2026 Utah

TRIO

FACT BOOK

2025-2026 Utah ASPIRE Board

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Dear Friend of TRIO,

For the past 18 years, I have worked in education in Utah, and for the last five I have had the privilege of serving in TRIO. During that time, I have seen firsthand what happens when students are given structured support, clear guidance, and someone who believes in their potential.

Every public college and university in Utah, as well as Westminster University, hosts TRIO programs serving thousands of first-generation and low-income students. As Utah's State TRIO President, I have visited programs from Logan to St. George and witnessed the professionalism of our staff and the determination of our students. These programs are key in helping students navigate financial aid, overcome academic barriers, build confidence, and complete credentials that prepare them to contribute to Utah's workforce and communities.

Recently, we worked with a student who came to TRIO seeking tutoring support. She had been on an IEP in high school and was told she would never be able to succeed in college. At 40 years old, she enrolled at Utah Valley University and attempted her first courses. With the support of TRIO tutors and advisors, she earned a 4.0 GPA. She came into our office in tears — not because it was easy, but because for the first time, she saw a new reality and a new future for herself. That is what TRIO makes possible.

This past year, a TRIO Educational Opportunity Center program serving nearly 1,000 Utahns was canceled by the U.S. Department of Education. The loss of that program means 1,000 individuals each year will no longer receive structured support to access and complete postsecondary education. The consequences of this extend beyond individual students — they affect families, local communities, and Utah's workforce pipeline.

As you review this booklet, you will see firsthand the outcome data and the personal stories of students from across the state of Utah. We hope you will see what we see every day — that TRIO works, and that Congressional support makes that impact possible. Thank you for your time and for your continued support of TRIO programs serving Utah students and families

With appreciation,

Dr. Jennie Hall

Jennie Hall, D.Ed
President | Utah ASPIRE
Director | TRIO Undergraduate Programs | Utah Valley University

What are federal **TRIO** programs?

TRIO is a set of federally funded college opportunity programs that motivate and support first-generation students from low-income backgrounds and students with disabilities in their pursuit of a postsecondary degree or certificate. There are over **800,000** TRIO students spanning from sixth grade through college graduation, who are served by over **3,000** 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
Talent Search	Pre-college support for students in grades 6-12 and adults up to age 27.
Upward Bound	Pre-college support for students in grades 9-12.
Student Support Services	College support for undergraduate students.
Veterans Upward Bound	Support in preparing and transitioning into college for veterans.
Educational Opportunity Centers	College skills support for qualifying adults and youth not served by Talent Search.
McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement	Tutoring, mentoring, academic counseling, and activities to assist students in preparation for enrollment and success in graduate programs.

In 2025, **UTAH TRIO** programs…

✓ Served over **7,153** TRIO students, most from low-income households.

✓ Provided vital pre-college academic support to students in **94** middle schools and high schools in low-income communities across the state.

✓ Helped **1,134** students enroll in postsecondary education.

✓ Helped **822** 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, which helped **1,511** students persist in college.

TRIO in Utah

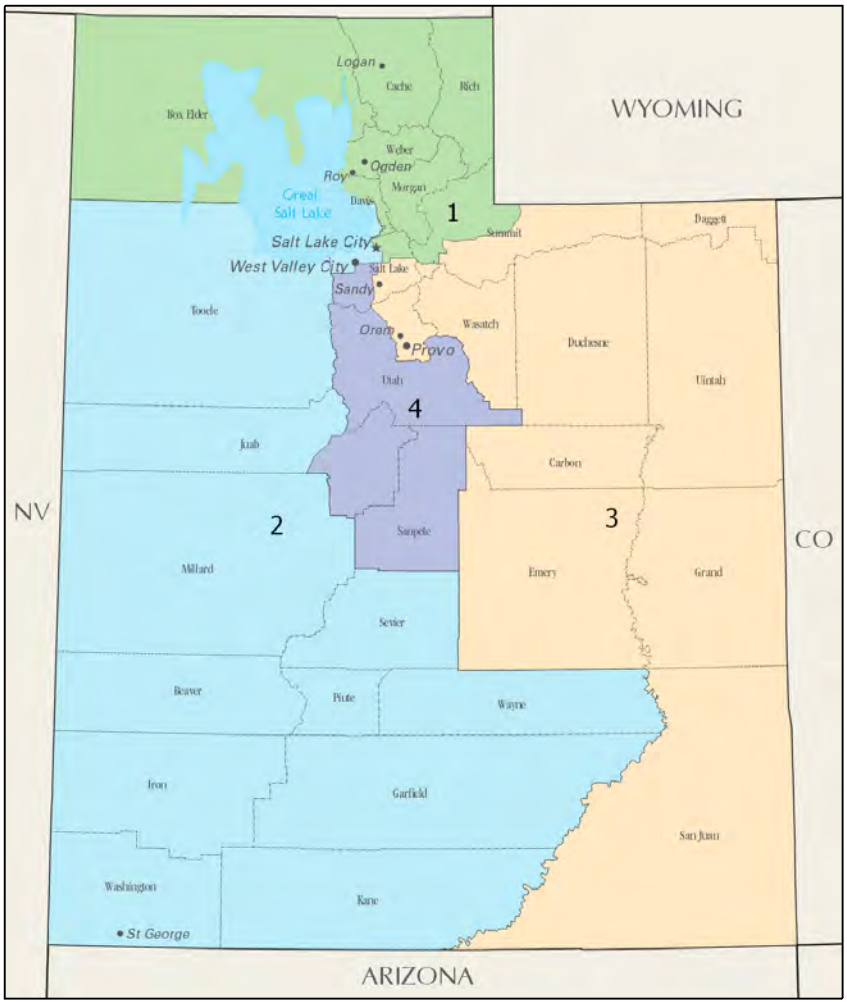
Programs Across the State

Senator
Mike Lee
State of Utah

Senator
John Curtis
State of Utah

27 TRIO programs
Funding: $10,459,812

7,153 students served



TRIO in Utah

Programs by Congressional District

UT-01

Congressman
Blake Moore
District 1
7 TRIO programs
Funding:
$2,895,987

1,178 students served

UT-02

Congresswoman
Celeste Maloy
District 2
7 TRIO programs
Funding:
$2,815,213

2,090 students served

TRIO in Utah

Programs by Congressional District

UT-03

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

2,899 students served

UT-04

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

986 students served

Utah's District 1

Adrian Zuniga Rosas has been a dedicated member of both the University of Utah's TRIO Upward Bound and Student Support Services programs since 2019, consistently demonstrating resilience, perseverance, and an unwavering commitment to growth. More importantly, he models these qualities for others. Adrian does not face challenges quietly or in isolation—he transforms them into opportunities to lead by example. His determination, work ethic, and steady optimism uplift fellow TRIO students and strengthen our community in meaningful ways.

During his time in TRIO Upward Bound, Adrian intentionally sought out opportunities that stretched him beyond his comfort zone. He embraced academic rigor and actively engaged in program offerings that promoted leadership and skill development. Recognizing a need among his peers, he co-founded the Upward Bound Tech Support Club, creating a collaborative space where students could build technical skills, problem-solve together, and support one another's learning. His initiative reflected both innovation and a genuine desire to give back.

Adrian carried that same commitment with him into Student Support Services, where he remains an engaged and dependable presence. He regularly encourages newer students, shares resources, and leads by example in his academic discipline and campus involvement. His impact extends beyond participation—he actively cultivates community.

Now pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Utah, Adrian continues to channel his drive into service and leadership. He is involved in multiple campus organizations, serves as an orientation leader, and aspires to become a College of Engineering Ambassador.

Adrian's success represents far more than personal achievement. It reflects grit, integrity, and a deep commitment to uplifting others. He is not only building a promising future for himself—he is helping create pathways for those who will follow.

Weber State TRIO Upward Bound students and staff on a campus tour at the University of Montana.

Demitrius Sanders, a graduate of Weber State University's TRIO Upward Bound program, receives his master's degree.

TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

Utah's District 1

As a first-generation student, the thought of higher education was overwhelming. I did not think graduating from college or even being accepted was an option for me. But then the TRIO programs made me realize that my dream of higher education was possible. TRIO has had a major impact on my educational journey and the support I have received from TRIO has been enormous.

My name is Jennifer Rodriguez and I joined TRIO Upward Bound (UB) my junior year of high school. They provided many resources and opportunities such as scholarships, workshops, volunteer work, and educational trips. In my senior year, UB took us to Texas to tour colleges. Walking around the campus and seeing students who looked like me in a college environment was the first time I realized that this was achievable. However, it wasn't until the UB summer program where I got to experience firsthand what college felt like. We lived on campus in the dorms, were able to take courses to count toward high school credit, and do an internship. Because of UB and these opportunities, my main goal through high school was to get to college and, at the end of my senior year, I achieved that.

I enrolled at the University of Utah where I was excited to continue to receive support from TRIO through Student Support Services (SSS). Similar to UB, I was provided with different experiences that enhanced my college career. These led me to opportunities like touring grad schools in New York City, networking with other offices on campus that allowed me to get involved and take on leadership roles like becoming a TA for a Social Justice Advocacy course, and receiving the West High School Young Alumni Award in 2022 for commitment to my community through the Bennion Center for Community Engagement.

About a year ago, I faced some challenges that negatively impacted not only my physical health, but also my mental health. I had to receive emergency surgery due to an unexpected health issue. While I was recovering from that medical emergency, I then experienced a loss of a family member. This caused a barrier to the way I was able to show up in achieving academic success toward my bachelor's degree. I was ready to give up and drop out of college. Being a first-generation student already comes with challenges, but all of this going on made it so much harder. This is when I really felt the positive impact and support of the TRIO programs and their staff. They were able to help me navigate through all of the steps of getting back on track. They connected me to resources for mental health support and helped me apply for scholarships and complete an appeal process in order to stay enrolled in courses. This also allowed me to not feel alone in this journey and get my motivation back to finish my degree.

If it wasn't for the support I have received in the TRIO office, I would not be graduating this spring. My goal after graduation is to take the MCAT and go to medical school. Although I will be a TRIO alumni, I know I will always have TRIO cheering me on through all of my goals. I truly am so thankful for TRIO and all the support I have received from them. I met so many wonderful people in these programs and have had some of my best memories in their offices, from watching the World Cup games to writing a 15-page paper. The support of these programs has meant so much to me and I will always be an advocate for the TRIO programs.

TRIO WORKS!

Utah's District 2

I joined TRIO Student Support Services in 2004, just a few years after graduating from high school in my hometown of St. George, Utah. Neither of my parents graduated from college. They were successful and prepared me well for many things in life — but college wasn't one of them. What made it even harder was that I didn't know what I didn't know. I didn't understand the importance of registering for classes early. I didn't know how to navigate financial aid, find tutoring resources, or build a schedule that would allow me to work while attending school full time.

The TRIO SSS counselors stepped in where I didn't even realize I needed help. They helped me find free tutoring, checked in on my classes to make sure I was on track to graduate, and worked with me to build the right schedule so I could pay for school while staying on course. When I felt like quitting, they pushed me. They went out of their way to make sure I had every opportunity to succeed. I spent hours in their offices talking about life, goals, and the future. At the time, I didn't fully understand how much that support mattered. I do now.

Today, I own three mid-sized pest control companies operating in three states, including Utah. Together, we generate approximately $5 million in annual revenue and employ 25 people. I'm also a partner in two subdivisions in Hurricane focused on building affordable housing, a fracking water refinery company in Texas, and a startup scheduling software company. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Psychology, and I use it every single day — managing employees, shaping marketing strategies, and understanding customer behavior.

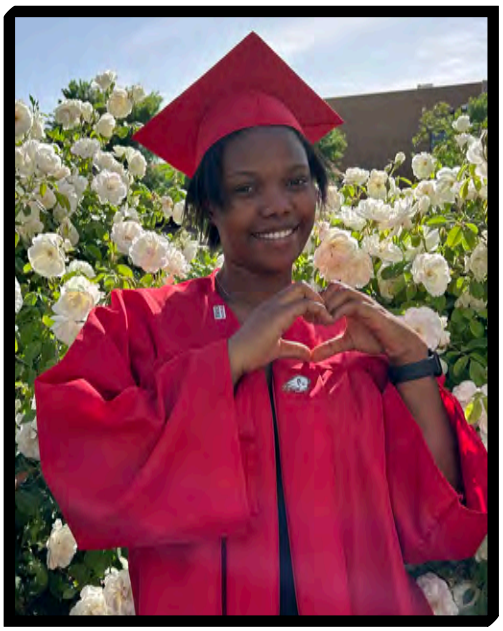
Would this all have been possible without SSS? Maybe. But it certainly wouldn't have happened as quickly — or as smoothly — without their guidance and persistence when I needed it most. When I reflect on my journey, I realize my five children may benefit the most from what SSS did for me. Because of the support I received, I can now prepare them for college in a way I was never prepared myself. That may be the greatest impact of all.

Westminster University TRIO McNair Scholars participate in an egg drop experiment.

Southern Utah University TRIO Student Support Services students study together in their tutoring lab.

TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

Utah's District 2



My name is Mellisha Serieux, and I am originally from Uganda in East Africa. In November 2017, my life changed when my family moved to the United States in search of better opportunities. My journey involved many transitions and challenges, including entering the foster care system, but those experiences shaped my resilience, independence, and determination to build a better future.

Despite the instability of moving between homes, I graduated from Spanish Fork High and eventually found a foster family in St. George, Utah, who became a stable source of support in my life. They helped me adjust to life in the United States and encouraged me to pursue higher education. When I became a U.S. permanent resident, I applied for FAFSA and enrolled at Utah Tech University in January 2021. Although I was excited, I was also extremely nervous about starting college as a first-generation student.

Early in my freshman year, I connected with the TRIO Student Support Services program and met my advisor, Jonathan Morrell. I remember telling him about my social anxiety and my fear that everyone on campus would be watching and judging me. He reassured me that most students were focused on their own challenges, and that simple conversation significantly reduced my anxiety. His encouragement gave me the confidence to begin attending classes and fully engage in college life.

Through TRIO, I participated in success courses, tutoring sessions, academic advising, and scholarship opportunities. As a first-generation college student, having structured support made a tremendous difference. Jonathan guided me through academic decisions, including when I transitioned from accounting to finance. Even when I doubted myself, he reminded me that I was capable of more than I believed. His mentorship continued through my associate degree and into my bachelor's degree program.

During my time in TRIO, I was honored to receive both the Academic Excellence Award and the Perseverance Award in June 2022. These recognitions meant a great deal to me because they affirmed the resilience and dedication, I had worked so hard to build. In May 2025, I graduated with my bachelor's degree in finance. Jonathan even attended my graduation after his retirement, which meant more to me than words can express.

While completing my degree, I worked as a Financial Aid Specialist at Utah Tech University, where I assisted students and families in understanding Title IV funding and navigating financial aid processes. After graduation, I worked as a Payment Specialist at REPAY, gaining hands-on experience in financial operations and payment processing. I later chose to take a short personal break to prioritize my well-being and reconnect with family after several years apart. I am now pursuing opportunities in finance and operations, including roles in operations analysis, revenue analysis, and credit analysis.

Looking back, TRIO played a foundational role in my success. The program gave me confidence during my most uncertain moments, provided mentorship when I needed guidance, and reminded me that I was capable of achieving my goals. As a former foster youth and first-generation college graduate, I am proud of how far I have come, and I am deeply grateful for the support from TRIO that helped me get here.

TRIO WORKS

Utah's District 3

Being part of Upward Bound TRIO for the past four years has truly changed my life. As a first-generation college student, I didn't always know how college worked or what steps I needed to take to get there. Upward Bound helped me understand all of that. It gave me the tools and confidence to believe that college was possible for me. The summer program especially meant so much. I made lifelong friendships and memories I will never forget.

We did community service activities, practiced interview skills, and worked on preparing for our futures. They even helped me take my ACT a second time so I could improve my score. Through everything, I always felt supported and encouraged to push myself.

What really makes Upward Bound special is the people who run it. The supervisors are truly amazing and have continued to support me, even after high school. They have always been there when I needed advice and have allowed me to use them as references on resumes. They are a big reason I am involved in leadership at Utah State University today. Because of them, I came into college knowing what to expect and feeling confident in myself. TRIO Upward Bound did not just help me get into college. It gave me mentors, friendships, and the belief that I can succeed.

TRIO

Utah Valley University TRIO Upward Bound students visit the ABC4 News Studio.

Two aspiring aviation students from USU Eastern Price's TRIO Upward Bound Program take their dreams to the skies with a hands-on flight experience.

TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

Utah's District 3

My name is Kedric Ward, and as a high school senior at Union High School in Roosevelt and a first-generation college student, preparing for college once felt overwhelming. Participating in the TRIO Educational Talent Search (ETS) program has helped me better understand what higher education looks like and how to prepare for it. From learning about college applications and financial aid to knowing what to expect once I get there, ETS has given me guidance and support I didn't have before. Because of this program, I feel more confident about my future and my ability to succeed in college.

One of my most impactful experiences with ETS has been going on college campus visits. Being able to see different campuses in person made college feel real and helped me picture myself as a college student one day. I also found the financial aid and scholarship workshops especially helpful. Before ETS, I didn't know much about these topics, but having them explained clearly and being able to ask questions made a huge difference for me.

Coming from a first-generation background, my parents did not attend college, and finances have always been something my family has had to think carefully about. Growing up, I didn't always have access to the same academic resources as others, which pushed me to become more independent and determined. Being first-generation has motivated me to work harder, not just for myself, but for my family as well. ETS has helped reinforce that mindset and reminded me to be grateful for every opportunity I receive.

In five years, I see myself finishing college and working toward a stable career, even though I'm still exploring what path fits me best. ETS has helped me feel less lost by exposing me to different opportunities and giving me the tools to make informed decisions about my future.

For any student thinking about joining ETS, my advice is simple: take the opportunity. Especially for first-generation or low-income students, ETS provides support, guidance, and people who truly care about your success. Even if you're unsure about what comes next, ETS helps you feel more prepared and confident as you take your next steps after high school.

USU Eastern TRIO Upward Bound students prepare meal kits for Carbon and Emery County youth.

TRIO

Utah Valley University TRIO Talent Search students attend a Utah Jazz game.

Utah's District 4

My name is Danelynn Castro. I joined Upward Bound (UB) at the beginning of my junior year, and I couldn't be more thankful. UB has given me many blessings, some that I wasn't even aware of until I started college. It was through UB that I learned how to approach college as a whole, how to balance a college education with social life and work and how to manage finances as I pay for a college education. It is because of UB that I understand and feel confident about my ability to move forward in my education.

Upward Bound has allowed me to meet wonderful people, whether it was long-lasting friendships or amazing teachers and mentors; I was constantly surrounded by support. As a first-generation student, I am more than grateful that, through the teaching of UB, I have gained knowledge that I can one day pass on to others. All in all, I can confidently say that without UB, I would not be as far along in my educational journey as I am now. I am not alone in this, and I believe that future students deserve the same chance to experience the blessings of TRIO and the incredible support system all of the TRIO programs provide.

Snow College TRIO Upward Bound students on an educational trip to Washington, DC.

Snow College TRIO Upward Bound students participate in a service project.

TRIO Snapshots & Spotlights

Utah's District 4

My name is Kentin Fautin and, as a high school student with an IEP and a diagnosed learning disability, I once believed higher education was not meant for someone like me. I doubted my ability to succeed academically and questioned whether college was even possible. As a first-generation college student, I carried the weight of figuring out higher education on my own, without a roadmap or example to follow. In 2017, I enrolled at Snow College and became involved in the TRIO Student Support Services program. Through consistent mentorship, academic guidance, and encouragement from advisors who truly believed in me, I began to see my own potential. TRIO not only supported my academic growth, but also gave me opportunities to mentor peers facing similar challenges. In helping others navigate their struggles, I discovered my passion for social work and supporting individuals through difficult moments.

With the continued support and guidance of TRIO advisors, I transferred to Weber State University, where I earned my Bachelor of Social Work in 2022. I began working at a community mental health agency as a caseworker, supporting individuals diagnosed with serious mental illnesses and connecting them with vital community resources.

Motivated to expand my impact, I pursued my Master of Social Work at Boise State University, graduating in 2024. I now work as a mental health therapist serving adolescents experiencing depression, anxiety, and life transitions, and I am in the process of becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. TRIO did more than help me earn degrees—it changed the trajectory of my life. Programs like TRIO open doors for students who may not otherwise see a path forward and continue to create lasting impact in communities by empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

Snow College TRIO Upward Bound scholars participating in an activity with the Natural Resources Department on campus during their summer program.

A Snow College TRIO Student Support Services student graduates with his associate degree.

For More Information on TRIO...

Helpful websites

Utah ASPIRE: 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, available upon request.

For more information on Utah TRIO programs, please contact:

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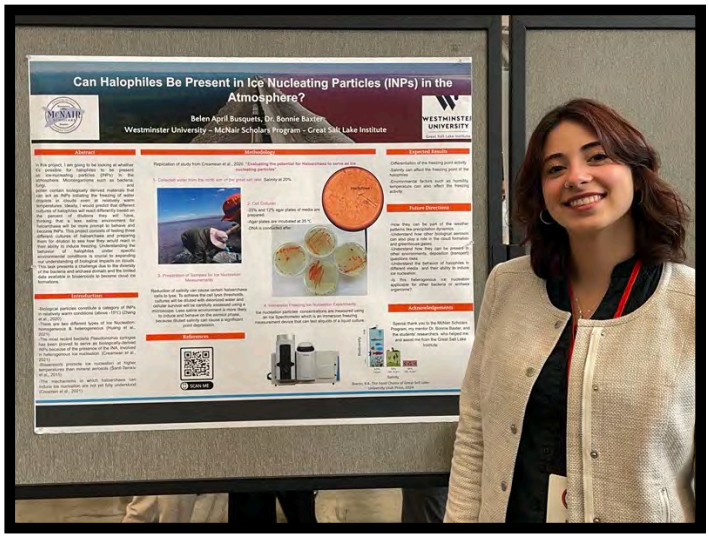
This booklet was created by TRIO professionals throughout the state of Utah.