

# *2025 Utah* **TRIO** **FACT BOOK**





## 2024-2025 Utah ASPIRE Board

### **President**

Gregory Christiansen  
*Weber State University  
Ogden, UT*

### **President-Elect**

Jennie Hall  
*Utah Valley University  
Orem, UT*

### **Secretary**

Brady Curtis  
*Utah Valley University  
Orem, UT*

### **Treasurer**

Sam Sessions  
*Weber State University  
Ogden, UT*



[aspireonline.org/utah](https://aspireonline.org/utah)

Dear Friend of TRIO,

Over the past twelve years that I have worked in TRIO, I have grown in appreciation for our unique role in education. While we provide guidance and academic support for a large number of students, it is the individual stories that stick with me. For example, three and a half years ago, a student who was suicidal and ready to drop out of school was brought to our office at Weber State University. Through my work in TRIO, he and I formed a special bond. He is now working as a computer programmer at Hill Air Force Base making \$75,000 annually.

I have often had frustrated students show up at my office and say, "This is the only place where I can get help." Although there is ample data to illustrate the effectiveness of the TRIO programs, the impact that TRIO has on the academic health of our nation cannot be accurately calculated or measured, because it is a story about the lives of individuals. I am grateful to have had the honor to contribute to this great work over the years, and am optimistic that it will continue to receive the support that it needs to sustain it long into the future.

Each year, Utah ASPIRE compiles this TRIO Fact Book to share TRIO student success stories and the wonderful TRIO work happening across Utah with local communities and with our representatives in Congress.

As you will see in the following pages, TRIO programs are life-changing for many thousands of students in Utah who might not otherwise have the opportunity and/or skill set to graduate from college. For each of the student spotlights included in this book, there are thousands more successful TRIO students who are now changing the world and the life trajectories of their families with their college degrees.

We appreciate your time and hope you are able to look through this book, where we have highlighted TRIO program outcomes in each congressional district and all across Utah. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Gregory P. Christiansen, M.S.  
President | Utah ASPIRE  
Advisor | Student Support Services | Weber State University

# What are federal **TRIO** programs?

TRIO is a set of federally funded college opportunity programs that motivate and support students from underserved backgrounds in their pursuit of a postsecondary degree or certificate. There are **844,383** low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities spanning from sixth grade through college graduation, who are served by **3,270** TRIO programs nationally.

## Who do **TRIO** programs serve?

As mandated by Congress, two-thirds of the students served by each TRIO program must come from families with incomes at 150% or less of the federal poverty level and in which neither parent has graduated from college. Some TRIO programs help students in grades 6 through 12 prepare for postsecondary education, while others serve adult students while they are in college and graduate school (see below).

TRIO Program	Description
<b>Talent Search</b>	Pre-college support for students in grades 6-12 and adults up to age 27.
<b>Upward Bound</b>	Pre-college support for students in grades 9-12.
<b>Student Support Services</b>	College support for undergraduate students.
<b>Veterans Upward Bound</b>	Support in preparing and transitioning into college for veterans.
<b>Educational Opportunity Centers</b>	College skills support for qualifying adults and youth not served by Talent Search.
<b>McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement</b>	Tutoring, mentoring, academic counseling, and activities to assist students in preparation for enrollment and success in graduate programs.

## In 2024, Utah **TRIO** programs...

- ✓ Served over **7,200** TRIO students, most from low-income households.
- ✓ Provided vital pre-college academic support to students in **85** middle schools and high schools in low-income communities across the state.
- ✓ Helped **1,165** students enroll in postsecondary education.
- ✓ Helped over **700** first-generation college students graduate with college degrees and certificates.
- ✓ Provided vital connections to academic support, community networks, campus resources, educational supplies, and more to many thousands of Utah students.

# TRIO in Utah

## Programs Across the State

---



Senator  
**Mike Lee**  
State of Utah



Senator  
**John Curtis**  
State of Utah

27 TRIO programs  
Funding: \$10,459,812

***7,262 students served***





# TRIO in Utah

## Programs by Congressional District

---

### UT-01



Congressman  
**Blake Moore**

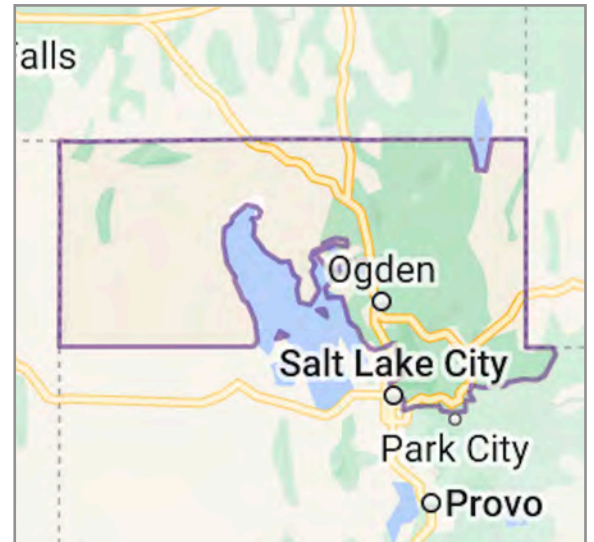
**District 1**

7 TRIO programs

Funding:

\$2,895,987

***1,185 students  
served***



### UT-02



Congresswoman  
**Celeste Maloy**

**District 2**

7 TRIO programs

Funding:

\$2,815,213

***2,074 students  
served***



# TRIO in Utah

## Programs by Congressional District

---

### UT-03



Congressman  
**Mike Kennedy**  
**District 3**  
8 TRIO programs  
Funding:  
\$2,999,247

***2,884 students  
served***

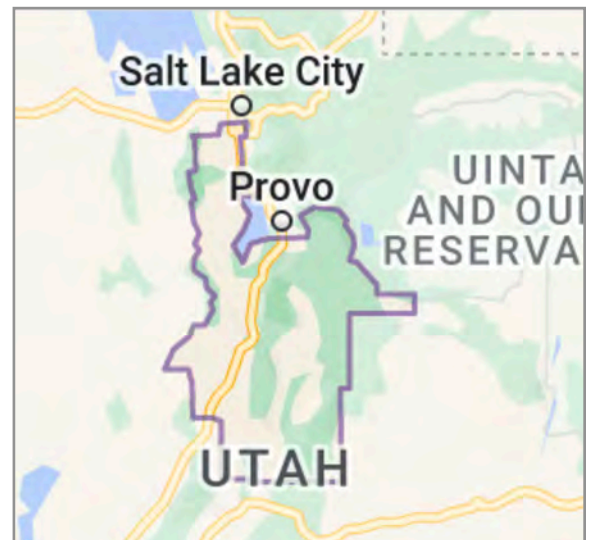


### UT-04



Congressman  
**Burgess Owens**  
**District 4**  
5 TRIO programs  
Funding:  
\$1,749,365

***1,119 students  
served***





# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

## Utah's District 1



**M**y name is Amber Redmond and I started at Weber State University in Fall 2021, majoring in Physics and Astronomy. When I started school, part of me did not believe that I would actually make it to graduation. However, three years later I feel confident that I will be able to receive my degree on time and with personal research experience!

One of the most helpful steps for me was joining the TRIO SSS-STEM program, first as a student in need of tutoring, then applying to work there as a tutor myself. Working with students to raise their confidence and grades brings me a lot of joy. I'm very thankful for the encouragement I have received from the TRIO SSS-STEM center and the staff who work there.

**T**RIO has helped me greatly throughout college here at Utah State University. I have been with them for four years now, since 2021. They supported me when I needed guidance in which class to take and helped me stay on track to graduate with my degree, which I am working on right now. The biggest benefit would be the advisors who have helped me make a pathway for my academic journey, helping me know which classes to take and formulate solutions for any problems that come up. They are always willing to help in any way they can and are always involved in any way they can.

I have a sense of belonging with TRIO, and I made connections that will last a lifetime with people here. Being a part of TRIO has helped me gain more self-awareness and be confident in what I do here at USU. I also feel like being in TRIO has helped me become a part of a big community and has allowed me to meet new people and make friends. TRIO advisors have always guided me on my journey through college and in getting my Nursing degree. I am always at the TRIO building and doing my homework there daily. I am very grateful to the TRIO Program and the advisors for always being there for the students and being willing to help in any way they can.



**TRIO**  
**WORKS!**

# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

---

## Utah's District 1



**M**y name is Makamai Mahuka and I come from the state of Hawaii. The transition to college has been one of the most difficult experiences I have been through. College has separated me from my family and community and it has left me feeling disassociated from the Weber State University community. Not only was the culture different, the land, stores, prices, and weather all seemed like foreign concepts. The cold especially was exceptionally difficult since I have never felt temperature so low in my life. The start of the transition had me hoping that something would help me start.

Luckily, joining the TRIO SSS-STEM program was a worthwhile decision I have made because it gave me a start towards connecting to the community. The people within TRIO were nice to me, exuding a sense of warmth and safety. They gave me opportunities that would help me through my situation academically, financially, and socially such as tutoring, study hall rooms, and text book checkouts. Textbook checkouts were a significant portion since I couldn't afford a lot during my transition and buying expensive textbooks would only worsen my condition. Now, I volunteer and work as a tutor in this program, solidifying my place in this community and taking a step forward towards a bright future.



*University of Utah students study together at the TRIO office at the University of Utah.*



*Weber State University TRIO Upward Bound students visit the Museum of Ancient Life at Thanksgiving Point.*



# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

---

## Utah's District 2

**M**y name is Elizabeth Casey and I am currently attending Southern Utah University after being a student in the TRIO Upward Bound program. Upward Bound is probably one of the best decisions I've ever made. I think the idea of learning how to have the costs of college covered initially draws people in, but I feel like that may be the least important part of the program. I've met amazing friends and great leaders who care about the people they help through TRIO. Upward Bound has taught me so much about college life and what I need to do to be successful in my courses once I get there. This program is truly incredible, and my only regret is not finding it sooner.

**TRIO**



**E**stefanie Aguilar Padilla is a first-generation graduate of the University of Utah (Ethnic Studies and Economics 2019). After being admitted to the TRIO McNair Scholars Program at Westminster University in Fall 2016, Estefanie was accepted as an undergraduate intern for the Utah Prison Education Project (UPEP), completed a rigorous independent research project in Summer 2018, was accepted as a Policy Innovation Fellow at Sorenson Impact and was selected to receive the 2019 Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award for the School for Cultural and Social Transformation at the University of Utah.

Estefanie finished her Master of Statistics degree in Econometrics in 2022, during which she was a research assistant with the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison (RCHEP). She is currently a PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania, where she is a Penn Presidential Fellow.

Estefanie credits the help of the TRIO McNair Scholars program and her faculty mentor for providing key information in how to navigate graduate school processes and for encouraging her to pursue the M.S. to PhD pathway.

# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

---

## Utah's District 2



*TRIO McNair Scholars traveled to the 2024 UMBC Research Conference in September.*



*Southern Utah University TRIO Upward Bound students tour Westminster University.*



*Southern Utah University TRIO SSS students receive awards last year.*



*Southern Utah University TRIO Upward Bound students celebrate their accomplishments at their senior banquet.*



# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

---

## Utah's District 3



**A**s a proud alumni of the TRIO Upward Bound program and a current ambassador at Utah State University Eastern, I can confidently say that TRIO shaped my college journey. Upward Bound provided me with invaluable insight into college life, equipping me with leadership skills and a strong sense of community involvement. Through the program, I had the opportunity to give back by painting murals for community libraries and volunteering at elementary schools, experiences that deepened my passion for service and leadership.

The support and guidance I received through Upward Bound not only helped me navigate the transition to college but also empowered me to become a leader on campus. The program instilled confidence in me, and I am grateful for the incredible mentors and peers who played a role in my success. Today, as an ambassador at USU Eastern, I continue to apply the skills I gained, advocating for students and helping others find their path in higher education. Upward Bound was truly a transformative experience, and I am proud to be part of its lasting impact.

**Y**enework “Yene” Alem exemplifies determination, perseverance, and compassion. Her academic achievements reflect her dedication, culminating in her Fall 2024 graduation with a Bachelor of Science degree, Magna Cum Laude. Through TRIO’s tutoring services and academic support, she has excelled in coursework, built strong relationships with professors and peers, and remained focused on attending medical school.

Her journey has been defined by resilience. After moving from Ethiopia, she navigated the challenges of college while balancing the responsibilities of being a new mother. Despite these demands, she has adapted to university and industry expectations, demonstrating strong communication skills and an unwavering commitment to success.

Beyond academics, Yene has contributed significantly to her community through volunteer work, service-oriented jobs, and experience in the medical field. TRIO’s support—including tutoring, priority registration, childcare assistance, graduate school preparation, and networking opportunities—has provided valuable resources that have helped her overcome obstacles and achieve her goals.





# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

---

## Utah's District 3

**H**ello, my name is Lexi Gorley, and I was a part of TRIO Upward Bound for many years. During my time in the program, I participated in several service projects, school trips, the summer program, and countless other things that I will remember for the rest of my life. I will be forever grateful for being allowed to be a part of this program as it taught me countless things and allowed me to develop more as a person. In high school, I was a very shy and awkward person who didn't really know what the next steps of my life were going to be. I am a first-generation student where my parents didn't even graduate high school and was living with my grandparents, so I had never even thought about the possibility of going to college. That was until I was introduced to TRIO. I learned what college was all about, what I wanted to be, and exactly how I would get there. My mentors, Emma and Desiree, supported me constantly and pushed me to get out of my shell to get the opportunities that I now have today.

I am now in a leadership position on the USU-Eastern campus called the A-Team, where I help students get connected to different resources just as Upward Bound did for me. My college is completely paid for, all thanks to the resources that I was guided towards, the TRIO ASPIRE scholarship, and the monthly stipends that I received. This money also permitted me to pay for and put a down payment on the dorm that I am currently living in, so that I would have the opportunity to experience college life in its entirety. The countless memories and skills I have acquired because of TRIO will be cherished throughout my life. During all of this, I am still in contact with my mentors to this day where they have become a second family to me. All of this was only possible through TRIO Upward Bound. I hope my experience will inspire others to join Upward Bound/TRIO as it changed my life for the better. Truly, thank you for supporting these programs.



**M**y name is **Arlene Loera**. I participated in TRIO Upward Bound and graduated high school in 2015. I have a bachelor's degree from Utah Valley University and a master's degree in social work from The University of Utah.

TRIO Upward Bound significantly helped set me up for success. It not only prepared me by allowing college credits to be earned during high school, but also by giving me the opportunity to experience what college would look like. I was able to live at the apartments and take classes during Upward Bound's Summer Program. This is when I learned about UVU's Honors Program, which was one of the next best decisions I made. The Honors Program paid for half of my tuition every semester and allowed me educational/personal experiences that I otherwise would not have participated in.

Six months ago, I was promoted to a therapist supervisor for the Utah Department of Corrections. My office provides substance abuse services to individuals on probation and parole as well as supervision by the agents. The reason this promotion means so much to me is because I am the youngest supervisor in the entire department. I found my passion and I am excited to keep progressing and learning more.

# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

## Utah's District 4

The Snow College TRIO Upward Bound program has helped me a lot and given me some really fun memories. It prepared me for higher education and also made me excited for college. It has given me skills I won't just use in college, but also life.

Upward Bound also gave me experiences I would never have had otherwise. I got to go to the Utah Capitol building, on a tour of Utah Tech University, and I even got to go to Washington D.C. with this program to explore educational opportunities on a national level. Overall, I just want to thank everyone who is a part of TRIO at Snow College, who have supported me in this program, and I highly encourage others to join!



*Snow College TRIO Student Support Services students celebrate National TRIO Day.*



*Snow College TRIO students at their "Sub Lunch and Game Day" event.*



*TRIO Upward Bound scholars on campus at Snow College.*



# TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

---

## Utah's District 4

**M**y name is Maria Rodriguez. TRIO Student Support Services has played an invaluable role in my academic journey, providing assistance from the very beginning of my college experience. They have been a huge help in various ways, starting with tutoring in the study lab, where I received personalized guidance that significantly improved my understanding of challenging subjects. Additionally, they helped me create a well-structured class schedule for the upcoming semester, ensuring that I can manage my coursework effectively. My advisor, Mardee, has also been instrumental in my success, offering guidance in multiple areas to ensure I excel in my classes. Together, we have developed a comprehensive plan that focuses on my goals and prepares me for transferring to another university in the future. The TRIO Student Support Services program has supported me financially, academically, and in so many other ways, making a profound difference in my college experience and overall confidence. Their ongoing encouragement and resources have truly empowered me to thrive and aim for even greater success in my educational journey.



*Snow College TRIO Upward Bound students chatting with Senator Mike Lee between his meetings during their educational trip to Washington, DC.*





# For More Information on TRIO...

---

## Helpful websites

Utah TRIO: <https://aspireonline.org/utah/>  
ASPIRE: <https://aspireonline.org>  
Council for Opportunity in Education: <https://coenet.org/>  
U.S. Department of Education TRIO homepage:  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>

## References

Number of participants per TRIO project and funding based on data from the U.S. Department of Education, compiled here:  
[TRIO Programs by State and Congressional District - FY22](#)

For more information on Utah TRIO programs, please contact:

Gregory P. Christiansen, M.S.  
President  
Utah Chapter of ASPIRE  
Weber State University  
3885 West Campus Dr.  
Ogden, UT 84408-1107  
[gchristiansen@weber.edu](mailto:gchristiansen@weber.edu)

This booklet was created by TRIO professionals throughout the state of Utah.

