# Center for Multicultural Educational Opportunities

**Director, Scott Willison, Ph.D.**

The Center for Multicultural Educational Opportunities (CMEO) was developed in 1991 and now includes seven educational support programs that guide students from pre-college enrollment to post-secondary graduation. CMEO improves the academic achievements of all student populations and addresses student success issues that are vital to the mission of Boise State University.

The programs provide a pipeline of support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and focus on collaborating with each other and building creative partnerships with both academic affairs and student affairs at Boise State University.

At a time when state resources are thin and many universities are discovering ways to do more with less, CMEO has helped increase participation in undergraduate research and service learning projects and generated student success goals that improve the educational opportunities of low-income families, students from migrant and seasonal farm-worker families, and students who are the first generation in their families to attend college.

CMEO’s initiatives come at an important time for Boise State as we strive to reach an unprecedented education attainment goal: by 2020, the State of Idaho wants 60% of the state’s 25-34 year olds to hold a post-secondary credential.

This is CMEO’s first newsletter. Updates from all seven programs include both recent accomplishments and future events.

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**CMEO Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRiO McNair Scholars Program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRiO Upward Bound</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Assistance Migrant Program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Equivalency Program</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRiO Educational Talent Search</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRiO Veteran’s Upward Bound</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRiO Student Success Program</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, please call (208) 426-3292.
CMEO programs are devoted to the Boise State University students who are most in need of support, providing intentional support for first-generation college students, and often students from limited financial means. Programs like TRIO have created a pipeline for students to succeed in Idaho. Sophia Valdez-Ramirez illustrates the possibilities for students that enter TRIO in secondary education and continue their post-secondary educations with the support and encouragement of TRIO college programs.

Sophia was first introduced to the TRIO Upward Bound program at Caldwell High School. She always thought of herself as an average student, but her Upward Bound counselor encouraged her to run for student council. “My counselor, Juli Bu, would always tell me that I should run for student council—or apply—that sort of encouragement was pivotal. ” Sophia attended the Upward Bound Summer Bridge program in 2003 and began her undergraduate studies at Boise State soon afterwards.

However, in 2005 Sophia found herself struggling to go to school full-time, work, and care for her daughter as a single parent. “It was too stressful, and I felt like I couldn’t manage alone.” She decided to pursue a legal administrative assistant certificate instead of finishing her bachelor’s degree, but she still struggled to care for her family with a take-home pay check of only eight dollars an hour.

Then Sophia found a position at a middle school in Caldwell tracking and working with at-risk students. It was working with these middle school students back in Caldwell who had been labeled “at-risk” that helped her realize what she wanted to do with her future. Sophia saw the potential in the students she worked with every day, and she cared about their success. “They were really smart kids, but teachers sometimes just couldn’t help them.” Sophia shared how her background and personal experiences helped her connect with the students and see beyond the labels attached to them: “I’m from Canyon County. I grew up in a predominately Hispanic area. I know their challenges and how to overcome them.”

In 2008, Sophia went back to school to study Sociology. The kids from Canyon County stuck with her. “Studying Sociology helped me see how community can impact a student’s success.” Community was what Sophia felt was lacking from her first attempt at her four-year degree. “I didn’t feel a connection at Boise State until I found the TRIO office with the Student Success Program.” Shortly after she enrolled with the TRIO program, she started studying in the Student Success Program’s computer lab and building relationships with the staff. “I made a close connection with the staff and felt like I had a place I belonged. That’s what this program is for.” When asked why she thinks first-generation and low-income students are at a greater risk for dropping out, she said it was because “they don’t feel connected.”

Sophia valued and used the support system at the Student Success Program, and in the spring of 2013, she graduated from Boise State. Sophia described what was most significant to her about graduation day: “Just my daughter being able to see me graduate and knowing she is not a first-generation college student because of my hard-work. That moment was the greatest achievement.” Sophia’s success came full circle when, within just a few months of graduation, she was hired as an Educational Specialist for the TRIO Educational Talent Search.
McNair Scholars Prepare for Graduate School

TRiO McNair Scholars Program

The Boise State McNair Scholars Program serves students from groups underrepresented in graduate education and first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds, preparing them for graduate studies through scholarly enrichment, exposure to research, and other academic experiences and opportunities.

Eleven students presented their research work during the third Annual Summer Undergraduate Research Conference at Boise State University. The McNair Scholars Program is a federally-funded initiative that provides research opportunities for groups underrepresented in graduate education and first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds, preparing them for graduate studies.

Helen Barnes, Program Coordinator for the TRiO McNair Scholars Program, explained why the undergraduate research McNair students are doing is so valuable: “The mission of the McNair Scholars program is to diversify the doctorate. Our scholars need research experience in order to be accepted to and persist in Ph.D programs.”

The eleven McNair scholars presented on an array of research topics, from the effects of parental involvement on college students’ motivation to dynamic decision-making in non-irrigated corn production. The program fosters close student interactions with faculty members, which is central to the success of the McNair Scholars Program. Helen Barnes explained that by “working with a faculty mentor in their discipline, our scholars design, conduct, present, and publish their research over a period of two years. This experience provides a solid foundation for their entry into graduate level studies.”

91% of the 2013 McNair graduates accepted to graduate programs this fall

83.3% of ALL McNair graduates have gone on to graduate programs

Reaping the Rewards of Civic Engagement

TRiO Upward Bound

The Upward Bound (UB) program prepares and motivates high school students that are low-income, first-generation, and college-bound for success in education beyond high school.

The Boise State TRIO Upward Bound program knows the importance of giving back to the community. The Upward Bound summer program, designed to help students from low-income families prepare for college, partnered with Service Learning, and TRIO students were offered a variety of volunteer opportunities, including Friendship Feast, a community meals program that collaborates with local churches, and College Carnival in Boise for the Whitney Community Center.

Upward Bound students provided 20 free activities for 288 children and their families at the community center. Students’ favorite events were the college cotton candy stand, bracelet-making, face-painting and tug-of-war.

“The summer program was a huge success,” shared UB Director Juli Bu. This year, over 123 high school students completed the six-week residential session and got a taste of college life and the rich rewards of civic engagement.

Boise State TRIO Upward Bound is also celebrating its 20th year on campus. And perhaps the best evidence of their continued successes are the 10 alumni that are now staffing their Treasure Valley programs.
CAMP Exceeds Graduation and Retention Goals

College Assistance Migrant Program

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) assists students who are migratory or seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) enrolled in their first year of undergraduate studies. The funding supports completion of the first-year of studies.

Did you know that Boise State’s College Assistance Migrant Program is among the most established in the nation, serving over 1,000 students since 1984? CAMP helps migrant or seasonal farm workers and their families go to college, and the program is paying off for many students. Arnold Mediola from Wendell, Idaho, is headed to Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, Florida. Josue Gomez from Rupert, Idaho, graduated as a McNair Scholar last spring and will start his doctoral program in Political Science at Ohio State University this fall.

CAMP had a very productive 2012-2013 school year, and they surpassed their student success goal of 85% retention after the first year, with a 94.4% persistence rate. The program was awarded a $35,000 State Farm Good Neighbor Citizenship grant for the Cultivating Community project, and they also completed another HEP/CAMP showcase, which allowed their students to network with local professionals and discover job and summer internships opportunities. Former CAMP students have gone on to attend law school, doctoral programs, and participate in internship opportunities that lead to successful job placement after graduation.

HEP Students Invest in Their Futures

High School Equivalency Program

Boise State University’s High School Equivalency Program (HEP) is a Migrant Education Program designed to assist farm workers and their immediate family members in obtaining a high school equivalency or GED certificate.

Margarita, Martha, and Rocio worked hard, supported each other, and eventually, with the help of the High School Equivalency Program at Boise State University, achieved their education goals. Despite having to leave high school to work with their family in Idaho’s orchards and hop farms, the Ayala sisters knew their education was important for their futures. They believed earning their GEDs would set a good example for their siblings and children. Margarita, Martha, and Rocio completed their GEDs in May of 2013 and attended graduation together. Boise State’s HEP is one of 45 GED programs for farmworkers funded through a competitive grant process by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Migrant Education. The HEP program at Boise State has a strong performance record and has exceeded the national performance targets for GED attainment by reaching 89% GED attainment for the 2012-2013 academic year. Since the program began 30 years ago, HEP has helped 1,500 students obtain their GEDs. The program impacts students from across Idaho who might not otherwise have access to alternative educational resources. Projects like the HEP residential program and the satellite site in Nampa, Idaho, contribute to the state’s economy and help students gain the skills they need to get the jobs they want.
The Veterans Upward Bound program serves Veterans living in the Treasure Valley area planning to attend college, universities, technical school, certificate programs and more.

The TRIO Veterans Upward Bound program provides math support and other tutoring services, including classroom technology support to prepare vets for a post-secondary education. The program provides intensive basic skills development for military veterans to help them transition to college.

And this summer VUB tried something new by engineering their first ever class meeting via Skype. “It happened by accident,” VUB Director Mark Heilman explained. “Our math instructor was going to be out of town. The instructor suggested utilizing Skype to prevent postponing the class.” The staff set up a projector in the classroom so that the students could communicate with their instructor and work through the course material. Heilman said, “It worked exceptionally well and is an example of how technology can supplement and support the work we are doing.”

VUB also partnered with Service Learning recently to provide over 90 hours of individual instruction to vets in need of math skills improvement. Several undergraduate students from Dr. Michael Humphries’ EDSPED 333 class provided 15 hours of math tutoring to six VUB students. Dr. Humphries said, “We were able to identify specific needs the veterans had and the students could then focus on those particular skills during their tutoring sessions.” The pilot program proved beneficial for students, and VUB plans to expand the partnership to include English instructors this fall.

The Educational Talent Search (ETS) program is designed to assist economically and educationally disadvantaged students. This program supports secondary students through graduation and assists them in enrolling at post-secondary institutions.

Students supported by CMEO are often faced with the dilemma of how to pay for college. The Boise State Educational Talent Search program and other CMEO-programs are committed to educating students and families on both the costs of higher education and the assistance available to help them pay for college. Serving over 1,500 students in 14 schools, ETS hosted 16 well-attended FAFSA completion nights at area schools and plans to continue the successful events during the 2013-2014 school year. FAFSA night assists students and parents in navigating the online FAFSA submission process. With the assistance of ETS counselors, events like these help guide students toward scholarship opportunities and the financial support they will need to complete a post-secondary degree. Two ETS students received the Gates Millennium Scholarship, assuring them a full-ride scholarship for both their undergraduate and graduate studies. Numerous other students received scholarship monies that will help them attend college and keep their debt levels low.

Providing TRIO students with clear steps that can lead to a post-secondary degree is some of the most critical work CMEO programs do. ETS staff rallied 83 juniors to attend an ACT/SAT prep day held at Boise State University; 35 seniors were accompanied to University of Idaho for Vandal Friday; and they were able to gather 90 high school freshmen and sophomores to participate in a Spring Break Campus Tour trip to Lewis and Clark State College, the University of Idaho, and Washington State University.
TRIO Student Success Program

TRIO Student Success Program (SSP) is a federally-funded education grant that supports low-income students earning a baccalaureate degree.

The TRIO Student Success Program at Boise State University serves 180 limited-income, first-generation, and disabled students and enables them to stay in college until they earn their baccalaureate degrees. Our students receive individual tutoring, academic advising, career exploration services, and remedial academic support.

SSP begins the 2013 fall semester with its largest Peer Mentoring program to date. The Peer Mentoring program was created to provide first-generation and SSP students with a continuing orientation to the university and opportunities to grow both personally and academically. New SSP students are matched with a peer the first week of school based on their academic major.

The Peer Mentoring program wrapped up its first semester last spring and has grown to include five SSP peer mentors and four mentors from Multicultural Student Services. Working with Multicultural Student Services provides additional training and education opportunities for first-generation students.

At the end of last spring, the Peer Mentoring program participated in University Day, and it will continue the spirit of civic engagement this fall with a scheduled Service Saturday event.

SSP is also committed to enriching the co-curricular experiences of Boise State’s first-generation and limited-income students and has partnered with the pilot program Towers Engagement Center, a program designed to help connect first-year students to university resources and co-curricular activities. SSP students living in Towers Residence Hall can even attend academic workshops hosted by SSP professional staff essentially in their living room. This initiative has proven to have a tremendous impact on first-generation students, and SSP is thrilled to help jump-start the fall workshops in Towers Residence Hall!

SSP hopes that the Peer Mentoring initiative will help the program exceed their current 60% graduation rate. “We are incredibly proud of last year’s 60% graduation rate and hope we can continue to improve our numbers,” said Director Greg Martinez.

80% retention rate for 2012-2013 year

65% 6-year graduation rate for 2006 cohort