

# IPCN

Indiana Pathways to College Network

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### ***Documented Successes in TRIO program: Lessons from Research and Evaluation*** **Charles Gary, Purdue University, and Alyssia Coates, University of Notre Dame**

Mr. Gary introduced TRIO programs, providing a historical summary of program development. The following is an excerpt from History of the Federal Trio Programs (U.S. Office of Postsecondary Education, 2008).

The history of TRIO is progressive. It began with Upward Bound, which emerged out of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 in response to the administration's War on Poverty. In 1965, Talent Search, the second outreach program, was created as part of the Higher Education Act. In 1968, Student Support Services, which was originally known as Special Services for Disadvantaged Students, was authorized by the Higher Education Amendments and became the third in a series of educational opportunity programs. By the late 1960's, the term "TRIO" was coined to describe these federal programs.

Over the years, the TRIO Programs have been expanded and improved to provide a wider range of services and to reach more students who need assistance. The Higher Education Amendments of 1972 added the fourth program to the TRIO group by authorizing the Educational Opportunity Centers. The 1976 Education Amendments authorized the Training Program for Federal TRIO Programs, initially known as the Training Program for Special Programs Staff and Leadership Personnel. Amendments in 1986 added the sixth program, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. Additionally, in 1990, the Department created the Upward Bound Math/Science program to address the need for specific instruction in the fields of math and science. The Upward Bound Math/Science program is administered under the same regulations as the regular Upward Bound program, but it must be applied for separately. The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 authorized the TRIO Dissemination Partnership program to encourage the replication of successful practices of TRIO programs. Finally, the Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2001 amended the Student Support Services (SSS) program to permit the use of program funds for direct financial assistance (Grant Aid) for current SSS participants who are receiving Federal Pell Grants.

The legislative requirements for all Federal TRIO Programs can be found in the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2. The requirements for the SSS Grant Aid can be found in Public Law 106-554.

Forty-one TRIO programs operate in Indiana, serving 12,144 students, with a total federal spending per participant of \$1,012.88.

TRIO programs exist to serve the significant percentage of the student population in danger of not graduating from high school, and/or not enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education. One out of three public high school students in the U.S. will not graduate from high school, with the dropout rate approximately 50 percent for Latino and African American students. Students from the lowest income quartile are 6 times more likely to dropout than students from the highest quartile.

The high school dropout rate in Indiana is 4<sup>th</sup> from the bottom nationally, yet Upward Bound programs targeting first-generation, low-income, and minority students report that students are graduating and achieving admission into college, despite the fact that these students are statistically the least likely to do so.

A study of Upward Bound programs, conducted by Alyssia Coates, identifies the barriers to high school and postsecondary success perceived by successful Upward Bound students, and the knowledge and actions they perceive to be effective in overcoming those barriers. The study also seeks to determine whether these perceptions are consistent with those of the Upward Bound staff.

Perceived barriers identified by students include:

- Lack of motivation
- Negative peer pressure
- Family responsibilities
- Negative school environment
- Negative perception of self
- Lack of parent/family support
- Financial pressures
- Lack of resources

Factors associated with student success identified by students include:

- Time management
- Sense of self
- Positive mindset
- Belief in self
- Awareness of the “big picture”
- Responsibility to self and others
- Resourcefulness
- Respect

Students in the Upward Bound programs participating in the survey also indicated the need for better communication/relationships between students and teachers, classes geared toward interests and various learning styles, and increased parental/familial involvement.

Factors impacting postsecondary retention and graduation rates were identified in Charles Gary’s doctoral research, examining the experiences of first-generation, low-income college students. Career goals, coping strategies and mechanisms, internal factors, opportunities, and supports were identified among a group of eight college students, four who persisted to graduation, and four who did not.

Career goals were found to be critical to student success, affecting the confidence and self-efficacy a student develops as a result of identifying and following his or her career path.

Positive and negative coping mechanisms used to manage stress were also highly important in determining whether a student is able to overcome life circumstances and persevere to degree completion.

Internal factors, such as accepting personal responsibility and taking ownership, as well as personal growth, or learning from life experiences were positively related to persistence to graduation.

Opportunities and institutional supports also affected whether students were academically successful.