

# EQUALITY



[Click here to watch Secretary Cardona's full remarks to TRIO.](#)

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## POLICY SEMINAR 2022

### **For the First Time, COE Hosts the Education Secretary**

At COE's annual Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C., the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, began his remarks with a smile, saying, "I bring greetings from La Casa Blanca!" to enthusiastic cheers and applause of the assembled crowd.

In her introductory remarks COE President Maureen Hoyler noted that this year was the first time an Education Secretary had been invited to the Policy



Sec. Cardona: "There will be a TRIO graduate serving as President in the future."

Seminar. “The reason we broke tradition this year is very simple: The Biden Administration is the first administration since the Johnson administration that unreservedly supports a significant expansion of TRIO programs,” Hoyler said. She went on to call Cardona “one of the boldest leaders within the Administration.”

The Secretary said that the **Biden Administration** was committed to the staunch support of TRIO programs. “Every eligible student should have access to the wealth of resources that TRIO programs have to offer,” Cardona said. He noted that only a tiny percentage of eligible students have access to TRIO programs and added, “We need to change that.”

Cardona said that the pandemic has been especially challenging for TRIO students and that students of color have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic’s health and economic impact. “That has the potential to set us back,” he said. “I am committed to leveling the playing field, as is the entire **Biden-Harris** administration. We are supporting TRIO programs to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of our efforts.”

As a student who showed up for the first day of kindergarten in Meriden, CT, unable to speak English, Cardona admitted, “I didn’t fit the profile of a future Secretary of Education. So, it is important for me to be here and say: There will be a TRIO graduate serving as president in the future.” ■



## **Biden Administration Proposes Large Increase for TRIO in FY23**

Just one week after COE’s 2022 Policy Seminar, the **Biden-Harris** Administration released its budget request to **Congress** for Fiscal Year 2023 (Program Year 2023-24). The budget asked Congress for a **\$161 million (or 14%) funding increase for TRIO**, for a total proposed appropriation of **\$1.298 billion in FY23**. The Administration’s budget would also increase the maximum **Pell Grant** by \$1,775 (10%), for a total maximum Pell grant award of \$8,670. The Administration also requested a \$30 million (or 8%) funding increase for **GEAR UP**, for a total proposed appropriation of \$408 million. During Policy Seminar, the TRIO community asked Congress for a **\$170 million increase** – \$9 million more than the Administration request. This level would allow TRIO to **serve 1 million students in Program Year 2023-24**. COE is arguing that this funding should be used, at least in part, to fund down the

recent competition slates to fund more grants in **Upward Bound**, **Upward Bound Math-Science**, **Veterans Upward Bound**, **McNair**, **EOC**, **Student Support Services**, and **Talent Search**. The TRIO community’s request would also provide a cost-of-living increase for all current programs to serve students more intensively to help recover from the pandemic’s learning loss and social-emotional challenges.

As **COE President Maureen Hoyler** noted, we titled our Policy Seminar “The Power of Persistence” because we still have much work to do. In the coming weeks and months, the TRIO community will need to continue its strong advocacy with **U.S. Representatives and Senators, who ultimately set the funding levels for TRIO** and all other federal programs. Get resources here to assist in reaching out to your legislators and gathering support for this request, including an invitation to visit your students locally. Such outreach will be necessary if we are to achieve our goal of increasing TRIO funding by **\$170 million in FY23**. ■





Two friends connect during Leadership Summit.



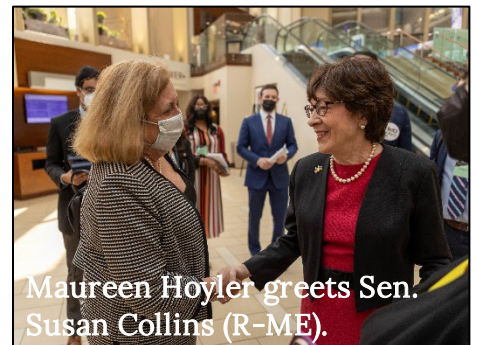
A captivated audience



TRIO Champion Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) in a Hill visit.



TRIO alumni from Nevada during a Hill visit.



Maureen Hoyler greets Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME).

## POLICY SEMINAR 2022

## TRIO Activates the Power of its Persistence

The theme of the Policy Seminar, “The Power of Persistence,” is still needed in the struggle to gain more federal support for TRIO. COE President Maureen Hoyler noted that the \$40 million increase in the TRIO budget appropriated by Congress for

this year was disappointing compared to the proposed increase of \$200 million and the Biden Administration’s early vow to “double Pell, double TRIO” within five years.

Given this recent disappointment, members in the audience wondered how they should approach their upcoming visits to Capitol and a renewed request for a **\$170 million increase in FY23**. First, be realistic, Hoyler said. At the time Congress was finalizing the

budget for TRIO and all other federal programs, it was also contending with major crises, not the least of which being the emerging war in **Ukraine**.

Also, although TRIO advocates and COE wanted more than a \$40 million increase, that increase passed through Congress on a bipartisan basis, which is all to the good. Hoyler reminded the audience: “You are not just having a meeting. Listen to them. Look at them. If you are meeting [congressmen and staff members] for the first time, you are beginning a relationship. If you have met them before, you are developing a relationship,” she said. In other words, it all comes down to the theme of the Policy Seminar: *Persistence*. ■





Maureen Hoyer and Chris Williamson



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# National TRIO Alumni Association Recognizes Christopher Williamson

The National TRIO Alumni Association (NTAA) held its alumni reception during the 2022 Policy Seminar on March 22, convening over 100 alumni and honoring **TRIO Alumnus Christopher Williamson, President Biden's** newly appointed Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health. Williamson participated in **Upward Bound at Marshall University** and **Student Support Services** and **McNair** programs at **West Virginia University**.

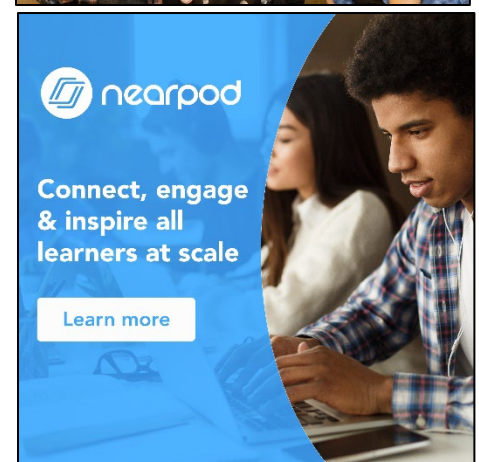
“Notably, my time in the **Upward Bound Program at Marshall University** did wonders for my self-esteem and helped transform a socially awkward, shy kid from rural West Virginia into a confident young man ready to tackle any challenge put before



Photos from the reception in March.

him,” said Williamson. “To this day, I try to pay it forward by volunteering and helping TRIO whenever I can to help the current generation of students get as much from these wonderful programs as I did.

“Without question, I owe a great deal of my professional and personal success to my participation in **Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and the McNair Scholars Program**. Each program supported me throughout my educational journey and helped open doors that I did not even know existed.”







Ashley Jones

## Alumna and EOC Director Ashley Jones Advocates on the Hill

TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) Alumna and Paris Junior College Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) Director took part in COE's "Advocacy on the Hill," where she visited the offices of Representative Pat Fallon (R-TX) and Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) while advocating for all TRIO Students across Texas. ■

### RECORD 275 BIPARTISAN U.S. REPRESENTATIVES CALL FOR AN INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR FEDERAL TRIO PROGRAMS

The COVID-19 crisis has ravaged every stage of our education system, thus making the need for targeted investments in TRIO all the more urgent.

## Where Are They Now? COE Interviews Past EOC and VUB National TRIO Achievers

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of TRIO's Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) and Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) programs, COE Director of Alumni Relations Tommy Walls reached out to 2009 National TRIO Achiever Tyrone J. Flowers, an EOC alumnus and graduate of University of Missouri-Columbia, and 2002 National TRIO Achiever Mark Klinkenberg, an alumnus of the VUB program at University of Tennessee Knoxville.

When asked about the impact of TRIO and their current career, they said:

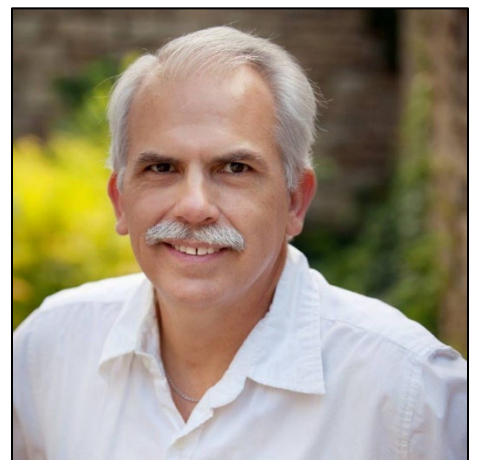
"As I look at my success, it speaks for itself. The EOC program allowed me to break poverty cycles within families and communities with our mentoring program, Higher M-Pact. Our organization is digging at the root of the cause and making critical decisions for families. While serving hundreds of students, I never want a kid who looks like me to say you cannot do it

because of your skin color or physical limitations. For that, I pay it forward to our community."



-Tyrone J. Flowers, CEO of Higher M-Pact in Kansas City, Missouri

"I appreciate the opportunity to express my appreciation for TRIO. I would not have been successful without the support. I received a 3.97 GPA during my time in undergraduate studies, and I credit my success to VUB and the way they taught me how to learn. I was in private practice for 20 years and became a partner in 2003. After completing my tenure with King Hershey, PC, I opened my law office." ■



-Mark Klinkenberg, The Klinkenberg Law Firm, LLC in Pleasant Hill, Missouri

#VUBTurns50

## VUB Director Looks Back, Writes about Life



Robert Hernandez vividly remembers his first day as director of Veterans Upward Bound for Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno,

Nevada. "The first day of work I was handed a 100-page grant application [for Veterans Upward Bound] and told to 'Just do it!'" he laughed. "I had a hard time wrapping my mind around it." But with the help of mentors, he soon got funding for his program.

That was 32 years ago. In the early years, Hernandez recalled, the program helped a World War II veteran in his late 70s prepare for entering college. Now the program helps veterans from a variety of generations find college success. Hernandez himself was once a first-generation student, the youngest of five, and graduated from college with the help of TRIO Student Support Services. "When I started [as director], I mostly worked with Vietnam veterans. The average age was about 46 years. Now the average age is about 30-32 years old. It makes it tough for some veterans,

especially combat veterans, to relate to students who may be the more traditional age of 20 or 21 and have never served," he said.

Hernandez is proud that his staff tends to stick around: "I hire on attitude," Hernandez said. Attitude, and its importance, is one reason Hernandez used the extra time during the pandemic to write a book titled "[Awaken and Come Alive! The Power of Self-Awareness Featuring the 5 Master Keys for Life Success](#)." Some of the lessons he relates are those he learned from veterans, including his own brother, a Marine wounded in Vietnam.

"People have great potential," Hernandez said. "But the nature of our work and society has changed tremendously over 30 years. What I've learned from the vets is that it isn't the change itself, it is the transition, and how you adapt to change that is the biggest challenge." ■

A banner for Professional Development Webinars. The background is a teal-colored image of a woman with dark hair, wearing a patterned sweater, sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. Overlaid on this image is the text "PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEBINARS" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WEBINARS

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## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

### TRIO Upward Bound Student at Galveston College Earns Associate of Science Degree a Semester Before High School Graduation and Makes History



Eyleen Fuentes

With the support of the Galveston College TRIO Upward Bound and Galveston Career Connect, Eyleen Fuentes earned her Associate of Science Degree in General Studies, cum laude, this past December, an entire semester before she graduates from Ball High School. Not only is she a first-generation college student, but she is the first Latina in Galveston College's history to earn her associate degree an entire semester before graduating from high school.

"I have dedicated myself to giving back to my community. I feel that I was born with a servant's heart and that my purpose in life is to serve others as much as I am capable," said Fuentes.

She plans to continue her education at Texas A&M University's Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Professional Program and plans on pursuing Biomedical Sciences.

Ultimately, she hopes to work as an equine veterinarian.

While earning her degree, Fuentes has also earned certification as an Assistant Nurse (CNA) and is currently taking phlebotomy courses. She is involved in various organizations and leadership positions: National Honor Society, President of the National Spanish Honor Society, Dual Credit Ambassadors Program, Galveston College's Hispanic Student Organization, and serves as Social Media Chair for the Ball High Choir.

"Upward Bound has unquestionably shaped the person I am today. With its unfailing support and advice, I have found a second family and the people I certainly identify with along the way. I am where I am today because of my family, friends, and the support network I have gained throughout my life," said Fuentes. ■



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# ALUMNI OUTREACH

LEARN MORE AT [TRIOALUMNI.ORG](https://TRIOALUMNI.ORG)

## LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

**Don't Underestimate Students with Disabilities!**

Teresa Spoulos knows something about not letting a disability define you - and living your best life despite what some might view as limitations.



Teresa Spoulos

Spoulos is the project director for **Student Support Services for Students with Disabilities** at **San Diego State University**. Although she was born blind, after multiple operations she has some vision but remains legally blind. Yet she keeps moving. The **Student Support Services** office where she works at **San Diego State** has exclusively

supported students with disabilities since the 1970s. The 225 students the office serves annually have a variety of challenges, ranging from anxiety and depression to head injuries or autism.

"Two-thirds of the students we serve have visible disabilities," Spoulos said. To figure out how best to serve them, Spoulos always asks the students to tell her about themselves. Supports are different depending upon the nature of the challenges they confront. Auditory learners get digital books; those who find writing hard get tutoring; students who struggle with time management are taught to set individual deadlines and use alarms as reminders. For most, the office assigns students a campus "buddy" to answer questions or provide help if needed.

"Sometimes a student isn't a good reader but might be a good listener. So, we must think outside the box. We help them get books they can listen to in a digital format instead of reading." Others struggle with writing or time management. Each student gets the support they need to help them thrive.

Spoulos said that lingering results of the pandemic has increased depression and anxiety among students. "The pandemic has thrown them for a loop," she said. "They need some normalcy." Her office, as always, is ready. Throughout the pandemic, she and others began "TRIO Thursdays," a weekly hour-long period where students could join a conversation on Zoom. Now the office plans to make those sessions hybrid, with options to visit the office in person or participate on Zoom. ■

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