With its multiple summits throughout the last year, the Obama administration has highlighted the need to help low-income students aspire to postsecondary education and raised the visibility of college access programs. Now, there is a focus on figuring out which of the many approaches to college access and success work.

This month, the White House released a thick report on the progress made since January on commitments by colleges and nonprofits to reach out to more disadvantaged students. An active participant in the White House gatherings this year, the National College Access Network has released a first ever benchmarking report with promising results on the effectiveness of its programs. The Washington based nonprofit, which has hundreds of member organizations across the country, provides support services for students transitioning from high school to college.

It partnered with the Herndon, Va. based National Student Clearinghouse Research Center to analyze the outcomes of students from 24 NCAN member programs. The research found that college enrollment rates for students in the college access programs ranged from 65 percent to 71 percent over the four years of graduating classes studied. These rates are higher than the overall rates for similar low income students from urban, suburban, and rural areas, which ranged from 47 to 58 percent in this year’s Clearinghouse report, and even exceeded some rates at high income urban and rural schools.

The new benchmark report found 55 percent of NCAN served students who graduated in the class of 2007 graduated from college six years later, about 10 percentage points higher than the rate for low-income, first generation students who were not served.

While limited in scope, some experts see the study results as an important step toward validating work in the emerging field of college access programs. To learn more about what’s working with these programs, NCAN is profiling some of the successful member agencies, such as College Now Greater Cleveland, in its blog this month.

The benchmarking report will be released annually and NCAN is accepting applications for programs that wish to be evaluated.
MORE THAN 1400 APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES GRANT COMPETITION

The large number of Student Support Services applications submitted in this year’s competition that closed on February 2, 2015, demonstrates the significant unmet need experienced by two- and four-year colleges serving low-income, first-generation students. There are currently 1,027 SSS projects funded in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Pacific Islands. The goal of the SSS program is to increase college retention, graduation rates, and in the case of two-year colleges, the transfer rates of students who participate in the program.

The students who participate in Student Support Services benefit greatly from the services it provides. Unfortunately, there are thousands more students who have a need for these services. We must continue to advocate for this, and the other TRIO programs, until TRIO is adequately funded to meet the needs of all students who need a little extra help.

As you may know, on Monday, February 3, President Obama released his budget request which included a $20 million increase in TRIO funding for a total appropriation of $859.75 million in FY 2016. This is an effort by the Administration to fund demonstration projects that may yield new information about what strategies work best to boost college access and success as well as inform decision-makers as they move to reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965. The Council for Opportunity in Education strongly supports the President’s proposal but realizes it will be an uphill battle to reach this goal under a divided government.

In response, we as a TRIO community must come together to request more funding for the TRIO programs in FY 2016.

(Slightly modified due to an advertisement for a dated event that passed before publication of this newsletter).

As spring semester comes to an end, SSS staff are busy identifying students who are eligible to receive supplemental grant aid. Our participants who have completed less than 60 credits, receive a Pell grant and have unmet need, make satisfactory progress by completing 12 or more credits with at least a 2.0 GPA and complete a study plan, graduation plan, and financial plan may receive extra grant money after grades are posted. This helps them to avoid or delay incurring loan debt as they earn a bachelor's degree. The extra money also puts a smile on their faces and encourages the recipients to continue their education.

Eddie, Donalyn, Greg, and Sharadee attended the Utah ASPIRE conference in Salt Lake City in March and received some useful information to implement in our program. It is always good to mingle with TRiO people from across the state to renew friendships and meet new colleagues.

We have decided to implement the Blumen online data system and are in the process of transferring data to the new system. We anticipate that this will eliminate the problems we have encountered with servers occasionally. We have also been working on digitizing files to cut down on the amount of space needed for physically storing files.

We have several participants who are planning to attend the summer semester. We will continue to provide some tutoring and textbook loans to help them academically. We are pleased with the number of students we have graduating this semester. It is a great payoff for their hard work.

“A wise man can learn more from a foolish question than a fool can learn from a wise answer.” — Bruce Lee

“No one is dumb who is curious. The people who do not ask questions remain clueless throughout their lives.” — Neil deGrasse Tyson

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” — Nelson Mandela
Talent Search

Spring Talent Search Activities

On February 26th and 27th TRIO Talent Search had four students attend the TRIO Youth Leadership Conference held at Utah Valley University. The students experienced workshops, a speaker who specializes in memorization techniques, simulations of space crafts and alien encounters, and a metaphoric maze with an element of meditation. The students all said they had a great time and really enjoyed the activities.

High school Advisors are gearing up with assisting seniors in completing the FAFSA application process. Fall enrollment is right around the corner, and they’re working hard to ensure the students are all set up come August! Our junior high Advisor is completing financial literacy workshops with the 8th and 9th graders….it’s never too soon to talk about how to pay for college.

This year’s state Aspire conference was held at the University of Utah and all of the TRIO Talent Search staff was able to attend. Highlights included a speaker on the changing demographics in Utah, and as always the TRIO scholarship luncheon. Learning what TRIO students have overcome, and continue to overcome is an inspiration to those of us who have the privilege of working with our amazing TRIO students.

The Director, Rebecca Tierney, presented at the Montana College Access Network Conference on April 9th. She was also able to attend the COE (Council for Opportunity in Education) conference in Washington D.C. on March 15-17. This yearly conference allows TRIO programs to receive training and after the conference, TRIO staff have the opportunity to meet with Senate and Congressional representatives’ offices to advocate for these programs.

Our upcoming events include our Northern Utah Campus Tour with 9th, 10th, and 11th graders from the Ogden School District, and the promotion of the “Reach Higher” initiative from the First Lady, Michelle Obama with May 1st being designated as “College Decision Day” for our seniors.
UPWARD BOUND

Upward Bound wants to welcome their newest staff members, Sam Sessions and Adam Bachison to the upward bound team.

Sam Sessions

Sam was born right here in Ogden, Utah. He was raised in Layton and graduated from Layton High School. He attended Weber State University on the nine-year Bachelor’s Degree plan. Earning a degree in English Teaching with a minor in PE and Coaching. He taught in Jordan and Weber School Districts for several years before pursuing opportunities in the private sector. He re-entered the world of education in 2013 as an Educational Instructor at Northridge Learning Center. He is thrilled to be at Weber State, working with underrepresented populations and helping kids reach their goals. Last, but not least, He is the proud father of Ashlynd Forest Sessions, a beautiful, kind, funny, and intelligent senior at Weber High School.

Adam Bachison

Adam grew up in North Ogden, Utah and graduated from Weber State University in 2006 with a Earth and Space Science Teaching Composite degree. Since graduating, he has taught science in Utah and Arizona. He recently moved back to Utah and he is here to stay. When Adam is not working, he enjoys spending time with his two children, cooking, playing computer games, and spending a lot of time in his garden.

PROJECT SUCCESS

ANTI-TOBACCO CAMPAIGN

On February 4th 2015, five Upward Bound students and Program Director Linda Tobias attended a presentation on the dangers of e-tobacco and e-cigarettes presented by the weber county health department. These students are part of Project Successes Youth Advisory Committee.

(From left to right Edgar Lopez, Manuel Rodriguez, Linda Tobias, Marcela Rodriguez, Chris Gutierrez and Neida Tinajero)

They also visited the state capitol on February 12th 2015 to talk with legislators about anti-smoking legislation.

UTAH STATE TOUR

Upward bound would like to thank Utah State for hosting the Upward Bound students for a tour of the USU campus. Our students had a great time experiencing college life in Logan, Utah. The Upward bound students visited Student Support Services, Admissions, and Housing while on campus. Senior students were able to meet with academic advisers at the university and with admission. Great things to come!
YANDRIEL “JIMMY” RODRIGUEZ

Yandriel “Jimmy” Rodriguez was born in Cienfuegos, Cuba, a city which translates as “100 fires” in Spanish. Due to oppression and harassment from the Cuban government, Jimmy’s parents decided to apply at the U.S. embassy in Cuba to come to the United States. After a lengthy process, they were allowed to come to the US. In December 2001, Jimmy (12), his brother (10), and his parents arrived as political refugees. Jimmy was immediately enrolled in middle school, and initially had a tough time transitioning. Learning the language was his primary struggle.

After graduating high school, Jimmy joined the Marine Corps at age 18. He did the Marine Corps boot camp in San Diego, and afterwards was sent to MOS (Military Occupation School). His stationary unit was with the 3rd Battalion 5th Marines (or the dark horse battalion as many call it). He was there during his remaining time and was able to deploy overseas with the battalion once.

Jimmy started his schooling at Salt Lake Community College studying Computer Science (CS). He has always liked computers, and his intrigue with computer problems created enough interest that he wanted to know as much as possible about computers and how they operate. He is now at Weber State University, and is additionally pursuing a Math minor because he says he has to take many math classes for his CS major anyway.

Despite initially struggling to learn English and find support for going to college, Jimmy ascribes his positive attitude and commitment for being able to accomplish his goals. By putting school first, he is able to commit as much time as necessary for doing homework and studying. He says this is the best way to overcome anything that might be slowing him down.

He says that life has been a learning experience ever since stepping on American soil. He has been enjoying that experience, and knows that he would not have been afforded any of the same experiences in Cuba. He is grateful for his parents bringing him to the US, and is also appreciative of Veterans Upward Bound.

He says, “I cannot find words to describe how helpful the Upward Bound program has been to me. I don’t think I would’ve gotten as far as I am and as quick as I have if it wasn’t for them. They have helped me with school work; they have given me advice on school and non-school related problems/choices. It’s just really nice to have someone around to connect to and to listen to you when you need it.”

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

During the 2015 annual conference of the National Association of Veterans Upward Bound (NAVUB) held in Fairfax, VA, Randy Wilson, Director of Veterans Upward Bound at WSU received the association’s Lifetime Achievement Award. This award recognizes the leadership and involvement Randy has had in the organization since joining it in 1996 and can also be applied to his activities in Federal TRiO programs since beginning his career in 1979. Randy has served on the NAVUB Board of Directors for nearly 15 of his 19+ years in NAVUB while doing double duty chairing and serving on other committees as well. He was instrumental in creating the first web site for the organization, leading the board in creating a scholarship program that has grown over the years, creating the NAVUB archives, and much more. After 20 years of service in VUB and NAVUB (and 37 years total in Federal TRiO Programs), Randy plans to retire in the spring of 2016. (Picture: Randy Wilson, Leroy Chavez—NAVUB President).
Postsecondary Education Opportunity, November 2014 — Data Shows U.S. Rankings in Decline

The Council for Opportunity in Education and the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education are pleased to announce the November 2014 issue of Postsecondary Education Opportunity. The issue, “Educational Performance of the United States — An International Perspective” summarizes international data on the educational performance and ranking of the 35 countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The data for the United States show mediocre to notably inferior performance of the educational system in the United States compared to other OECD member countries on the metrics analyzed. Moreover, the ranking of the United States among these countries is continuing to drop. Other countries have surpassed the educational performance of the United States on key measures of high school graduation and attainment, college enrollment, completion, and attainment. Author Tom Mortenson argues that the poor educational performance of the United States indicates economic challenges ahead. The poor educational performance of the United States may also help explain current domestic political dysfunction, growing inequality of income, wealth, life expectancy, and other measures of human welfare that are closely associated with education.

Excerpt from “Educational Performance of the United States — An International Perspective”

In the past, the United States has invested heavily in higher education. Through the federal government, states, religious denominations, businesses, and other civic and social organizations the United States created 4-year colleges, universities, normal schools/teachers’ colleges, junior colleges, technical colleges, and institutes to provide training and education beyond high school. We made policy, program, and funding choices at the state and federal levels that created new forms of higher education to address perceived needs. As these needs changed over time so too did the missions of institutions and programs evolve. They kept social investments through higher education relevant to the needs of society, the economy, and those of students. This was the progressive era of higher education policy making, and it ended around 1980.

Since about 1980 in the states and at the federal level, the progressive investment policies, programs and funding of the past have been steadily replaced by regressive choices including policies, programs, and funding that have produced dramatically different results compared to results from the choices made prior to 1980. These new results were predictable from existing social science theory at the time the new policy choices were made. And since they were predictable, we conclude that the results of these regressive policy choices were intended. Opportunity has been reporting since 1992 on this policy redirection.

INDICATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Below are some excerpts from the above report. You can find the entire report at http://www.coenet.us/coe_prod_imis/COE/Home/COE/Home.aspx?hkey=040cec49-d947-4110-b9fa-1f30bef9c919

WHO ENROLLS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION? Continuation Rates by Family Income: Indicating a very high level of inequality, 81 percent of 18 to 24 year olds from the top family income quartile were enrolled in postsecondary education in 2012, compared with just 45 percent of those in the bottom quartile. Because participation rates increased among those in bottom quartile, the percentage point gap in participation between the top and bottom quartiles lessened somewhat over the 42-year period

WHAT TYPE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION DO STUDENTS ATTEND? In the United States, income is highly predictive of the type of college that students attend. Three-fourths (75 percent) of students who did not receive Pell Grants attended a four-year rather than a two-year institution, compared with only 55 percent of Pell Grant recipients.
DOES FINANCIAL AID ELIMINATE THE FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO PAYING COLLEGE COSTS? Average tuition and fees at colleges and universities in the U.S. more than doubled in constant dollars since 1970, rising from $9,625 in 1970 to $20,234 to 2012-13. Relative to the average cost of attendance, the maximum Pell Grant peaked in 1975 when the maximum Pell grant covered two-thirds (67 percent) of average costs. The maximum Pell Grant covered only 27 percent of costs in 2012, the lowest percentage since 1970.

HOW DO STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES PAY FOR COLLEGE? College costs are not only rising but also borne increasingly by students and their families, as the percent of costs paid by state and local funds has declined. For those in the bottom income quartile, average costs after all grant aid represented 84 percent of the average family income. Given these trends it is not surprising that both the percent of students who borrow to pay college costs and the amount they borrow have risen considerably since the 1990s. Low-income bachelor’s degree recipients (as measured by Federal Pell Grant receipt) average higher amounts borrowed than other bachelor’s degree recipients.

HOW DOES BACHELOR’S DEGREE ATTAINMENT VARY BY FAMILY INCOME? In 2013 individuals from the top family income quartile were over 8 times as likely to obtain a bachelor’s degree by age 24 as those in the bottom family income quartile. Bachelor’s degree attainment rates have nearly doubled since 1970 for those in the highest family income quartile --- rising from 40 percent to 77 percent – but, for those in the bottom family income quartile, bachelor’s degree attainment rates have risen only slightly – rising from 6 percent in 1970 to 9 percent in 2013. Even when only those who enter college are considered, bachelor’s degree attainment rates for those in the bottom quartile have remained low (at 21 percent) and remained virtually unchanged since 1970.

HOW DO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT RATES IN THE U.S. COMPARE WITH RATES IN OTHER NATIONS? Attainment Rates by Country: International comparisons show that the U.S. has fallen from second in tertiary type A (bachelor’s) degree attainment in 2000 to 12th in 2012.

YULIA GOFF, VUB INSTRUCTOR, RECEIVES AWARD

WOW Awards are given annually to wonderful Women of Weber. There are several different fields where women inspire others with their actions. Nominations are made and awards given to each of three categories, faculty, staff and student. This year Yulia Goff was nominated and won the staff award for Woman of the World. The definition of this award is, “She shares her life and her culture in a way that brings awareness to others about the beauty of our world.” Although the award is presented by the Women’s Center, we at Veterans Upward Bound know firsthand that this award is going to the correct person. Every day, Yulia does exactly that with everyone she meets.

Congratulations, Yulia!
ANNOUNCING — A CAMPAIGN TO CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF TALENT SEARCH

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Talent Search program, which has guided more than 11 million students and their families through the college preparation and application process. Talent Search grew out of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Higher Education Act (HEA), established with the goal of seeing that “no American talent is wasted.” HEA also celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year. The HEA is arguably the most significant piece of legislation governing American higher education. These anniversaries, coming in the same year, make 2015 a milestone in the history of higher education.

These anniversaries also provide an opportunity for you to share with your institutions and your own TRIO and Talent Search alumni the life-altering contributions that Talent Search has made in the lives of the students that you serve. We know that you will actively engage with your state and regional associations to generate excitement, energy and recognition. The Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) envisions that all Talent Search and TRIO programs will use this occasion to cast a light on student accomplishments, on strengthening schools and communities, and on the families that are touched and transformed by the work of your programs. COE encourages all TRIO programs to commemorate this milestone by organizing events, reaching out to alumni, publishing stories and op-eds, using social media to raise our national profile and be acknowledged as agents of change.

There will be an array of menu items on the Talent Search 50th Anniversary page of the COE website to help you with planning these activities, as there was last year for the Upward Bound 50th Anniversary. Look for more information and assistance to come your way!

Please forward information on your upcoming event(s) to Dolores Gomez (dolores.gomez@coenet.us) to be included in our centralized Calendar of Events.

For guidance or assistance with any of the media or publicity planning for the Talent Search 50th Anniversary, please contact Beth Hogan (beth.hogan@coenet.us), (978) 979-1886, or Jodi Koehn-Pike (jodi.koechnpike@coenet.us), (202) 347-7430, Ext. #382.

Connect with the Council for Opportunity in Education

Talent Search 50th Anniversary Logo

Please place this logo (.zip) in your e-mail signature, on your websites and Facebook pages, and in other places of prominence as you see fit. The logo is available in Joint Photographic Experts Group (.jpg) and Encapsulated PostScript (.eps) format. We ask that you keep the logo intact when you use them.

Late in December 2014 Congress passed H.R. 83, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2015. The bill provided $1.1 trillion in funding for FY 2015, including a $1.5 million increase for TRIO. This may not seem to be a lot but TRIO considers it a victory that the programs will not all be level funded again.