Chapter 3
Mentoring, Partnering, and Follow–Through:
TRIO Programs Provide a Path Through the Wilderness

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ABSTRACT

TRIO programs partner with low-income, first-generation, and/or students with disabilities to address academic and personal challenges, as well as social capital deficits that can cause students to struggle with feelings of isolation and a lack of belonging to the university community. This can place students at risk for leaving academia prematurely. The chapter will discuss the history of TRIO programs and the development of the eight specific programs currently available to students. Barriers to student social and educational success will be discussed, specifically intersectionality of oppression, the hidden curriculum, and lack of cultural humility by faculty and administrators. TRIO programs provide various services to students that have been found to be highly successful with student retention rates, academic performance, and increased self-efficacy. The chapter will discuss TRIO staff characteristics, needed administrative and faculty support, and university community buy-in for overall success. The chapter includes TRIO student and staff member testimonies.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss TRIO Student Support Services and the positive impact they have on students who commonly struggle with successful completion of their academic careers at colleges and universities. TRIO is a group of eight federally funded programs conducted through competitive grants that target students who are first-generation, economically disadvantaged, and/or have a documented disability. The chapter will discuss the historical development of the TRIO programs under President Johnson as part of the War on Poverty, as well as a synopsis of each of the eight programs that are still active today.

Secondly, the chapter will discuss the importance of TRIO in combating the ongoing individual and systematic educational disparities seen at colleges and universities. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds commonly have additional barriers they must navigate to be successful in higher education. These challenges often stem from an accumulation of consequences from poverty, lack of social capital, and long-standing educational inadequacies that are beyond the control of the student. The chapter will discuss the developmental and generational dynamics that result in a dearth of equity issues at the college level, leaving some students vulnerable to failure. Specific issues discussed will be the intersectionality of oppression, the hidden curriculum, cultural differences, lack of social capital, and negative educational experiences in higher education.

Lastly, the chapter will discuss the promise of TRIO programs and the elements that make them successful. TRIO programs approach qualifying students with several wrap-around interventions to help ensure success on campus, both academically and socially. TRIO programs support students through individual scholastic advising to ensure they are taking classes in a manner that promotes efficacy and builds on accomplishments. TRIO offers mentorship to students across multiple life domains to assist with daily life issues, classroom behavior, appropriate interactions with authority figures, and forward thinking for future success. TRIO also actively works to help students navigate the unknowns of higher education, such as financial aid paperwork, housing issues, meal plans, important deadlines, and multiple other protocols that may be overlooked or disregarded by students who are unfamiliar with university policies. TRIO has a demonstrated record of goal attainment for their students that could serve as a template for universities nation-wide who desire to have higher retention and graduation rates with other underrepresented student groups.

A final section of the chapter will include testimonies from TRIO students and staff members. These testimonies will provide personal accounts of how TRIO's mission has positively impacted students and helped to ensure academic success, as well as lifelong guidance and direction for personal and professional endeavors. Because TRIO is dependent on federal monies, it is important to demonstrate the need

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