils.org)

🔗 [americancouncils.org](https://americancouncils.org)

## DREAMCATCHER CURRICULUM, LLC

Booth 601

**Whitney Srsen**

Fayetteville, AR

✉ [hello@dreamcatchercurriculum.com](mailto:hello@dreamcatchercurriculum.com)

🔗 [dreamcatchercurriculum.com](https://dreamcatchercurriculum.com)

## EDREADY CREATED BY THE NROC PROJECT

Booth 203

**Melissa S. Lerner**

Long Branch, NJ

✉ [mlerner@nroc.org](mailto:mlerner@nroc.org)

🔗 [nroc.org](https://nroc.org)

## ELEVATED MINDS

Booth 410

**Yuval Trachtenberg**

Park Ridge, IL

✉ [yuval@elevatedminds.com](mailto:yuval@elevatedminds.com)

🔗 [elevatedminds.com](https://elevatedminds.com)

## EMPOWER

Booth 200

**Helmut Neher**

Lehi, UT

✉ [helmut@empoweranalytics.org](mailto:helmut@empoweranalytics.org)

🔗 [empoweranalytics.org](https://empoweranalytics.org)

## FINANCIAL SPACE

Booth 404

**Cynthia Diaz**

Los Angeles, CA

✉ [cynthia@financial-space.com](mailto:cynthia@financial-space.com)

🔗 [financial-space.com](https://financial-space.com)

## FIRSTGEN FORWARD

Booth 505

**Wendy Beesley**

Washington, DC

✉ [wbeesley@firstgenforward.org](mailto:wbeesley@firstgenforward.org)

🔗 [firstgenforward.org](https://firstgenforward.org)

## FOCUS TRAINING

Booth 305

**Jah-Naika Lopez**

Milwaukee, WI

✉ [jah-naika.lopez@focustraining.com](mailto:jah-naika.lopez@focustraining.com)

🔗 [focustraining.com](https://focustraining.com)

## FOURWINDS TOURS & TRAVEL

Booth 608

**Allison Schuster**

Syosset, NY

✉ [allison@fourwindstours.com](mailto:allison@fourwindstours.com)

🔗 [fourwindstours.com](https://fourwindstours.com)



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# 2026 CONFERENCE EXHIBITORS

## GENIUS POTENTIAL

Booth 401

David Horne

Brooklyn, NY

✉ [Info@GeniusPotential.com](mailto:Info@GeniusPotential.com)

🔗 [GeniusPotential.com](http://GeniusPotential.com)

## GL TRAVEL

Booth 704

Josh Bruman

Granite Bay, CA

✉ [josh@gltravelco.com](mailto:josh@gltravelco.com)

🔗 [gltravelco.com](http://gltravelco.com)

## GOCAMPUSING

Booth 700

Judith Marrazzo

East Norwich, NY

✉ [judy@gocampus.com](mailto:judy@gocampus.com)

🔗 [gocampus.com](http://gocampus.com)

## GOT IT PHOTOSTUDY

Booth 402

Matthew Hubbell

Palo Alto, CA

✉ [matt@gotitapp.co](mailto:matt@gotitapp.co)

🔗 [photostudy.com](http://photostudy.com)

## HEFWA

Booth 109

Phil Schman

Bloomington, IN

✉ [phaschum@iu.edu](mailto:phaschum@iu.edu)

🔗 [iu.edu](http://iu.edu)

## HEIBERG CONSULTING, INC.

Booth 412

Claysa Diamond

Fort Collins, CO

✉ [cdiamond@heiberg.com](mailto:cdiamond@heiberg.com)

🔗 [heiberg.com](http://heiberg.com)

## IDAHO NATIONAL LABORATORY

Booth 215

Luis Antonio Carrillo-Rodríguez

Idaho Falls, ID

✉ [luis.carrillorodriguez@inl.gov](mailto:luis.carrillorodriguez@inl.gov)

🔗 [inl.gov](http://inl.gov)

## INNOVATIVE EDUCATORS

Booth 702

Fred Scott

Boulder, CO

✉ [fred@ieinfo.org](mailto:fred@ieinfo.org)

🔗 [ieinfo.org](http://ieinfo.org)

## LACAI

Booth 405

Richard Carney

New Braunfels, TX

✉ [mcarney@mylakai.com](mailto:mcarney@mylakai.com)

🔗 [mylakai.com](http://mylakai.com)

## LANDON LEGACY LLC

Booth 507

Donnie Landon

Clinton, MD

✉ [transformation@donnielandon.com](mailto:transformation@donnielandon.com)

🔗 [donnielandon.com](http://donnielandon.com)

## LARRY BOONE SPEAKERS NETWORK LLC

Booth 513

Larry Boone, Jr.

Broken Arrow, OK

✉ [booking@lbspeaks.net](mailto:booking@lbspeaks.net)

🔗 [lbspeaks.net](http://lbspeaks.net)

## LONGSDALE PUBLISHING

Booth 407

Michael Ealy

Trinity, FL

✉ [service@longsdalepub.com](mailto:service@longsdalepub.com)

🔗 [longsdalepub.com](http://longsdalepub.com)

## MASTERYPREP

Booth 500

Pamela Daniels

Myrtle Beach, SC

✉ [pamela.daniels@masteryprep.com](mailto:pamela.daniels@masteryprep.com)

🔗 [masteryprep.com](http://masteryprep.com)

## MCGRAW-HILL EDUCATION

Booth 316

Raymond Ramos

Monterey Park, CA

✉ [raymond.ramos@mheducation.com](mailto:raymond.ramos@mheducation.com)

🔗 [mheducation.com](http://mheducation.com)

## METHOD LEARNING

Booth 503

Kyle Henriksen

East Northport, NY

✉ [kyle@methodlearning.com](mailto:kyle@methodlearning.com)

🔗 [methodlearning.com](http://methodlearning.com)

## MONSTER WELLNESS CONSULTANTS

Booth 314

Kijuan Poland

New Orleans, LA

✉ [kijuandp@gmail.com](mailto:kijuandp@gmail.com)

## NATIONAL TRIO ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (NTAA)

Booth 113

Revon Pauling

Washington, DC

✉ [revon.pauling@coenet.org](mailto:revon.pauling@coenet.org)

🔗 [coenet.org/for-alumni](http://coenet.org/for-alumni)

## NOSOTROS EDUCATION CENTER

Booth 600

Dawna Cowan Walls

Allen, TX

✉ [dwalls@nosotrosgedu.org](mailto:dwalls@nosotrosgedu.org)

🔗 [nosotrosgedu.org](http://nosotrosgedu.org)

## NUCLEUS, LLC

Booth 208

James Prince

Los Angeles, CA

✉ [james@nucleuscourses.com](mailto:james@nucleuscourses.com)

🔗 [nucleuscourses.com](http://nucleuscourses.com)

## OVERGRAD

Booth 101

Collins West

Fort Collins, CO

✉ [collins@overgrad.com](mailto:collins@overgrad.com)

🔗 [overgrad.com](http://overgrad.com)

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Booth 302

Luis Perez

Houston, TX

✉ [predegreeinc@gmail.com](mailto:predegreeinc@gmail.com)

🔗 [mypredegree.com](http://mypredegree.com)

## PROFORMA GREEN MARKETING

Booth 604

Mr. John Mi Simonetta

Carrollton, TX

✉ [john.simonetta@proforma.com](mailto:john.simonetta@proforma.com)

🔗 [proforma.com](http://proforma.com)

## ROBOLINK

Booth 313

Matthew Yena

✉ [matt@robolink.com](mailto:matt@robolink.com)

🔗 [robolink.com](http://robolink.com)

## SAVANNAH RIVER NATIONAL LABORATORY

Booth 215

Terrence Buck

Aiken, SC

✉ [Terrence.Buck@srnl.gov](mailto:Terrence.Buck@srnl.gov)

🔗 [srnl.gov](http://srnl.gov)



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## SIMPLE MONEY ACADEMY

Booth 301

**Michael Pittman**

Allen, TX

✉ [Mike@simplemoneyacademy.com](mailto:Mike@simplemoneyacademy.com)

🔗 [simplemoneyacademy.com](https://simplemoneyacademy.com)

## STUDY SMART TUTORS, INC.

Booth 502

**Heath William Alexander**

Silver Spring, MD

✉ [heath@studysmarttutors.com](mailto:heath@studysmarttutors.com)

🔗 [studysmarttutors.com](https://studysmarttutors.com)

## THE SCHOOL PLANNER COMPANY

Booth 400

**Sarah Vaughan**

Memphis, TN

✉ [sarah.vaughan@mimeo.com](mailto:sarah.vaughan@mimeo.com)

🔗 [mimeo.com](https://mimeo.com)

## THE UNLOCK PROJECT

Booth 602

**Cole Blalock**

Provo, UT

✉ [teach@theunlockproject.com](mailto:teach@theunlockproject.com)

🔗 [theunlockproject.com](https://theunlockproject.com)

## TRIED & TRUE EDUCATION

Booth 408

**Jonathan Mallaley**

Woodland Hills, CA

✉ [jonathan@triedandtrueeducation.com](mailto:jonathan@triedandtrueeducation.com)

🔗 [triedandtrueeducation.com](https://triedandtrueeducation.com)

## TUTOR.COM

Booth 511

**Seth Bruce**

New York, NY

✉ [seth.bruce@tutor.com](mailto:seth.bruce@tutor.com)

🔗 [tutor.com](https://tutor.com)

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Booth 201

**Brad Judy**

Dayton, OH

✉ [brad@woodburnpress.com](mailto:brad@woodburnpress.com)

🔗 [woodburnpress.com](https://woodburnpress.com)

## WOVEN LEARNING AND TECHNOLOGY

Booth 300

**Chris Scott**

Tustin, CA

✉ [chris@wovenlearning.org](mailto:chris@wovenlearning.org)

🔗 [wovenlearning.org](https://wovenlearning.org)

## ZION LEADERSHIP GROUP

Booth 212

**Adrian Rosado**

San Juan, PR

✉ [arosado@zionleadershipgroup.com](mailto:arosado@zionleadershipgroup.com)

🔗 [zionleadershipgroup.com](https://zionleadershipgroup.com)



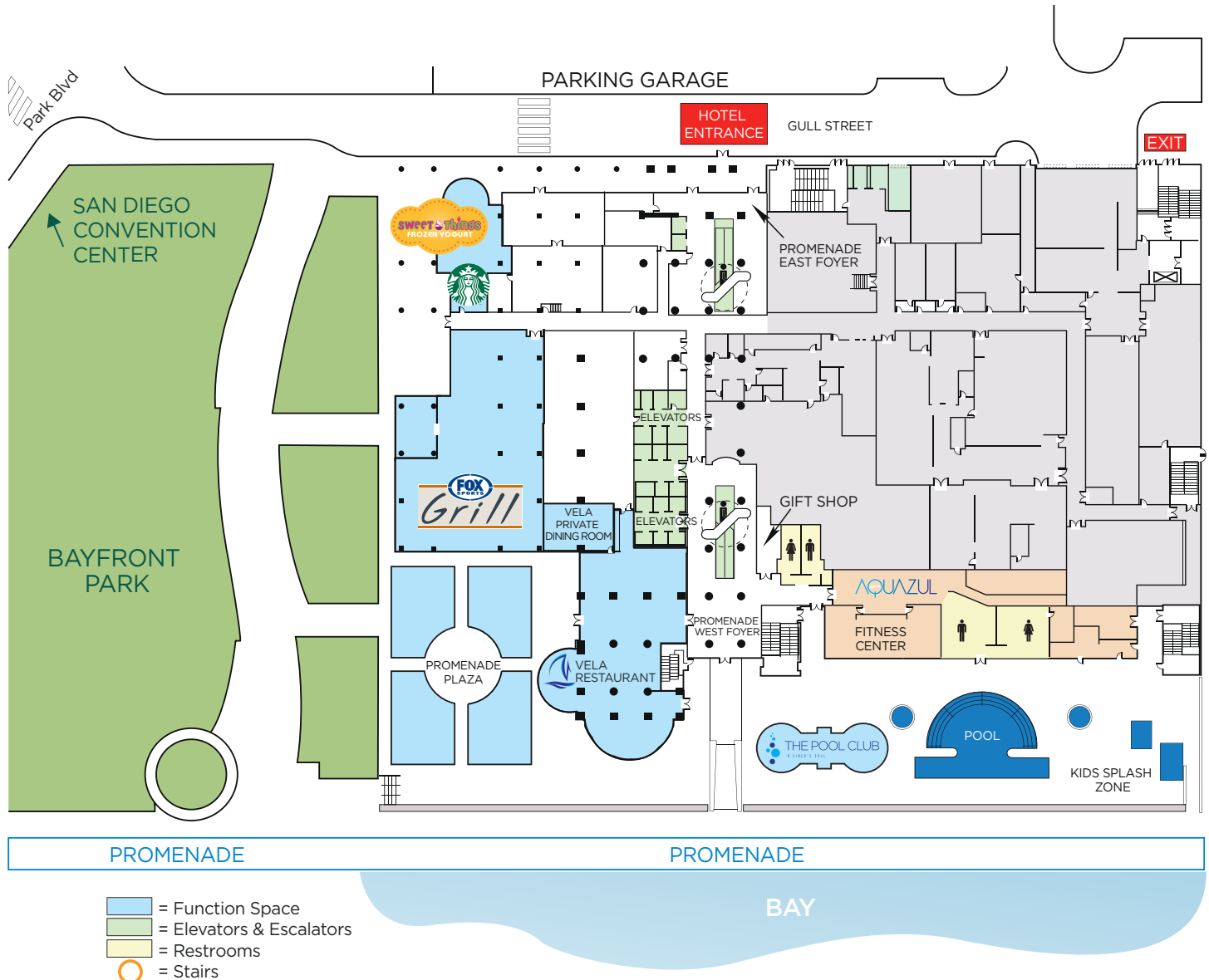
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# 2026 CONFERENCE MAPS

## HOTEL MAPS

### Level 1 - Promenade Level





**FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:**

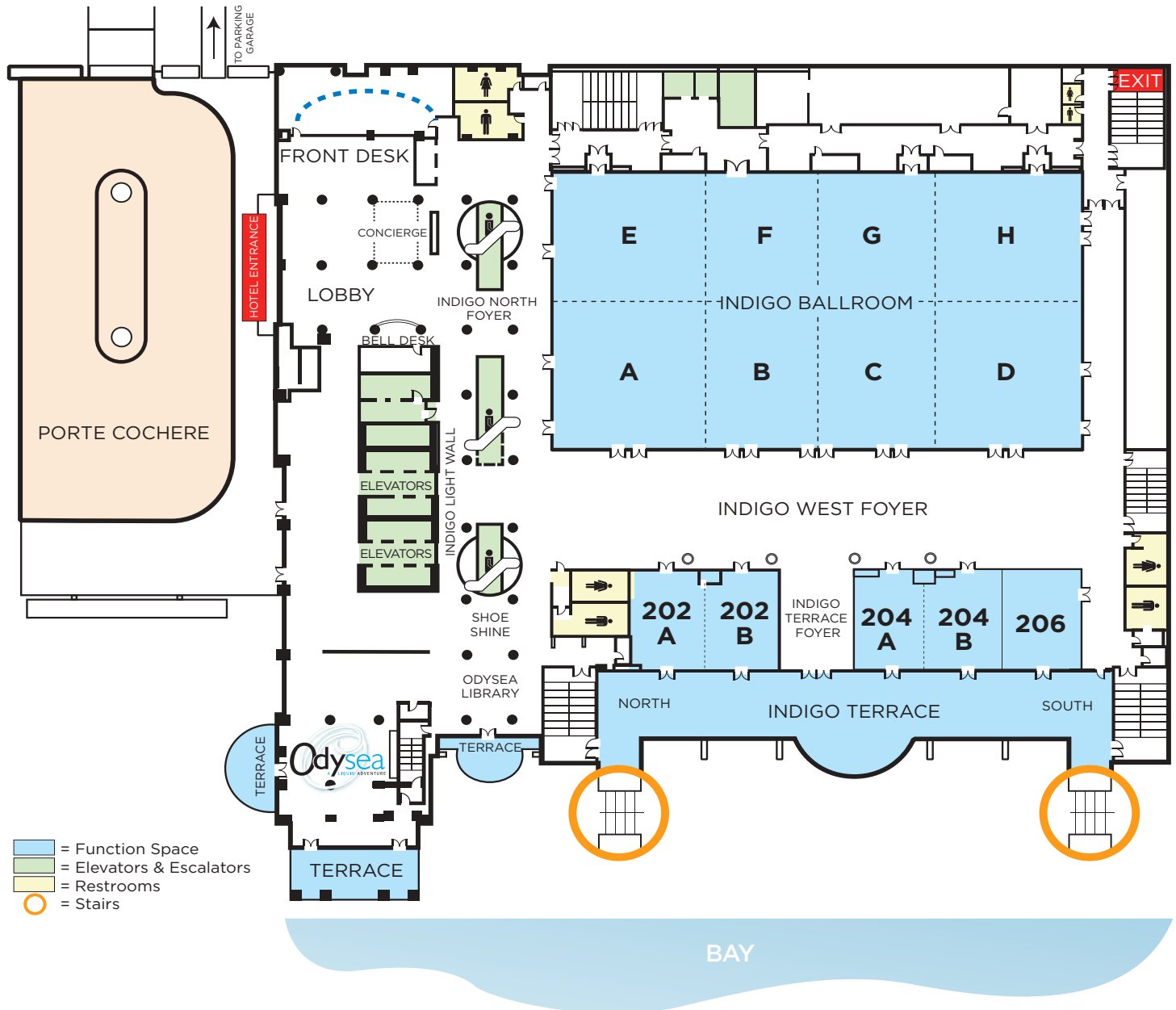
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# 2026 CONFERENCE MAPS

## HOTEL MAPS

### Level 2 - Indigo Level





# 2026 CONFERENCE MAPS

## HOTEL MAPS

### Level 3 - Aqua Level





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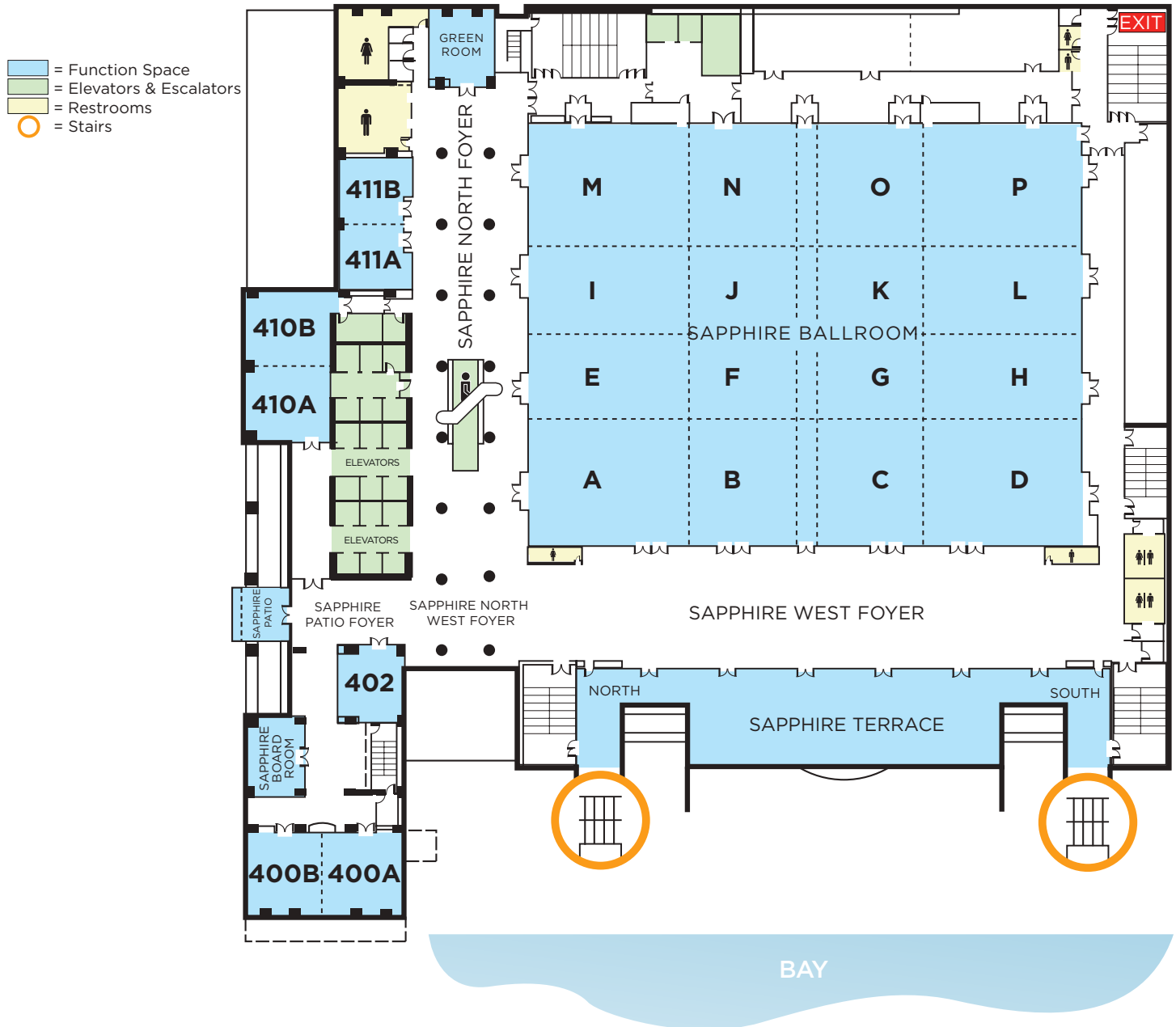
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# 2026 CONFERENCE MAPS

## HOTEL MAPS

### Level 4 - Sapphire Level





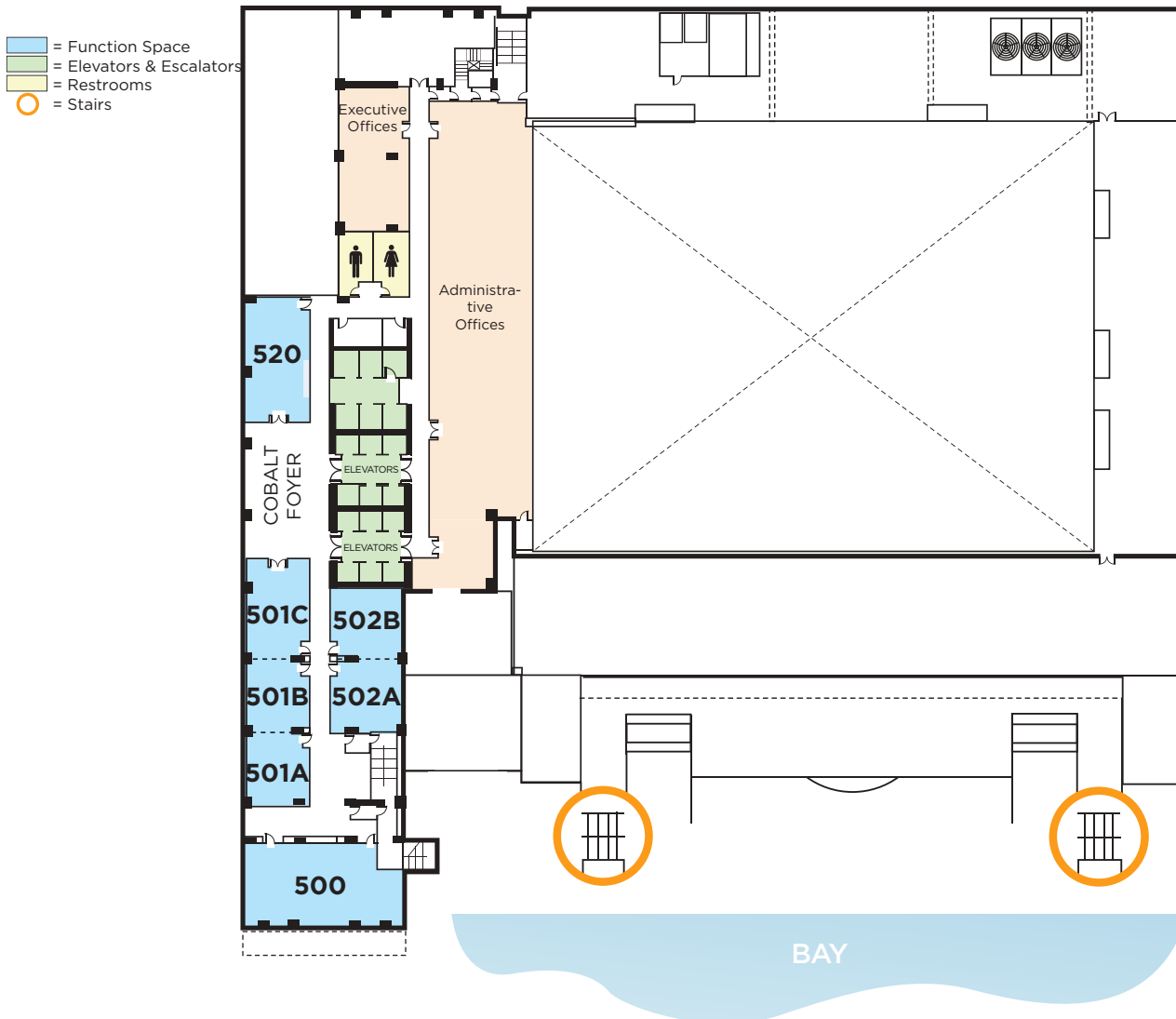
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# 2026 CONFERENCE MAPS

## HOTEL MAPS

### Level 5 - Cobalt Level



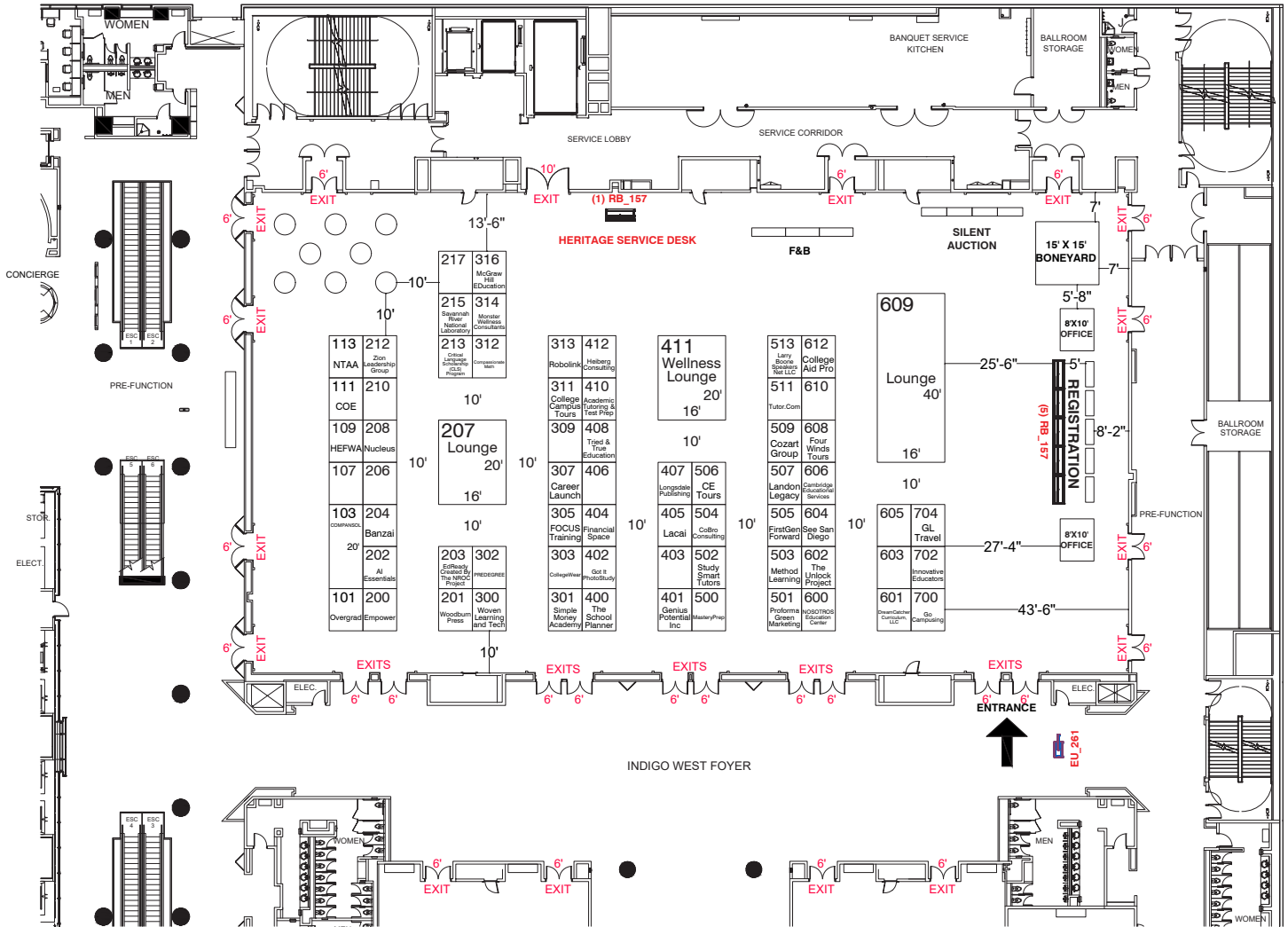


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# 2026 CONFERENCE MAPS

## EXPO HALL MAP





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# CONFERENCE TECHNOLOGY

Stay connected at the annual conference and download the new 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!

[CLICK HERE](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)



## 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 the 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.

## 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 shared content.
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 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.



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# CONFERENCE STRANDS

## *Five conference strands designed just for you!*

This year's conference strands are designed to help you turn learning into action. Whether you are new to TRIO, stepping into leadership, strengthening your use of data, preparing students for careers, or exploring emerging technologies, these sessions offer practical strategies and fresh perspectives to strengthen your work. Please take full advantage of these sessions and come ready to share your ideas, experiences, and promising practices with colleagues from across the TRIO community.

Designed for professionals building their knowledge of TRIO, *TRIO 101* explores the fundamentals, expectations, leadership practices, and program visibility that create a strong foundation for serving students with confidence and purpose. Leadership comes with both tremendous opportunity and responsibility. The *Start Smart for New Directors* strand equips new and emerging directors with practical approaches to managing people, priorities, systems, advocacy, and program performance while building the confidence to lead effectively.

Data can do more than satisfy reporting requirements—it can illuminate student needs, strengthen program performance, demonstrate impact, and make the case for TRIO. *Research and Evaluation* sessions will help professionals use evidence more strategically to understand challenges, evaluate outcomes, and tell a stronger story about their work.

Access to college is the beginning—not the destination. *Fueling the Future* explores how TRIO professionals can connect education to career preparation, workforce opportunities, financial knowledge, and the skills students need to achieve lasting economic mobility. Technology is rapidly reshaping how students learn, work, and engage with institutions. The *AI and Innovative Technology* strand moves beyond the hype to explore practical and responsible ways TRIO programs can use AI, digital tools, and innovative approaches to improve operations, personalize support, expand engagement, and better serve students.

## **TRIO 101: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT**

- Behind the Curtain: Transparent Leadership that Drives TRIO Impact
- The Power of Perception: How Expectations Shape Low-Income Student Success
- TRIO Still M.A.T.T.E.R.S: A Foundation that Transforms Lives
- TRIO Who? Raising the Profile of Your Program on Your Campus

## **START SMART FOR NEW DIRECTORS: LEADERSHIP THAT DRIVES RESULTS**

- Thrown into the Fire: Revitalizing a TRIO Program in a Shifting Policy Landscape
- Mentoring on Purpose: Moving First-Generation Students from Access to Impact—and Impact to Legacy
- From Services to Systems: Designing High-Impact TRIO Programs in Rural Communities
- From Participant to Advocate: Amplifying Student Voices in TRIO
- Leading with Your Strengths
- First-Time Director Playbook: What No One Tells You About Leading a TRIO Program
- The First-Year Director's Playbook: Managing People, Performance, and Priorities
- New Everything? How to Get a Successful Start to Your New Program!
- TRIO Who? Raising the Profile of Your Program on Your Campus



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# CONFERENCE STRANDS

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION: PROVING IMPACT THROUGH EVIDENCE

- Growing Problem with Low-Income Students Facing Unmet Financial Need
- Concurrent Enrollment in Action: Insights, Data, and Strategies for TRIO Programs
- The Price Is Right...Or Is It? A TRIO Data Showdown!
- Beyond the APR: Transforming the Use of TRIO Data Through an Evaluation Partnership
- Abraca-data: Using Dashboards to Understand Higher Education, Your State, and Your Program
- Using Federal Data to Power TRIO Program Success

## FUELING THE FUTURE: ECONOMIC IMPACT AND CAREER READINESS

- Honors Education for the TRIO Student: Practical Strategies and Partnerships
- Aloha 'Āina to Innovation: Community-Driven Problem Solving Through Design Thinking in Upward Bound
- From Access to Industry: Expanding Pathways to Arts, Entertainment, and Design Credentials
- Navigating Federal Financial Aid Changes: What TRIO Practitioners Need to Know
- Helping Students Create Evidence that Shows Their Durable Skills

## AI AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY: EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY THROUGH INNOVATION

- AI in TRIO: Maximizing Impact, Minimizing Burnout
- Revolutionary Relics: Using AI to Defend, Document, and Deliver for TRIO Students
- Partnering with Innovative Educators: Technology-Driven Onboarding and Tutor Training in TRIO SSS
- Streamlining Your McNair Plan of Operation
- From Access to Anywhere: Scaling TRIO Impact Through Online Orientation and Digital Engagement
- Out of Many, One: Bringing Multiple Innovative Technologies Together for Singular Success
- Translating First-Gen Access into Measurable Impact Through Human-Centered and AI-Enhanced Support
- Designing Belonging at Scale: Using Story & Technology to Support First-Generation Students



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## COE ED TALKS

### *Big Ideas. Candid Conversations. A Stronger TRIO Community.*

Some of the most important conversations in our profession begin with a question. What should TRIO carry forward—and what must we be willing to change? How do we care for others without losing ourselves? Where do we fit when our expertise crosses traditional professional boundaries? How do we help students recognize the power of civic participation? And how can we better support student well-being in a changing world?

COE ED Talks create space to explore those questions together. These engaging sessions pair thought-provoking presentations with facilitated conversation, inviting you to listen, reflect, challenge assumptions, share your experiences, and learn from colleagues across the TRIO community.

- **Innovation vs. Tradition:** Honoring TRIO's Legacy While Shaping Its Future: How do we honor where TRIO has been while preparing it for where it needs to go? Explore the traditions and values that have sustained TRIO for generations—and consider where new voices, ideas, and approaches are needed to ensure the movement continues to evolve and thrive.
- **Put Your Oxygen Mask on First:** Sustaining Yourself While Supporting Others: You cannot pour endlessly from an empty cup. Examine boundaries, priorities, and sustainable practices that can help professionals protect their capacity while continuing to care, lead, advocate, and serve effectively for the long haul.
- **Owning the Role:** What “STEM-Adjacent” Teaches Us About Being the Adjacent Professional: Not every professional fits neatly inside a box—and that can be a strength. Consider what it means to work alongside, across, and between traditional professional identities and how embracing an “adjacent” role can expand collaboration, perspective, and impact.
- **Your Voice Matters:** Importance of Voting! Civic participation begins with understanding that your voice has value. This nonpartisan conversation explores how TRIO professionals can help students and families understand civic responsibility, overcome barriers to engagement, and participate more fully in their communities—without directing their political choices.
- **Mental Health Matters:** Supporting Student Well-Being in a Changing World: Student well-being and student success are inseparable. Explore the appropriately bounded role TRIO professionals can play in recognizing emotional distress, responding with care, connecting students to resources, and creating environments where students know they belong and are supported.



# CONFERENCE EVALUATIONS

## Share Your Feedback—and You Could Win!

Your feedback helps COE strengthen the Annual Conference and shape future learning experiences for the TRIO community. We encourage all attendees to share their thoughts and recommendations by completing session evaluations and the Overall Conference Evaluation in the COE Works app.

And this year, your feedback could come with a reward! COE will randomly select eligible participants to receive Amazon eGift Cards, with \$600 in prizes available throughout the conference.

### SESSION EVALUATION PRIZES

- **Wednesday:** Four \$25 Amazon eGift Cards for pre-conference evaluations
- **Thursday:** Four \$25 Amazon eGift Cards for concurrent and Hot Topic session evaluations
- **Friday:** Four \$25 Amazon eGift Cards for concurrent and Hot Topic session evaluations
- **Grand Session Prize:** One \$100 Amazon eGift Card selected from eligible session evaluation entries submitted Wednesday through Friday

### OVERALL CONFERENCE EVALUATION PRIZES

Complete the Overall Conference Evaluation for a chance to receive one of four \$25 Amazon eGift Cards or one \$100 Amazon eGift Card.

### HOW TO SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

**For individual sessions:** Open Annual Conference 2026 in the COE Works app → select Agenda → choose the session you attended → find Feedback → select Surveys → complete and submit the evaluation.

**For the Overall Conference Evaluation,** look for it directly on the Annual Conference 2026 main event page in COE Works.

Your experience matters. Tell us what worked, what we can improve, and what you would like to see next year.

*No purchase or payment is necessary to enter or win. Eligibility requirements, entry limits, submission periods, and other conditions apply. See the [COE 2026 Annual Conference Evaluation Survey Sweepstakes Official Rules](#) for complete details.*



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## SPECIAL EVENTS

### MEALS

Please note that your conference badge is your official meal ticket to the Educational Opportunity Dinner and National TRIO Achiever Awards on Thursday and the Walter O. Mason and Family Achievement Awards luncheon on Friday. 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

#### ZEN ZONE | Indigo Ballroom

We know that the most rewarding conference experiences include moments to pause, recharge, and take care of yourself. That's why we're excited to introduce the Zen Zone, a wellness lounge located inside the Exhibit Hall. Created as a peaceful retreat from the pace of the conference, the Zen Zone offers a comfortable space where you can relax between sessions, rest your feet, gather your thoughts, or simply enjoy a few quiet moments before heading back into the day's activities.

#### AUTHORS PAVILION

Celebrate the power of ideas, stories, and knowledge at the COE Authors Pavilion! As part of the 2026 COE Annual Conference, the inaugural Authors Pavilion brings together a distinguished group of authors whose work reflects the experiences, research, and perspectives shaping higher education, college access, student success, leadership, and educational opportunity.

Take a break from the sessions and meet the authors behind the books. Explore their work, discover new resources and perspectives, purchase books, and connect with authors through meaningful conversations and book signings. Whether you're looking for inspiration, professional resources, or your next great read, the Pavilion offers a unique opportunity to engage directly with the voices behind important ideas in our field. Make the COE Authors Pavilion a must-stop during your conference experience! Come discover, connect, and celebrate our authors—and leave with new ideas, new resources, and perhaps a signed book or two.

#### WEDNESDAY - 8:15-10:00 PM | Karaoke | Aqua Salon

**SPONSORED BY** *Genius Potential*



#### 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!

#### THURSDAY - 7:00 AM | Breathe & Begin—Gentle Morning Yoga | Sapphire Terrace

#### Rise and Shine with Gentle Morning 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



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## SPECIAL EVENTS

your positive energy and a willingness to try something new. Let's breathe, stretch, and recharge together as we enthusiastically greet the day.

**THURSDAY - 3:30-4:30 PM** | Exhibit Walkthrough & Snack Break | Indigo Ballroom

**SPONSORED BY Hilton**

### **Exhibit Hall Passport Game: 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 Friday, September 18, at 5 p.m. to be entered to win a prize. The winner of the Grand Prize, plus three lucky runners-up, each receiving a gift card, will be announced via the COE Works app on Saturday morning! Winners will also be contacted directly by email.

**THURSDAY - 4:00-5:00 PM** | Hot Topic Sessions

**THURSDAY - 9:30-11:45 PM** | The Opportunity After-Party: The Night Isn't Over Yet! | Sapphire Ballroom

The celebration doesn't stop when the Educational Opportunity Dinner ends! Keep the connections, conversations, and good vibes going at The Opportunity After-Party. Hit the dance floor, reconnect with colleagues and friends from across the TRIO community, and make a few new connections along the way. After a full day of learning, celebrating, and building opportunity together, this is your chance to unwind, turn up the music, and enjoy the community that makes COE's Annual Conference so special. The night isn't over yet!

**FRIDAY - MEET AT 6:00 AM** | Wellness Activity: Get Up and Go Walk | Meet in Lobby

### **Sunrise Walk**

Start your Friday with movement, fresh air, and some of San Diego's best waterfront views! The COE Wellness Committee invites you to prioritize your well-being and join fellow conference participants for a refreshing Sunrise Bay Walk along the waterfront promenade. Meet at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront at 6:00 a.m., with the group departing at 6:15 a.m., to enjoy an easy-paced walk, meaningful conversation, and scenic views of San Diego Bay as the city wakes up. Whether you come for the exercise, the fellowship, or simply a peaceful start to a busy conference day, lace up your walking shoes and make a little time for yourself before the day gets underway.

**FRIDAY - 12:30 PM** | Silent Auction | Indigo Ballroom

### **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 Wednesday, September 16, at 4:00 p.m. and closes on Friday, September 18, at 12:30 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!

**FRIDAY - 1:30-2:30 PM** | Hot Topic Sessions



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## SPECIAL EVENTS

**FRIDAY - 5:00 PM** | 50-50 Raffle | Indigo Ballroom

### **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. Purchase your raffle ticket before 5 p.m. on Friday, September 18. 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 Saturday, September 19, at the 11:30 a.m. plenary session. You must be present to win.

**FRIDAY - 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 Friday, September 18, at 2:00 p.m. Browse and bid on exclusive items from anywhere! Join the bidding 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!**

**FRIDAY - 8:30-10:30 PM** | Entertainment | Aqua Salon ABCD

**SPONSORED BY Study Smart**

### **TRIO Champions Commence: 60 Seconds to Glory!**

Close out Friday night with 60 Seconds to Glory, a fast-paced, Minute to Win It–style competition where attendees will have just one minute to conquer a series of hilarious challenges. Step up and test your skills, cheer on your colleagues, or simply enjoy the spectacle as competitors race against the clock for bragging rights and delightfully cheesy prizes. Between challenges, grab your friends and colleagues and head to the photo booth to capture a few final memories from San Diego. No athletic ability—or dignity—is required. Just bring your competitive spirit, your sense of humor, and a willingness to play along.



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# SESSIONS GRID WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 16, 2026

## Pre-Conference Sessions

8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

### PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION 1 (OFFSITE/WALKING)

Full STEAM Ahead: Powering Access and Innovation (Ticket required)

ALL

MEET IN AQUA SALON AB

### PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION 2 (OFFSITE/WALKING)

See San Diego: Best Practices in Student Travel for TRIO Programs (Ticket required)

ALL

MEET IN AQUA SALON EF

### STATE LEADERS CAUCUS: STRONGER TOGETHER

(Ticket required)

ALL

AQUA SALON CD

## REGISTRATION & EXHIBITS

11:00 AM – 7:00 PM

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

ALL

INDIGO BALLROOM

### EXHIBITS

ALL

INDIGO BALLROOM

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

### PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION 3

Evaluation 101: A Step-by-Step Guide to Program Evaluation (Ticket required)

ALL

AQUA SALON EF

### PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION 4

Reimagining Upward Bound: An Innovation Forum for Design, Data, and Student Outcomes (Ticket required)

UB/UBMS

AQUA SALON CD

### PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION 5

Using Federal Data to Power TRIO Program Success (Ticket required)

RESEARCH & EVALUATION STRAND

ALL

AQUA SALON AB

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

### Moderators' Orientation

INVITATION ONLY

AQUA SALON 300

### Newcomers Reception

SPONSORED BY ZION LEADERSHIP GROUP

INVITATION ONLY

## Opening Session

7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

8:15 PM – 9:00 PM

8:15 PM – 10:15 PM

### OPENING SESSION

From Survival to Opportunity: Education as Stephanie Land's Path to Economic Mobility

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM

### BOOK SALES & SIGNING

Author Stephanie Land

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM FOYER

### KARAOKE

SPONSORED BY GENIUS POTENTIAL

ALL

AQUA SALON ABCD



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

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# SESSIONS GRID

## THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 2026

| 7:00 AM – 8:00 AM                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                          | 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM                                                                                                                                    | 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM                                                                                                                                          | PLENARY SESSION                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                            | 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM                                                                                            |
| Wellness Activity: Breathe & Begin—Gentle Morning Yoga<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE TERRACE                                                                            |                                                                                                                                          | Registration<br>ALL<br>INDIGO BALLROOM                                                                                                               | Exhibits<br>ALL<br>INDIGO BALLROOM                                                                                                                         | Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility<br><i>SPONSORED BY COLLEGE BOARD</i><br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE BALLROOM |
| 10:15 AM – 11:30 AM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                               |
| 1<br>Small Towns, Big Impact: Elevating Rural TRIO Student Success<br>ALL<br>AQUA SALON 300                                                                  | 2<br>The S.E.R.I.O.U.S. Conference - What and Why<br>PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH<br>AQUA SALON 305                                                 | 3<br>Recharge and Reignite: Navigating Burnout While Building Strong TRIO Practice<br>ALL<br>AQUA SALON 310                                          | 4<br>Behind the Curtain: Transparent Leadership that Drives TRIO Impact<br>TRIO 101 STRAND<br>ALL<br>AQUA SALON 311                                        |                                                                                                               |
| 5<br>Building Pathways: How EOC Expands Access and Drives Adult Success<br>EOC<br>AQUA SALON 313                                                             | 6<br>Evaluating a Statewide Intervention for Student Success: Early Data from Virginia's Pell Initiative<br>COLLEGE<br>AQUA SALON 314    | 7<br>Growing Problem with Low-Income Students Facing Unmet Financial Need<br>RESEARCH & EVALUATION STRAND<br>ALL<br>AQUA SALON AB                    | 8<br>Taking TRIO Students Global: Fundable Leadership & STEM<br>ALL<br>AQUA SALON CD                                                                       |                                                                                                               |
| 9<br>Concurrent Enrollment in Action: Insights, Data, and Strategies for TRIO Programs<br>RESEARCH & EVALUATION STRAND<br>PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH<br>AQUA SALON EF | 10<br>Honors Education for the TRIO Student: Practical Strategies and Partnerships<br>FUELING THE FUTURE STRAND<br>COLLEGE<br>COBALT 500 | 11<br>Revolutionary Relics: Using AI to Defend, Document, and Deliver for TRIO Students<br>AI STRAND<br>ALL<br>COBALT 501                            | 12<br>Aloha 'Āina to Innovation: Community-Driven Problem Solving Through Design Thinking in Upward Bound<br>FUELING THE FUTURE STRAND<br>UB<br>COBALT 520 |                                                                                                               |
| 13<br>Innovation vs. Tradition: Honoring TRIO's Legacy While Shaping Its Future<br>COE ED Talk<br>ALL<br>INDIGO 202                                          | 15<br>Preparing Students for Public Policy Internships: Pathways, Readiness, and Professional Growth<br>ALL<br>INDIGO 206                | 16<br>Mentoring on Purpose: Moving First-Generation Students from Access to Impact—and Impact to Legacy<br>START SMART STRAND<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE 400 | 17<br>Owning the Role: What "STEM-Adjacent" Teaches Us About Being the Adjacent Professional<br>COE ED Talk<br>COLLEGE<br>SAPPHIRE 402                     |                                                                                                               |



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# SESSIONS GRID

## THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 2026

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

**18**

From Practitioner to President's Cabinet: Leadership Lessons from the Front Lines of Student Support

ALL  
SAPPHIRE 410

**19**

Ready for 2027: Navigating the New ADA Requirements for TRIO Programs

ALL  
SAPPHIRE 411

### 11:45 AM – 1:45 PM

Lunch on Your Own

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

**20**

Beyond the Coursework: Guiding Undergraduates to Design Intentional Academic Pathways to Success

COLLEGE  
AQUA SALON 300

**21**

Educating the Post-COVID Scholar: Fostering Inclusive Learning Environments

ALL  
AQUA SALON 305

**22**

Leading as Humans: Balancing Commitment and Capacity

ALL  
AQUA SALON 310

### 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS (CONT.)

**23**

The Power of Perception: How Expectations Shape Low-Income Student Success

TRIO 101 STRAND

ALL  
AQUA SALON 311

**24**

Lessons from a 60-Year TRIO Legacy: Sustaining Innovation, Impact, and Institutional Commitment

ALL  
AQUA SALON 313

**25**

TRIO in the Pacific

ALL  
AQUA SALON 314

**26**

Who Wants to Go to College? We Do! The Data-Driven Program That Begins in 3rd Grade

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH  
AQUA SALON AB

**27**

Partnering with Innovative Educators: Technology-Driven Onboarding and Tutor Training in TRIO SSS

AI STRAND

SSS  
AQUA SALON CD

**28**

The Data Is Right...Or Is It? A TRIO Price Showdown!

RESEARCH & EVALUATION STRAND

ALL  
AQUA SALON EF

**29**

From Access to Industry: Expanding Pathways to Arts, Entertainment, and Design Credentials

FUELING THE FUTURE STRAND

ALL  
COBALT 500

**30**

Streamlining Your McNair Plan of Operation

AI STRAND

MCNAIR  
COBALT 501

**31**

TRIO Then & Now: The Legacy Challenge—Live from San Diego

ALL  
COBALT 520

**32**

A Chance to Read, A Chance to Rise: Building TRIO Book Clubs for Student Success

ALL  
INDIGO 202

**33**

From Services to Systems: Designing High-Impact TRIO Programs in Rural Communities

START SMART STRAND

ALL  
INDIGO 204

**34**

Considerations for Veteran-Serving Programs

EOC, SSS, VUB  
INDIGO 206



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

# SESSIONS GRID THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 2026

### 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM • CONCURRENT SESSIONS (CONT.)

**35**

From Participant to Advocate:  
Amplifying Student Voices in  
TRIO

**START SMART STRAND**

👤 ALL

🏠 SAPPHIRE 400

**37**

From Fear to Fluency Through  
Responsible Generative AI  
Literacy

👤 COLLEGE

🏠 SAPPHIRE 410

**38**

HR Best Practices in TRIO:  
Building Sustainable,  
Compliant, and Student-  
Centered Teams

👤 ALL

🏠 SAPPHIRE 411

### 3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Exhibit Walkthrough and  
Snack Break

**SPONSORED BY HILTON**

👤 ALL

🏠 INDIGO BALLROOM

### 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM • HOT TOPICS

**HT1**

Measure and Increase  
Students' Career Readiness,  
Social Capital, and Agency

👤 ALL

🏠 AQUA SALON 300

**HT2**

The T.R.I.O. Model: How to  
Teach in a Way That Doesn't  
Stink (Probably Backed by  
Science)

👤 ALL

🏠 AQUA SALON 310

**HT3**

The Application Advantage:  
Building Career Readiness  
Through Competitive  
Fellowships

👤 COLLEGE

🏠 AQUA SALON 311

**HT4**

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

👤 ALL

🏠 AQUA SALON 313

**HT5**

Mastering TRIO Data Like a  
Pro with StudentAccess

👤 ALL

🏠 AQUA SALON AB

**HT6**

The Power of a High-Quality,  
High-Dosage Tutoring  
Program

👤 PRE-COLLEGE

🏠 AQUA SALON CD

**HT7**

Activating Courageous Faith!  
Four Ways to Thrive & Succeed  
in Uncertain & Challenging  
Times as a TRIO Professional!

👤 ALL

🏠 AQUA SALON EF

**HT8**

Beyond Access: How TRIO  
Programs Use Data-Driven  
Test Prep to Close College  
Readiness Gap

👤 PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

🏠 COBALT 500

**HT9**

How AI Is Redefining College  
& Career Readiness for TRIO  
Programs

👤 ALL

🏠 COBALT 501

**HT10**

The Empowerment  
Blueprint™: A Four-Stage  
Framework for Developing  
Students Who Persist, Lead,  
and Thrive, Moving Beyond  
Motivation to Sustainable  
Student Transformation

👤 ALL

🏠 COBALT 520

**HT11**

The TRIO Student Success  
Ecosystem: Scaling High-  
Touch Support Without  
Scaling Staff

👤 ALL

🏠 INDIGO 202

**HT12**

Gateway to Innovation:  
Creating Career Access at  
National Laboratories

👤 ALL

🏠 INDIGO 204

**HT13**

Financial Fluency for TRIO  
Student Success

👤 ALL

🏠 INDIGO 206

**HT14**

Transform Your Student  
Success Programming with  
DreamCatcher Curriculum

👤 ALL

🏠 SAPPHIRE 400

**HT15**

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

👤 ALL

🏠 SAPPHIRE 410

**HT16**

BLUMEN SOFTWARE:  
Discover Why BOT Goes  
Beyond the Traditional TRIO  
Database

👤 ALL

🏠 SAPPHIRE 411



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

*Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility*

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

# SESSIONS GRID

## THURSDAY, SEPT. 17, 2026

6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Cash Bar

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM FOYER

7:30 PM – 9:30 PM

TRIO Educational Opportunity  
Dinner and TRIO Achievers  
Awards (Name Badge  
Required)

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM

9:30 PM – 12:00 AM

The Opportunity After-Party:  
The Night Isn't Over Yet!

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

# SESSIONS GRID FRIDAY, SEPT. 18, 2026

6:45 AM – 8:15 AM

Wellness Activity: Sunrise Walk

ALL

SAPPHIRE TERRACE

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Registration

ALL

INDIGO BALLROOM

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Exhibits

ALL

INDIGO BALLROOM

### PLENARY SESSION

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

State of the TRIO Nation: A Leadership Briefing from COE

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM

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

39

The Evolution of the Pell Grant: Policy Shifts and Their Impact on Students

ALL

AQUA SALON 300

40

Research and Academic Engagement: Utilizing Campus Partnerships to Strengthen Student Success

MCNAIR

AQUA SALON 305

41

Guiding Students to Authentic Choices

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

AQUA SALON 310

42

TRIO Who? Raising the Profile of Your Program on Your Campus

TRIO 101 STRAND

ALL

AQUA SALON 311

44

Beyond the Basics: Integrating Global Citizenship and Hands-On STEM to Transform Student Engagement

UB

AQUA SALON 314

45

Beyond the APR: Transforming the Use of TRIO Data Through an Evaluation Partnership

RESEARCH & EVALUATION STRAND

ALL

AQUA SALON AB

46

From Access to Anywhere: Scaling TRIO Impact Through Online Orientation and Digital Engagement

AI STRAND

SSS

AQUA SALON CD

47

Put Your Oxygen Mask on First: Sustaining Yourself While Supporting Others

COE ED Talk

ALL

AQUA SALON EF

48

Navigating Federal Financial Aid Changes: What TRIO Practitioners Need to Know

FUELING THE FUTURE STRAND

ALL

COBALT 500

49

Out of Many, One: Bringing Multiple Innovative Technologies Together for Singular Success

AI STRAND

UB AND SSS

COBALT 501

50

Conference Room Conversations: Building a Motivated and Accountable TRIO Team

ALL

COBALT 520

51

Your Voice Matters: Importance of Voting!

COE ED Talk

ALL

INDIGO 202

52

Leading with Your Strengths

START SMART STRAND

ALL

INDIGO 204

54

First-Time Director Playbook: What No One Tells You About Leading a TRIO Program

START SMART STRAND

ALL

SAPPHIRE 400

55

Career Connection: Aligning International Education with Career Readiness

COLLEGE

SAPPHIRE 402

56

Scaling What Works: Lessons from Community College Initiative

SSS

SAPPHIRE 410



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

## SESSIONS GRID FRIDAY, SEPT. 18, 2026

### PLENARY SESSION

11:45 AM – 1:30 PM

Walter O. Mason and First-Generation College Celebration Day Awards Luncheon (Name Badge Required)

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM

### 1:30 PM – 2:30 PM • HOT TOPICS

#### HT17

Strategic Learning Assessment (SLA): Helping Students Become More Strategic, Self-Regulated, Lifelong Learners

ALL

AQUA SALON 300

#### HT18

Compass: A Smarter Way to Manage TRIO Data & APR

ALL

AQUA SALON 310

#### HT19

Pathways That Matter: Advancing Social Mobility Through College and Career Readiness

ALL

AQUA SALON 311

#### HT20

Leading by Example: What AI Readiness Looks Like for TRIO Professionals

ALL

AQUA SALON AB

#### HT21

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

ALL

AQUA SALON CD

#### HT22

When AI Meets Engagement: Practical Strategies That Have Boosted TRIO Attendance, Retention, and Outcomes

ALL

COBALT 500

#### HT23

Elevating Education: One Great Educator at a Time

ALL

COBALT 501

#### HT24

Attendance Isn't the Problem—Identity Is

SSS

INDIGO 202

#### HT25

The 2027–2028 FAFSA Has Changed: Preparing TRIO Students and Families

ALL

INDIGO 204

#### HT26

Empower: Because 'I'll Just Fix It in Excel' Is Not a Strategy

ALL

SAPPHIRE 400

#### HT27

Student and Teacher Agency Create Workforce Pathways. Data and Program Evaluation Unlock Secure Employment and College/Career Success

ALL

SAPPHIRE 410

#### HT28

Mastering TRIO Data Like a Pro with StudentAccess

ALL

SAPPHIRE 411

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

#### 58

Elevating Success Through a First-Gen Student Success Lens: Why it Matters Now

COLLEGE

AQUA SALON 300

#### 60

Igniting the Alumni Engine: Driving Educational Opportunity Into the Future

ALL

AQUA SALON 310

#### 61

TRIO Still M.A.T.T.E.R.S.: A Foundation that Transforms Lives

TRIO 101 STRAND

ALL

AQUA SALON 311

#### 62

Beyond Test Optional: Practical ACT/SAT Strategies for Admissions, Scholarships, and Engagement

PRE-COLLEGE

AQUA SALON 313

#### 63

Leadership Development for First-Generation Students

ALL

AQUA SALON 314

#### 64

Mental Health Matters: Supporting Student Well-Being in a Changing World  
*COE ED Talk*

ALL

AQUA SALON AB

#### 65

Translating First-Gen Access into Measurable Impact Through Human-Centered & AI-Enhanced Support

AI STRAND

ALL

AQUA SALON CD

#### 66

Workforce Pell & TRIO: What Practitioners Need to Know Now

ALL

AQUA SALON EF



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

# SESSIONS GRID FRIDAY, SEPT. 18, 2026

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

67

Helping Students Create Evidence That Shows Their Durable Skills

**FUELING THE FUTURE STRAND**

ALL

COBALT 500

68

Designing Belonging at Scale: Using Storytelling and Technology to Support First-Generation Students

**AI STRAND**

ALL

COBALT 501

69

Expanding Opportunity: Helping TRIO Students Navigate Selective College Admissions

PRE-COLLEGE YOUTH

COBALT 520

70

Abraca-data: Using Dashboards to Understand Higher Education, Your State, and Your Program

**RESEARCH & EVALUATION STRAND**

ALL

INDIGO 202

71

The First-Year Director's Playbook: Managing People, Performance, and Priorities

**START SMART STRAND**

ALL

INDIGO 204

72

Seen, Heard, and Supported: Creating Spaces Where Neurodivergent Students Thrive

ALL

INDIGO 206

73

Thrown into the Fire: Revitalizing a TRIO Program in a Shifting Policy Landscape

**START SMART STRAND**

ALL

SAPPHIRE 400

75

The Cost of Ambition: Preparing TRIO Students for Graduate School in a New Aid Landscape

COLLEGE

SAPPHIRE 410

76

Building Disability Advocacy Groups in TRIO

COLLEGE

SAPPHIRE 411

### PLENARY SESSION

4:15 PM – 5:15 PM

Presidential Perspectives on Scaling Student Success

**SPONSORED BY ECMC FOUNDATION**

ALL

SAPPHIRE BALLROOM

8:30 PM – 10:30 PM

TRIO Champions Commence: 60 Seconds to Glory!

**SPONSORED BY STUDY SMART**

ALL

AQUA SALON ABCD



## FROM ACCESS TO IMPACT:

*Education as the Engine of Economic Mobility*

#COEAC2026 • San Diego, CA • September 16-19

# SESSIONS GRID

## SATURDAY, SEPT. 19, 2026

| 8:00 AM – 1:30 PM                                        | PLENARY SESSION<br>9:00 AM – 10:00 AM                                                                                | PLENARY SESSION<br>10:15 AM – 11:15 AM                                                             | 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Information Booth<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE BALLROOM FOYER      | Opening Doors, Expanding Opportunity: A Congressional Keynote with Rep. Suzanne Bonamici<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE BALLROOM | A Chance in the World: From Opportunity to Impact with Steve Pemberton<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE BALLROOM | Conference Awards, Installation of Officers, and Remarks from the 2026-2027 Board Chair Ray Cabrera<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE BALLROOM |
| 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM                                       | 1:30 PM                                                                                                              |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                 |
| Book Sales and Signing<br>ALL<br>SAPPHIRE BALLROOM FOYER | Conference Concludes                                                                                                 |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                 |



# SAVE THE DATE

## COE'S 2027 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Wednesday through Saturday, September 8-11, 2027

Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center  
6700 N. Gaylord Rockies Blvd.  
Denver, CO 80019



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION



# CELEBRATING

# 50

# YEARS OF AEEE

## 1976 ★ 2026

Five decades of advancing opportunity, building community, and supporting TRIO students and professionals in New York and New Jersey.



JOIN US IN SPRING 2027  
AEEE 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

### Special Thanks to AEEE Partners

AEEE thanks its long-term partners for helping make a difference in our students' lives!



**STUDY SMART TUTORS**  
EDUCATE • EMPOWER • INSPIRE



**Elevated Minds**  
engage | learn | thrive



ZION  
LEADERSHIP  
GROUP

**MasteryPrep**



## ***Big Tech on the Prairie: Where Tradition Meets Transformation***

**Join us October 11-14 in Fargo, North Dakota, as we explore the exciting possibilities of using the newest technology to support TRIO students, prepare for the UB/UBMS/VUB/McNair competitions, and celebrate 50 years of excellence in promoting college access and opportunity across the ASPIRE region!**

**Secure your spot today:**



***ASPIRE congratulates COE***

***Board Chair Jeff Kahlden***

***on a successful year and looks***

***forward to the leadership of***

***Chair-Elect Ray Cabrera!***

***Congratulations to ASPIRE's  
Theresa Rader***



***2026-2027 COE Board Chair-Elect***



CONGRATULATIONS & THANK YOU



**DR. MARA LUNA**

For your dedicated service on the  
Board of Directors as Past Board Chair.

*Upward Bound*  
**PROFESSIONAL SUMMIT**  
— SAVE THE DATE —



**FEBRUARY 2027**



**SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO**



[puertoricoubsummit@gmail.com](mailto:puertoricoubsummit@gmail.com)



The Connecticut Association  
of Educational Opportunity Programs



# You Educate. We'll Calculate.

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COUNCIL FOR OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION  
**OPPORTUNITY MATTERS  
BOOK CLUB**

READ. REFLECT. CONNECT. CREATE CHANGE.

**2027  
BOOK CLUB  
SELECTION**

# A Chance in the World

*An Orphan Boy, a Mysterious Past,  
and How He Found a Place Called Home*

by Steve Pemberton



*Stories  
Inspire  
Opportunity.*

PEOPLE.  
POSSIBILITIES.  
BRIGHTER FUTURES.



**Steve Pemberton**

Author | Business Leader  
Advocate | Change Maker

Join TRIO professionals from across the country for the 2027 Opportunity Matters Book Club as we read and discuss Steve Pemberton's powerful memoir, *A Chance in the World*. His remarkable story of resilience, hope, and the "human lighthouses" who changed his life reminds us why opportunity matters—and why our work in TRIO is so important.

*"This is a story about what's possible  
when someone believes in you."*

— Steve Pemberton

From an abusive foster care system to a nationally respected business leader, Steve's journey shows the transformative power of compassion, education, and opportunity.

Pemberton's remarkable journey takes readers from the trauma and instability of an abusive foster care system to a life of leadership, advocacy, and purpose. Along the way, he encounters the "human lighthouses"—people whose compassion, encouragement, and belief helped illuminate a path forward. Come for the book. Stay for the conversation. Leave inspired to become an even brighter lighthouse for your students.



COUNCIL for OPPORTUNITY in EDUCATION

[www.coenet.org](http://www.coenet.org)

# MAKE SURE YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HEAR DIRECTLY FROM TRIO THIS FALL.

COE's new **Fall 2026 Advocacy Action Guide** gives you the information, messages, and ready-to-use tools you need to engage your Members of Congress this fall. With Congress working toward final FY27 funding decisions, the guide centers on three priorities identified by COE: protecting TRIO's mission, structure, and current grantee base; securing \$33 million in supplemental funding for Talent Search and Educational Opportunity Centers; and urging Congress to address the Department of Education's proposed changes to EDGAR.



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[www.coenet.org](http://www.coenet.org)

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 smiling, and a red sign with white text and graphics is visible. The sign features a large white outline of a person's head and shoulders, with the text "#1" at the top and "WE'RE #1" at the bottom.

# 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](http://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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[www.coenet.org](http://www.coenet.org)



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

— CONGRATULATES —

# Corris Davis

ON HER WELL-DESERVED AWARD

For more than two decades, Corris has been a steadfast leader, mentor, and champion for students and professionals in the TRIO community. Her dedication, compassion, and belief in the power of people have strengthened TRIO and expanded opportunity for so many.

*TRIO is stronger  
because you bring  
people with you.*

Thank you, Corris, for your extraordinary leadership, your unwavering commitment to students and colleagues, and the lasting impact you make every day.

“When you invest in people,  
you create a legacy that  
reaches far beyond  
your own journey.”



PEOPLE | OPPORTUNITY | STRONGER TOGETHER



# The Pell Institute

*For the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education*

RESEARCH.  
EVIDENCE.  
OPPORTUNITY.  
A MORE EQUITABLE  
TOMORROW.



*“Evidence matters  
because people’s lives  
and opportunities matter.”*

— MARGARET CAHALAN

## Congratulations Margaret Cahalan

RECIPIENT OF THE  
**2026 WALTER O. MASON, JR. AWARD**

The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education proudly congratulates our colleague and friend, Margaret “Maggie” Cahalan, on receiving the 2026 Walter O. Mason, Jr. Award.

Maggie’s unwavering commitment to truth, equity, and educational opportunity has strengthened TRIO programs, informed national policy, and helped ensure that research serves the students and practitioners who make opportunity real.

Her work exemplifies the power of evidence to advance justice—challenging assumptions, elevating voices, and championing a more equitable future for all students.

*Thank you, Maggie,*

*for your extraordinary contributions to the field  
and for being a tireless advocate for opportunity.*

*Research for a More Equitable Tomorrow*

THE PELL INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF OPPORTUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION



**January 6-8, 2027**

### **About These Amazing Events :**

**The COE Institute at Rice University** is a two-day, in-person professional development experience designed to strengthen the skills and impact of TRIO professionals. Through interactive workshops and peer-to-peer learning, participants will explore strategies for supporting students across the college, career, and workforce development continuum

**The TRIO Innovation Lab: AI in Action** is an interactive, one-day experience that gives TRIO professionals hands-on opportunities to explore practical ways to use AI to enhance program operations, outreach, student engagement, and student success.

# COE

COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

## **INSTITUTE FOR ACCESS & SUCCESS PROFESSIONALS at RICE UNIVERSITY**

**Strengthen Your Skills  
January 6-7, 2027**



**TRIO Innovation Lab:  
AI in Action  
January 8, 2027**



**For More Information Visit [WWW.COENET.ORG](http://WWW.COENET.ORG)**



# SAVE THE DATE

## COE'S POLICY SEMINAR

**March 7-10, 2027**

Capitol Hilton  
1001 16th St NW  
Washington, DC 20036



**COUNCIL** *for* **OPPORTUNITY** *in* **EDUCATION**

# 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.



## LEARN MORE AND APPLY AT COENET.ORG

Then join a lifelong network of TRIO students and alumni dedicated to supporting your success, providing mentorship, and opening doors to career and leadership opportunities. Visit **trioalumni.org** to reconnect with past TRIO peers and meet other TRIO alumni around the globe!



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

[www.coenet.org](http://www.coenet.org)

# CHANGE THE FORTUNE OF YOUR PROGRAM

With Proven, Personalized  
Professional Development

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## ***Let COE Bring the Expertise to You.***

Every program has unique goals, challenges, and opportunities. COE Technical Assistance brings customized professional development directly to your team, virtually or in person. We'll work with you to create a targeted training experience that meets your objectives, strengthens your team, and maximizes your professional development investment without stretching your travel budget.

### ***Popular Technical Assistance Topics***

- *New TRIO Grant Start-Up*
- *Program Evaluation*
- *APR Assistance*
- *New Director Coaching*
- *TRIO Legislation & Regulations for Institutional teams*
- *Fiscal Accountability*
- *Team Building & Development*

**Designed for Institutional Teams,  
Community-Based Organizations, and  
Educational Opportunity Programs**

*You'll love it!*

Contact Angelica Vialpando ([angelica.vialpando@coenet.org](mailto:angelica.vialpando@coenet.org)) for more information



The Pell Institute  
For the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

People.  
Programs.  
Possibilities.

Students  
Today.  
Leaders  
Tomorrow.

# TRIO CENSUS

**Real Data. Greater Opportunity.  
Stronger Futures.**

The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education is conducting the first independent, comprehensive census of all TRIO programs outside of the federal government.



## WHY THE TRIO CENSUS MATTERS

TRIO programs open doors for low-income, first-generation, veterans, and students with disabilities. This census will:



Track  
national  
progress



Highlight  
successful  
practices



Identify  
challenges  
and needs



Inform  
solutions and  
recommendations

“TRIO programs create opportunities for low-income, first-generation, veteran, and students with disabilities to obtain a bachelor's degree and pursue graduate education.”

— Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

*Pell Institute National Census of TRIO Programs:  
Methodology and Study Protocol (2026)*

Whether your program exceeded its goals, met its objectives, or encountered challenges, your experience matters. Every participating program makes the national picture more complete—and gives the TRIO community better information to learn, improve, advocate, and demonstrate its collective impact.



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[www.coenet.org](http://www.coenet.org)



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# Legs & Regs

## Understanding TRIO Regulations, Compliance & Fiscal Management

Strengthen your knowledge of the Higher Education Act and TRIO program-specific regulations through this engaging two-day virtual seminar designed for TRIO professionals.

**Price\***  
**\$700**  
Member  
**\$1400**  
Non-Member

### Topics Covered

- ✓ Budget Management
- ✓ Fiscal Accountability
- ✓ Interpreting Regulations
- ✓ Compliance

### Date & Time

**December 15-16, 2026**  
**11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. ET**

Click [Here](#) For More Information and Registration



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

# VIRTUAL PROPOSAL WRITING WORKSHOPS



Get ready for the 2027 TRIO competitions with a two-day, hands-on proposal writing workshop designed to strengthen your application and position your program for success.

We'll walk through the essential components of a competitive proposal including:

- Identifying Need
- Developing Ambitious Objectives
- Crafting the Plan of Operation,
- Building Budgets and Designing Meaningful Evaluations
- Incorporating Lessons Learned from the 2026 TRIO Competitions.

## MCNAIR

- OCTOBER 26-27, 2026
- 11AM-5PM ET

## UPWARD BOUND/UBMS & VETERANS UPWARD BOUND

- NOVEMBER 4-5, 2026
- 11AM-5PM ET

**FREE FOR COE MEMBERS**

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*“This internship opened my eyes to what’s possible—  
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— PAST WOLANIN INTERN

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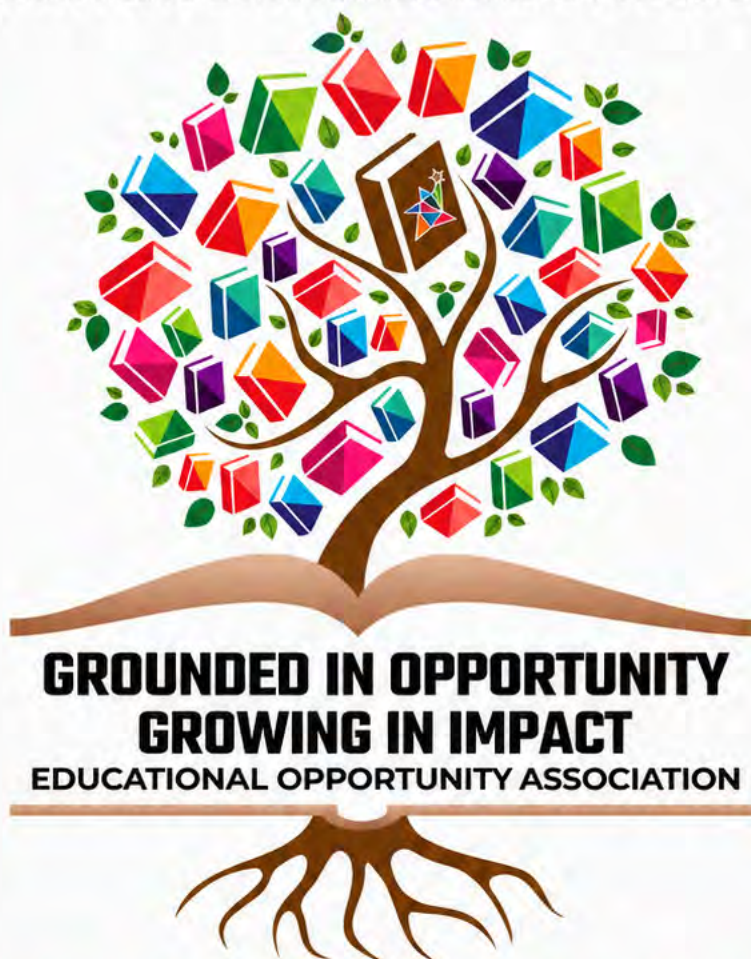
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April 4 – April 7, 2027

DoubleTree by Hilton  
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*Join Mighty, Mighty MEAEOPP as we celebrate  
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Opens: October 1, 2026

Deadline: December 31, 2026

### Mid-Eastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel

Delaware – Washington, DC – Maryland

Pennsylvania – Virginia – West Virginia

[www.meaeopp.org](http://www.meaeopp.org)

# MERCER UNIVERSITY

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## ***Congratulations, Dr. Ken Blair!***

As Mercer University celebrates six decades of partnership with TRIO programs, we are proud to recognize Dr. Ken Blair for his well-deserved recognition as a 2026 National Trio Achiever Recipient.

As a Mercer alumnus and former participant in the Upward Bound and Student Support Services programs, Dr. Blair's incredible achievements showcase the true power of opportunity.

At Mercer, everyone majors in changing the world.

[mercer.edu](https://mercer.edu)

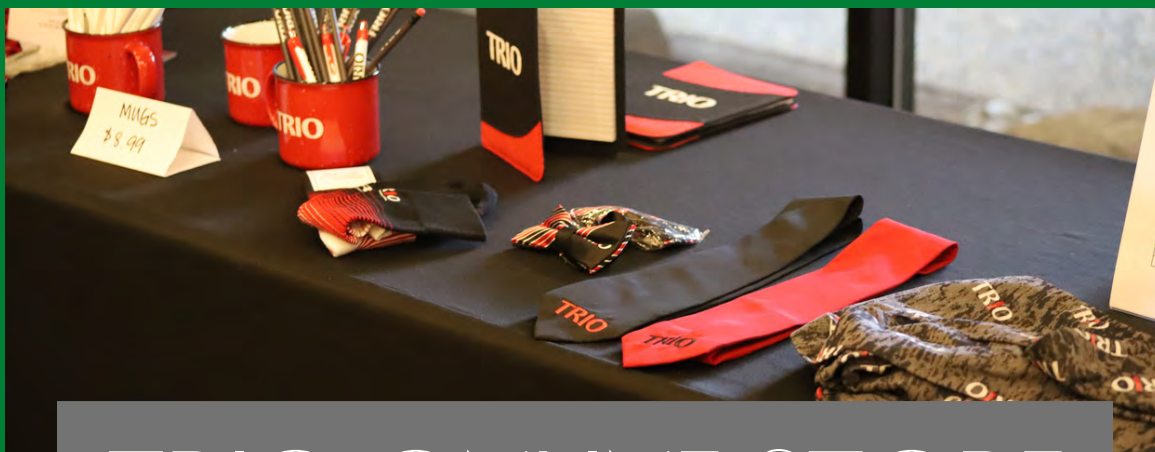


# TRIO NAEOP PEER REVIEW

Schedule Your Review today:  
[naeoptrio.org/peer-review-program](http://naeoptrio.org/peer-review-program)

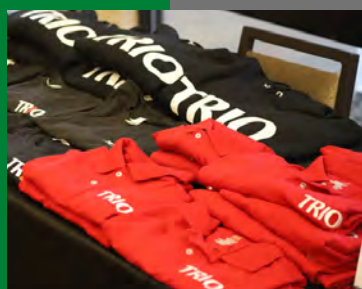
Trained peer monitors are available to perform site visits for TRIO Programs. The Peer Review program was created for Directors to take advantage of as a “technical checkup” on how their programs are doing in complying with the rules and regulations of the USDE.

Northwest Association of Educational Opportunity Programs



## TRIO ONLINE STORE

[friendsofnaeop.org/online-store](http://friendsofnaeop.org/online-store)



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*All proceeds go to scholarships for TRIO students!*



# New England Educational Opportunity Association

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- Massachusetts (MEOA)
- Maine (MEEOA)
- Vermont (VEOP)
- Rhode Island (RIEOA)
- New Hampshire (NHEOA)

**A Big “Thank You”  
Our Three Strong Leaders!**



*Left to Right: Arielle Derival (Past President),  
Dr. Kevin Linton (President), Michelle  
Richards, (President-Elect)*

 [www.neoaonline.org](http://www.neoaonline.org)

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**NEOA Celebrates its  
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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.**



# 2027 WESTOP Annual Conference

March 20 - 24, 2027

The Westin San Diego  
Gaslamp Quarter

visit [www.westop.org](http://www.westop.org)

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