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UNLV Recaps Successful 2015 TRiO/GEAR UP Day Celebration

by Danielle Gross, Business Administration Analyst

Nevada Elected officials, The Center’s community partners, administrators from the Clark County School District (CCSD) and UNLV, as well as students and families came together to celebrate the achievements of TRiO and GEAR UP participants, both past and present, on February 21, 2015. Shortly after 5 pm, the Amazon Ballroom at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino was filled to capacity by more than 1,100 people. Among those in attendance were Mr. Donald Snyder (UNLV president), Sam Lieberman, Kevin Page (NSHE regents), Chris Garvey, Kevin Child, Carolyn Edwards (CCSD trustees) Mark Alden (former NSHE regent), Dr. Raimer Spencer (associate vice provost), Dr. Fred Tredup (UNLV chief of staff), Dr. Juanita Fain (UNLV vice president for student affairs), Dr. Marta Meana (UNLV dean of honors college) Pat Skorkowsky (superintendent of CCSD), as well as several principals from CCSD middle and high schools.

TRiO/GEAR UP Day is proclaimed by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Day of Service. A slideshow presentation prior to the event’s opening showcased numerous pictures of TRiO and GEAR UP participants and staff volunteering in the local community throughout the year. Events included: assisting Three Square Food Bank package afterschool nutritious meals for distribution to families and students in need, sorting through thousands of pounds of grocery donations, Upward Bound students and staff assisting Three Square sort through a variety of donated products. Additional efforts included hosting literacy nights, feeding the homeless, acting as mentors for at-risk youth, among many other countless community events.

Mr. Keith Rogers, deputy executive director, referenced the slideshow presentation proudly stating that although TRiO/GEAR UP Day is a day of service, UNLV TRiO and GEAR UP programs serve the Las Vegas community continuously throughout the year.

Ms. Maria Silva, mistress of ceremonies, news anchor, reporter, and producer from KVVU Fox 5, began her welcome by stating that she looks forward to attending the TRiO/GEAR UP Day event each year and praised The Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach (The Center) for hosting the event. She also offered her congratulations to those who participated in and completed TRiO/GEAR UP programs. These programs help low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to overcome physical, social, cultural and academic barriers. “The Center houses the largest suite of federally funded (fifteen TRiO and three GEAR UP) programs in the nation,” said Dr. Juanita P. Fain. “Under the leadership of Dr. William W. Sullivan, The Center provides exceptional services to more than 29,000 students in Southern Nevada.”

Keynote speaker, Mr. Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent of the Clark County School District, was presented with the prestigious Educational Pioneer Award for his...
Educational Talent Search Participant Achieves Academic Excellence
by Cicely Morgan, Educational Talent Search Coordinator

John Dillard, TRiO Educational Talent Search student at Legacy High School, proudly accepted the 2015 Principal’s Award during senior award night on May 26, 2015. It is no wonder that he was this year’s recipient with accolades, such as taking second place at the State Business Leadership Conference for Future Business Leaders in America while also completing their certificate program. He was named Orchestra Musician of the Year, National Society of High School Scholars Ambassador, contributed the most number of service hours for National Honor Society and National Honor Society Parliamentarian, while also serving as a member of the Clark County School District Board of Trustees School Board Student Advisory Committee. John was accepted into Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but has chosen to attend Michigan Technological University in the fall of 2015. He received the National Distinction Scholar award for four years, $40,000, and the University Student Award.

community efforts and supporting low-income and first-generation students who seek to obtain a higher education degree. Two GEAR UP participants and five TRiO alumni were honored for their accomplishments during the event. The GEAR UP achievers were Jacob Chavira and Jeremiah Williams. The TRiO honorees were Dr. Michael Webber (McNair alumna), John Bui (SSS alumnus), Ni’Cola Mitchell (UB alumna), Gregory Noel (ETS alumnus), and Candi Shawn Jefferson (AES alumna).

The next annual TRiO/GEAR UP Day Celebration is scheduled for Saturday February 27, 2016, at the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino.
Staff Member Donates Merit Pay to Create Scholarship

by Lawrence Letourneau, Director for Research and Compliance

An anonymous member of The Center has donated the merit pay increase that s/he was awarded beginning July 2014 to establish the Larry and Theresa Thesing Memorial Scholarship. Earmarked for TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) students who attend UNLV and are juniors or seniors, the scholarship is named after the staff member's late grandparents: Larry and Theresa Thesing.

Born in 1918, Mr. Thesing lost his father to a firearms accident in 1924, dropped out of high school during the Great Depression, and crisscrossed the nation as a farm worker while still a teenager. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, stationed first in North Africa, then India, and finally in China. After returning to the U.S. in 1946 and being discharged from the military, Mr. Thesing met and married Theresa. Born in 1922, Mrs. Thesing was the youngest daughter of Italian immigrants who came to the United States to work on the railroads in the Midwest.

In 1948, less than two months after his only child was born, Mr. Thesing suffered a series of strokes that left him paralyzed on his right side and unable to walk or talk. Consequently, he was forced to close the small grocery store that he had recently purchased with military earnings he had squirreled away during his time overseas. With unwavering support from Mrs. Thesing, Mr. Thesing eventually re-learned how to talk and walk, but he never regained the use of his right arm or hand. Born right handed, Mr. Thesing re-learned how to write using his left hand.

Though disabled, Mr. Thesing could not collect Social Security disability payments because the program did not yet exist. As a result, both Mr. and Mrs. Thesing searched for employment so that they could generate the income needed to pay their household expenses and support their daughter. Mr. Thesing found it extremely difficult to secure a regular job, as few prospective employers were willing to look past his disabled condition to hire him on a permanent basis, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws that protect disabled persons were still decades away from passage. Mrs. Thesing eventually found work as a store-room clerk at an electronics company, a stable position she held for decades but for which she was never paid more than $10 per hour. Effectively barred from the workforce but still wanting to be a provider to his family, Mr. Thesing spent his days reading books and articles about finance and the stock market at his local public library, and decades before anyone had ever heard of the internet and online trading platforms, Mr. Thesing became a self-taught and moderately successful equity investor.

Mr. and Mrs. Thesing were always frugal when it came to spending money on themselves, but they were very generous with others, especially their grandchildren. Although Mr. and Mrs. Thesing did not achieve financial security until very late in life, they still managed to set aside some money for their grandchildren's college educations. However, Mr. and Mrs. Thesing's most important legacies are the tenacity and generosity they exemplified. The scholarship that bears their names is intended to honor them by helping persons who are struggling against significant odds to realize the American dream.

Thesing Scholarships will be awarded beginning in the fall semester of 2015 to SSS participants who are enrolled at UNLV, have earned sixty or more credit hours, and are Pell Grant recipients. Each scholarship awarded will be utilized to help close the gap between the amount of financial assistance the student has already received and his or her cost of attendance at UNLV.

TRiO Assists with Pursuing the Nevada Certificate of High School Equivalency

by Peggy Marlow, Director for Educational Opportunity Centers

Vincent Prado sought help from the UNLV TRiO Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) to get the Nevada Certificate of High School Equivalency (HSE). He took the HSE pre-test at the EOC office in May and passed it. Afterwards, the TRiO EOC counselor and Vincent discussed both his educational and career goals. Together they created an educational plan. Vincent was provided a voucher for $65 to cover the cost of registering for the official HSE test. Upon passing the official test, Vincent would like to attend the College of Southern Nevada to pursue a Criminal Justice Degree. He plans to return to the TRiO office to receive assistance with completing the College of Southern Nevada admissions application and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). EOC provides free HSE pre-testing every Tuesday and Wednesday at 8:00 AM. The test takes three to four hours to complete all five assessment areas: reading, writing, mathematics, social studies and science.
McNair Scholar
Recipient of the 2015
Calvert Award

by Terri Bernstein,
Assistant Director for Academic Enrichment

UNLV McNair Scholar, Bella V. Smith, is a recipient of the 2015 University Libraries Lance and Elena Calvert Undergraduate Research Award. The Calvert Award recognizes undergraduate students who demonstrate sophistication and originality in research projects. Up to five prizes were awarded in three categories: Emerging Scholars with a $750 prize, Advanced Undergraduate and Creative Works with a $1000 prize. Bella received one of the Advanced Undergraduate prizes.

GEAR UP and ETS
Collaborate for
Educational Tour

by Cicely Morgan,
Coordinator for Educational Talent Search

On April 30, 2015 the TRiO Educational Talent Search (ETS) program and GEAR UP at Marvin M. Sedway Middle School pulled off a successful collaborative event. Students participated in a campus tour of the West Charleston Campus of College of Southern Nevada and followed by an educational tour of the Lied Children’s Discovery Museum. ETS and GEAR UP students learned about the power of fear and how the body processes and responds to fear through the goosebumps exhibit.

Student Spotlight

by Cicely Morgan,
Coordinator for Educational Talent Search

The City of Las Vegas, Clark County School District and Nevada Partners hosted its Annual Batteries Included 2015 Youth Achievement Awards Gala on May 15, 2015. With the theme of “Celebrating our Service Stars” Legacy High School represented their talent. Three of the five awards given went to Legacy High School with two of the three being TRiO Educational Talent Search participants. Au-Zhanae Black was the proud recipient of the Mayor’s Award and Jocelyn Saucedo was the recipient of the Education Award.
TRiO Expanded: The Legacy Project
by Cicely Morgan, Coordinator for Educational Talent Search

TRiO “Longhorns” at Legacy High School are unique in nature because they are taught from day one the importance of leaving a positive imprint for the world to see. During the 2014-2015 academic year, TRiO expanded its commitment to preparing students to be “ready by exit” by collaborating with the Legacy Project. The Legacy Project is one of the unique teen council groups under the guidance of the City of Las Vegas’ Batteries Included (BI) Youth Initiative program. Created through a collaboration between the City of Las Vegas, Clark County School District and Nevada Partners, the Batteries Included teen council programs represent commitment to excellence and achievement. The BI program’s focus includes leadership training, community service, college preparation activities, access to out-of-school educational activities and opportunities for youth engagement, diverse life skills, as well as employment training and career planning classes. The Legacy Project adopted these values and created a mission to bridge the gap between home, life and community for youth by youth.

Through monthly BI connections meetings, students had the opportunity to come together with other council members in the valley to learn the skills needed to be productive leaders and the importance of community service. The Legacy Project Teen Council group at Legacy High School reached new heights and set a new standard this year. In September 2014, thirty five students were inducted into the Legacy Project Teen Council program. Over the past nine months, students stepped outside of their comfort zones, took on new challenges, as well as learned how to empower themselves and teach others the importance of leading by example. The Legacy Project participated in all required city activities and was regularly invited to engage in numerous events and activities including the premier of “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative project with Studio 11 films at the West Las Vegas Library, the Selma moving screening, SUU and Dixie College tour, Winter Holiday Mixer at Tivoli Village, Mayor Goodman’s College of Southern Nevada college tour. Other activities included volunteering as peer mentors for Hayden Elementary School, leading a three day youth cultural retreat at Mount Potosi, a job shadowing program through the Junior League Junior Achievement program, Teen Awareness Fair, Red Carpet Youth Achievement Gala, and Reclaim Your Future annual breakfast. During April 2015, the students created the “What’s your Legacy” challenge.

Each day the student body participated in various activities focused on how to leave your legacy. The most amazing element of this week was creating a time capsule for 2015 set to be opened in twenty years. The biggest accomplishment for the teen council this academic year was writing for the Youth Neighborhood Association Partnership Program grant. The Legacy Project was one of the few teen council projects selected to receive the $1,000 grant. The grant award was used for project “stay prepared for school” created by the students to assist those attending Rainbow Dreams Academy be prepared all year. The students and teachers were presented with school supplies and books for the library.

The Legacy Project has left its mark on the school, community and most importantly within the students themselves.
Vanni Jefferson Arcaina grew up in the Philippines and moved to Las Vegas in 2011 during his freshman year of high school. Every student’s worst nightmare is the transition period between schools, especially middle school to high school. Vanni struggled with culture shock; knowing little English, he was determined to master the English language. One of the most difficult times of Vanni’s high school career was moving between states. He moved to Pennsylvania to help a family member that needed a bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately his family member passed away a few weeks later. Due to the major tragedy in his life, he lost focus in his educational goals and was unable to concentrate on his studies until he moved back to Las Vegas.

Vanni has been an active participant of the UNLV TRiO Educational Talent Search Program (ETS) at Desert Pines High School since 2012. His ETS academic counselor Omar Gomez encouraged him throughout those difficult years so during his senior year, Vanni decided to apply for the Gates Millennium Scholarship (GMS) based on the recommendation of the ETS program at his school. Vanni worked hard to complete all of the extensive requirements for this scholarship with the assistance of his high school academic counselor Mr. Arthur Parker, who served as his recommender for the application, along with his ETS Counselor, Rocio Rodriguez, who served as his Nominator. Vanni was notified in April 2015 that he was selected as one of one thousand GMS recipients for 2015 and one of four in Nevada. Recipients of the GMS are awarded monies to be used to pursue a degree in any undergraduate major and selected graduate programs at accredited colleges or universities. Vanni is a student leader who has been involved in numerous clubs and programs, such as UNLV TRiO ETS, UNLV TRiO Upward Bound Math & Science Center, student council, journalism, publications/yearbook, Asia Pacific Student Union, International Club, and National Honor Society.

He was also selected as a Student Leader for by the Bank of America Charitable Foundation where he participated in an eight-week paid internship with a nonprofit organization. Similarly, he participated in the 2015 Bank of America Student Leaders Summit in Washington, D.C., which took place during July 12-17, 2015. This all-expense-paid trip was offered to two hundred student leaders from across the county. This experience allowed Vanni to gain additional tools to serve his community, and inspire others with positive change.

Vanni is a perfect example of how hard work and dedication can overcome academic and personal barriers. During his senior year, Vanni completed five Advance Placement (AP) classes, graduated with a 4.62 GPA, ranked 4 out of 419 in his graduating class and received numerous scholarships to fund his post-secondary education. In the Fall, he will be attending University of Nevada, Las Vegas majoring in psychology and plans to attend law school. Vanni expresses the importance of a support system which he received from his high school experience, not only by being part of TRiO, but also by being involved in different student organizations. Vanni is the epitome of the everyday struggles that first-generation and low-income students face every day.

Vanni’s Additional Accomplishments and Honors include the following:

- Gates Millennium Scholarship Recipient
- President’s Award for Academic Excellence
- Engelstad Scholar
- Community Service Medallion
- Kish Scholarship Recipient
- Lee Kirby Scholarship
The 2015 Earth Day Everyday Youth Art contest sponsored by the City of Las Vegas’ Keep Las Vegas Beautiful partnership provided an opportunity for talented students in grades four through twelve to showcase their talents. The TRiO Educational Talent Search program at Legacy High School proudly supported our participant Michelle Quiroz with her preparation and final entry. The top ten finalists were invited to showcase their talent at Town Square on April 18, 2015 where the first, second, and third place winners were selected. Michelle’s piece was the second place winner in her age category. The first place winner, also a Legacy High School student, will have the honor of having his or her work displayed at City Hall.

Contest winners were invited to participate in the Keep Las Vegas Beautiful beautification project and paint murals at Matt Kelly Elementary School.
SAVE THE DATE!

TRiO/GEAR UP Day

February 27, 2016
Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino
More Details coming soon
http://caeo.unlv.edu/trio-gearup.html