



COUNCIL *for* OPPORTUNITY *in* EDUCATION

SUMMER

RECESS

PACKET

August 2011



August 3, 2011

Dear TRIO Colleagues:

From the last-minute deal in April to prevent a government shutdown to the eleventh-hour debt ceiling agreement signed into law yesterday, we have seen the very worst of U.S. politics in recent months. With the Administration and Congress continuously gridlocked over federal spending, the only consistent outcome has been the slashing of services from our most vulnerable citizens. With the enactment of the debt ceiling deal – S. 365, the Budget Control Act – we are poised to experience several more rounds of grave cuts. While the effects of these cuts will not be felt until the 2012-2013 program year, your Representatives and Senators are working **now** to figure out exactly what those cuts will be.

We cannot let them continue to gut our programs.

This week, your legislators return home for the annual Summer Recess period. From now until Labor Day, you will have unparalleled access to your Members of Congress as they sponsor townhall meetings and open forums as well as meet with local residents in their district offices. Upon their return, they will use all they have heard from your community to influence their decisions about future spending cuts. Therefore, it's critical to reach out locally during the Summer Recess as well as nationally at their federal offices upon their return to Washington in September.

The time to act is now. We are truly in crisis mode and all TRIO supporters – staff, students, parents, alumni, and community leaders – must make congressional outreach a regular and repeated activity. We must aggressively target all Members of Congress and hold them accountable for what has happened and what could happen to TRIO. To that end, the enclosed Summer Recess Packet includes the following resources to assist you in these efforts:

- instructions for bi-weekly messages to Washington
- links to social media sites for online advocacy
- sample petition
- sample op-ed
- sample TRIO student letter

Thank you for your continued advocacy and support of TRIO programs and students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arnold L. Mitchem".

Arnold L. Mitchem
President

Instructions for Bi-Weekly Outreach to Washington, DC

Beginning in the first week of August, the Government Relations team at the Council will send short sample messages to the TRIO community twice a week. We urge all TRIO supporters to send these or similar messages to their congressional offices on a biweekly basis. By doing so, we will maintain a consistent presence in legislators' minds.

Sample Message #1

Dear [LEGISLATOR NAME]:

Do not put the future of 840,000 students at risk by including a decrease in TRIO funding in the discretionary cuts agreed to in the debt ceiling negotiations for FY 2012. A cut to TRIO is a cut against our investment in America's students, veterans, adult learners, and students with disabilities. Our community cannot afford for any additional students to lose TRIO services. Please stand up and support TRIO and fight for this critical investment in America!

How Can I Get the Sample Messages from COE?

If you haven't done so already, you can receive our messages by subscribing to the TRIO listserv at <http://listserv.uwm.edu/mailman/listinfo/trio-list>.

How Can I Contact My Members of Congress?

Contact information for all Members of Congress is available online at www.contactingthecongress.org. Additionally, COE has set up an online tool that will identify and send messages to your legislators after you enter your mailing address. You can access this tool at <http://www.congressweb.com/cweb2/index.cfm/siteid/COE/action/Legislators.ValidateZipCode/composeyourown/true>.

How Can I Contact the White House?

You can contact the White House by phone at (202) 456-1111. (Please note that the line is only staffed Monday through Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.) You can also send an e-mail at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

What If They Send Me a "Stock" Response?

Typically, legislators will send a "stock" response to constituent emails. If you receive what appears to be a form letter that does not address your inquiry (or does not address it to your satisfaction), we recommend copying the e-mail communication into a new message reiterating your point. Below is an example:

While I understand the Senator is very busy and there are multiple issues being considered right now in Congress, the letter did not answer the question I asked, which was how the Senator plans to support TRIO and expand on the number of students we serve in (STATE). **ADD SOME STATE AND PROGRAM DATA HERE**. Because you handle higher education for the Senator, I was hoping you would assist me — I work with hundreds of students and families who are depending on the Senator's support and leadership. As you know, TRIO has lost more than 50,000 students since FY 2005 and we cannot afford to lose any more. So my question is, how does the Senator plan to ensure that TRIO funding is not cut in FY 2012?

Thank you in advance for your reply. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (PHONE NUMBER).

HOW CAN YOU FIGHT FOR TRIO THROUGH FACEBOOK AND TWITTER?

Step 1: Connect with COE

Connect with the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) – the national advocacy group representing TRIO programs and students – to find out the latest happening with TRIO on Capitol Hill and the White House!



Follow us on Twitter @COETalk

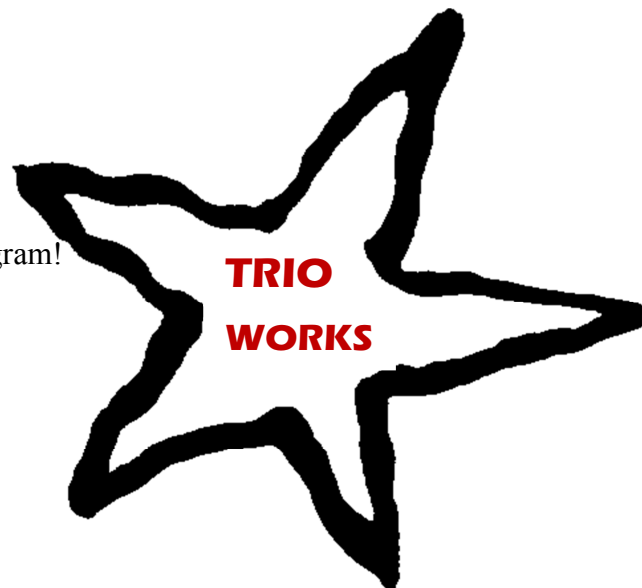


Help us spread the word at [Facebook.com/CouncilforOpportunityinEducation](https://www.facebook.com/CouncilforOpportunityinEducation)

For more information about COE and TRIO, please contact Rheanna Martinez at (202) 347-7430 or rheanna.martinez@coenet.us.

Step 2: “Like” and/or “Follow” our political leaders!

- Find the Facebook pages of the President and our political leaders!
- Follow political leaders on twitter at:
 - @whitehouse
 - @BarackObama
 - @VP
 - @SenatorReid
 - @SenatorHarkin
 - @Daniel_Inouye
 - @SpeakerBoehner
 - @NancyPelosi
 - @Clyburn
 - @ChrisVanHollen
- Look up your own legislators online at <http://www.contactingthecongress.org> to find out their information on Facebook and Twitter as well!
- Post/tweet messages on their pages about TRIO!
 - **“Do not cut TRIO in FY 2012!”**
 - **“TRIO is important to me because”**
- Start trending topics on Twitter!
 - #SaveTRIO
 - #TRIOworks!
- Post links to news stories and videos about your program!



HOW CAN YOU FIGHT FOR TRIO USING PETITIONS?

Step One: Sign COE's Petition to Save TRIO!

Last month, COE started an online petition at www.change.org/coe. Simply by signing on, each supporter sent the message below to each of their Members of Congress and the White House. As of this writing, more than 14,400 individuals have signed up!

Don't Cut Funding for Our Nation's Most Vulnerable Students

Greetings,

Currently, more than 800,000 students – from sixth-graders to doctoral candidates, from military veterans to displaced workers – rely on TRIO Programs for support in their pursuit of a college degree. These students receive academic tutoring, college and career counseling, financial aid assistance and other supports through 2,600 federally funded TRIO programs, including Talent Search, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Student Support Services, Ronald E. McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement, Educational Opportunity Centers, and Veterans Upward Bound programs. Despite the fact that TRIO has become a staple in our local communities and has a long history of producing remarkable results at our institutions, Congress cut TRIO by \$26.6 million. This cut will strip services away from approximately 25,000 students across the nation this year alone. Nearly 65,000 students will have lost services since 2006. If we want to solve the debt crisis, cutting programs that help our nation's most vulnerable citizens is not the answer.

TRIO Programs' History of Success Underscores the Nation's Investments in Pell Grants through Student Success and Degree Completion

TRIO is not simply education spending; rather, it's an investment in our nation's future. We have seen a significant return on this investment over the years. Studies illustrate that the TRIO programs produce substantive positive effects on student success. More specifically, when compared to non-TRIO students, TRIO participants are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education programs, apply for financial assistance, complete college degrees, accrue more college credits and earn higher grade point averages. TRIO students are given assistance in obtaining Pell Grants, utilizing Pell Grants to enroll in college and earn college degrees. Across the board, TRIO programs work.

We Urge Congress and the Obama Administration to Halt Additional Cuts to TRIO Programs

As Americans, we must protect and defend all people, regardless of race, gender, economic circumstance, or disability. We are signing this petition to say "NO" to sacrificing the future of more hard-working students, adults, veterans and students with disabilities in the name of deficit reduction. Tens of thousands of students have already lost critical services provided by TRIO in budget negotiations in FY2011. We are signing this petition to say "NO" to more cuts to TRIO in FY2012. Students should not have to suffer the burden and consequence of any more debates over spending for America's future. We urge the leaders of the House, Senate, and White House to take a strong stance against cutting TRIO programs for low-income Americans.

Step Two: Create Your Own Petition!

In response to recent remarks by House Education and Workforce Chairman, John Kline (R-MN) Minnesota TRIO circulated the attached letter and collected approximately 1,100 signatures of TRIO supporters throughout the state! A copy of the petition was delivered to their entire congressional delegation and local media outlets.

SAMPLE - MINNESOTA TRIO PETITION

PROTECT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN CONGRESS!

“Our commitment to education should never be measured in the amount of money the federal government spends; it should be measured by the quality of our programs and policies.”

112th Congress- First Quarter Activities Report
House Education & Workforce Committee
John Kline (R) (MN-2), Chairman

July 18, 2011

Dear Chairman Kline:

We, the undersigned citizens, are concerned for the future of thousands of low-income students in Minnesota and across the nation. As supporters of the Federal TRIO Programs, which provide academic, financial, and social services to low-income students – from grade school to graduate school, from unemployed workers to military veterans – who aspire to be the first in their families to earn college degrees, we are concerned by the federal government’s investment in TRIO.

TRIO serves 15,420 students in Minnesota – including more than 1,500 students in the 2nd District alone. While the individuals served by TRIO face tremendous barriers to educational success, TRIO programs provide substantive positive effects on student success. For example, national data indicate that the college entrance rate for students from low-income, first-generation backgrounds who are **not** served by TRIO is less than 33 percent. By comparison, the average rate of Minnesota TRIO students entering college after high school is 70 percent. Similarly, in recent years, the six-year graduation and transfer rates for low-income college students served by TRIO are more than three times the national average for low-income students (64 percent vs. 20 percent). Across the board, TRIO programs work!

Despite its success, TRIO has been forced to decrease its student numbers by nearly 37,000 over the last five years. Due to the drastic cuts in the recent most budget agreement, we will lose an additional 25,000 students this year alone. Continued cuts would reverse progress on improving student achievement and closing achievement gaps, while decreasing high school graduation, postsecondary enrollment and college completion rates.

If we want to solve the debt crisis, cutting education programs that help our nation’s most vulnerable citizens is not the answer. Don’t trade the futures of the low-income students and families who rely on programs like TRIO in the name of fiscal responsibility. Without an educated population, our economy will not survive. These cuts will harm America’s global competitiveness and economic future.

We call on you to reconsider your stance on education funding and renew your strong commitment to TRIO Programs. Our nation should not retreat on its investment in access to postsecondary education provided by college opportunity programs--quality programs and practices that have been proven to work. It is time for the federal government to reassert its commitment to education by increasing support for successful college opportunity programs such as TRIO.

Sincerely,

Wade Warner, President, Minnesota TRIO Association

CC:

Northfield News

Managing Editor, Jerry Smith

Apple Valley Rosemount Eagan Sun Current
Joseph Palmersheim, Editor

Eden Prairie Sun Current
Paul Groessel, Managing Editor
Eden Prairie News
Karla Wennerstrom, Editor

The Patch, Inver Grove Heights, Eagan, Apple Valley, Rosemount
Don Wyatt, Regional Editor

Minneapolis Star Tribune
Nancy Barnes, Editor, Senior Vice President

Saint Paul Pioneer Press
Mike Burbach, Editor

(LIST OF SIGNATORIES)

HOW CAN YOU FIGHT FOR TRIO THROUGH LOCAL NEWSPAPERS?

Opinion Editorials

Many newspapers will accept opinion pieces submitted by members of the community. Opinion editorials—commonly referred to as “op-eds”—allow you to make arguments in support of TRIO to a newspaper, in this case, to your local major newspaper.

Most papers publish an op-ed page next to the editorial page. The op-ed page contains columns written by the paper’s own columnists and/or syndicated columnists. In some cases, newspapers will publish guest columns or opinion pieces written by authorities who don’t generally make their living as newspaper columnists.

Here is the structure of how to write an op-ed:

- Take a stand in a provocative, informative, interesting, creative and insightful way.
- The ideal length for most newspapers is 500 to 800 words. Check the length restrictions before submitting an op-ed.
- Be creative, but to the point. Editors like the use of vignettes and analogies, but want to first know what is new and important.

Submitting an Op-Ed

- Find out the name of the op-ed editor along with their address, phone, fax, e-mail. This information may be found online. Most op-ed editors use the titles “opinion editor” or “commentary editor.”
- Submit your op-ed to one newspaper at a time. Most newspapers insist on exclusivity for the op-ed they run, at least within their circulation area. If your piece is not accepted by one area newspaper, try another paper.
- Write a short paragraph introducing yourself and your issue to the editor.
- Cut and paste your op-ed within the body of the e-mail as well as attach it as a Word document.
- Once you send your e-mail, follow up with a phone call the next day. If the reporter is not available, leave a voicemail/phone message saying you are “following up” on the e-mail you sent.

SAMPLE OP-ED

Support for TRIO is an Investment in our Community and Across America

By: Your Name

In what is sure to be a devastating fallout for low-income Americans and their families across the country, on July 31st the Senate, House, and President Obama came together on a compromise debt ceiling package that will most certainly include large cuts to discretionary programs that matter most throughout our low-income neighborhoods.

One program that is sure to be targeted is the successful and critical TRIO program. Our President and many Members of Congress continue to stress the importance of an educated America, setting the goal to be number one in the world in higher education degree attainment by 2020 but yet they continue to support legislation that slashes funding for this important program -- and impacting America's investment in its future. Every year, TRIO helps tens of thousands of low-income and first-generation student, students with disabilities, and veterans in their pursuit of a college education and enables them to become more productive citizens. The United States will not reach its education goal by excluding the students who are so successfully served by the TRIO programs.

So why then are cuts being aimed at these proven successful programs so crucial to the advancement of our students? I ask that the Congressional delegation serving (YOUR TOWN) ensure that when the tough decisions are made in deciding what programs are cut in accordance to the debt ceiling negation, TRIO is not included. In these difficult economic times, with the increase of Americans—not just traditional students, but jobless adults and veterans—returning to the classroom, this is a time to build up, not decrease, services to our most vulnerable students. INSERT LOCAL TRIO PROGRAM FACTS HERE.

Of course, I agree with the need for greater fiscal responsibility, but not at the expense of our children and grandchildren. We must work together to lift our fellow citizens out of poverty, not hold them down. When this issue is addressed again, I hope my elected officials will consider the impact their vote has on the community and future success of not only our students, but our investment in our country.

SAMPLE LETTER FROM A TRIO STUDENT

August 2, 2011

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
United States Representative
2136 Rayburn HOB
Washington D.C 20515

Dear Eleanor Holmes Norton,

My name is Whitney Henry and I am a rising junior at Frank W. Ballou Senior High School. For the last 2 years I have participated in the TRIO-Upward Bound Program that takes place in my school during the school year and is located at The Catholic University of America during the summer.

Before I was accepted into TRIO-Upward Bound I always had hopes of having a job and finishing college. At that stage in my life my mindset was not focused on careers, to be honest, because the environment I resided in solely focused on making it just through high school to receive a job.

The everyday life of a TRIO-Upward Bound student is always busy which means there is barely any down time because the student is embracing the jump start of a chosen career field. In my own opinion, that's a good thing because from personal experience I have come to realize that when youth have a lot of free time usually they find ways to get in trouble. On several occasions I have found myself in troubled situations but knowing I had an image to uphold as an Upward Bound student I would direct my attention elsewhere. Since the first time I heard my Upward Bound director say "Carry Upward Bound in Your Heart" I have done so. I feel as though with the current budget cut situation there are added obstacles in my life. As a teen in Southeast DC we have to rise above stereotypes and accept every great thing that is taken from us. I just cannot allow TRIO to lose funding and possibly the entire program. What would my chances of enrollment and success in college be without Upward Bound? My estimate would be a 30% chance.

Ms. Eleanor Holmes Norton, if you could only see our growth and progress as students and citizens you would be overwhelmed with joy because some of my Upward Bound peers come from troubled backgrounds and knowing that one program has changed our entire method of thinking shows a lot. The funding that is given to our TRIO Programs is used for good causes such as to build a stronger future for America meaning more doctors, lawyers, senators, Presidents, etc. If our funding rate remains the same, better yet more money was giving to the TRIO Programs; do you think there will be more opportunities for the youth to join Upward Bound to gain similar experiences like I have had? Do you think that the juvenile rates would decrease? Could you visualize high school retention rates increasing? I sure can - as long as TRIO is around there's guaranteed support. I believe that everyone should have this experience

and the exposure to what it feels like to work hard for everything you earn to have somebody there to tell you what obstacles to avoid.

Please, Ms. Norton, all I ask is that you support TRIO funding because the program has improved my performance in school and in my social life. Upward Bound is not only playing an effective role in my life it's impacting a huge part in my immediate family. Since my mom has seen that I attend college tours and meet career mentors she has been convinced to go back to school and strive for a college degree that awaits her.

Sincerely,

Whitney Henry
Upward Bound Student